English Language & Literature Teaching, *Vol. 30*, No. 3, Fall 2024
https://doi.org/10.35828/etak.2024.30.3.41

Korean English Textbooks and the Curricular Goal of Cultivating Intercultural Communicative Competence*

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Yook, Cheongmin, & Kim, Gyumi. (2024). Korean English textbooks and the curricular goal of cultivating intercultural communicative competence. *English Language & Literature Teaching, 30*(3), 41-60.

This study examines the extent to which Korean middle-school English textbooks align with the goal of cultivating intercultural communicative competence, as expressed in the 2015 national curriculum for English. Employing both qualitative and quantitative methods, it analyzes four sets of textbooks, totaling 12 books, developed under the 2015 curriculum. The analysis focuses on (1) diversity of people, (2) interaction patterns and accents, (3) cultural diversity, and (4) statements for intercultural attitudes, as represented in the textbooks. The study finds that these efforts are undermined by several issues: (1) bias in the visual presentation of people; (2) an inner-circle-centered approach to interaction patterns; (3) dominance of native-speakerism; (4) preference for American and European cultures; (5) excessive focus on traditional Korean culture; (6) the use of specially designated sections for cultural presentations; and (7) a lack of robust statements supporting intercultural attitudes. It reveals gaps in achieving the curriculum's intercultural goals, highlighting the need for comprehensive reform. The study concludes with a discussion on the implications of these findings for authorizing bodies, textbook developers, and teachers, urging for reforms to better support intercultural goals and enrich students' learning experiences.

[intercultural communicative competence/textbooks/English as a foreign language/national curriculum]

* This research was supported by Hallym University Research Fund, 2024 (HRF-202402-007).
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I. INTRODUCTION

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is a highly promoted competence in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts. ICC refers to the ability to understand different cultures and to use this understanding to communicate with persons from diverse cultures effectively and appropriately (Byram, 1997; Byram & Wagner, 2018). The highlight of ICC in the EFL context is largely due to two historical factors: globalization and the status of English as a global contact language (Agustina & Kencana, 2023; Ishikawa, 2017). People from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds interact with each other more than ever before, and their dominant means of communication is English. This historical phenomenon has led to the recognition that cultivating ICC is crucial for EFL learners.

What constitutes ICC has been explained in various ways. This study draws on Byram's (1997) model to define concepts related to ICC. In Byram's model, ICC comprises four interdependent elements: attitudes, knowledge, skills, and critical cultural awareness. Attitudes include curiosity, open-mindedness, tolerance, and respect for other cultures. Knowledge involves understanding various aspects of diverse cultures and the processes of interaction. Skills refer to the abilities to apply acquired intercultural knowledge and attitudes in effective communication. More importantly, at the core of these components lies critical cultural awareness, defined as "an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices, and products in one's own and other cultures" (Byram, 1997, p. 101). Critical cultural awareness emphasizes that EFL students should be capable of appreciating different cultures from a comparative perspective and discussing their own culture within various intercultural contexts.

The importance of ICC was recognized in the Korean national curriculum as early as 1997 (Jang, 2011; Kim, 2011). The national curriculum is revised every two to four years, and the 2011 curriculum included a goal "to develop open attitudes toward diverse cultures and cultivate a sense of world citizenship" in students (Ministry of Education, 2011, p. 24). The national curriculum was most recently revised in 2015 (hereafter referred to as the 2015 national curriculum). This version reiterated the cultivation of ICC as a key goal in EFL education. This time, the description of the goal was expanded to include the phrase, "and raise the ability to introduce Korean culture to foreigners" (Ministry of Education, 2015a, p. 3). The inclusion of the Korean-culture element indicates that ICC was taken more seriously.

Meanwhile, the textbook is recognized as a main tool for implementing curricular goals (Byrd, 2001; Vitta, 2021). It plays a particularly important role in the centralized educational system of Korea. The Ministry of Education prepares the national curriculum, and a sub-agency, the Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation (KICE), prepares textbook development guidelines and a rubric for obtaining authorization. Commercial publishers then develop textbooks in accordance with these guidelines and submit them for

authorization. Individual schools choose from among these authorized textbooks. The textbooks thus chosen are exclusively used in the classroom, determining the direction and content of classroom instruction. This situation underscores the critical role that textbooks play in implementing the goals of the national curriculum.

Arguably, the most effective way to cultivate ICC is through direct encounters with diverse people and their cultures. However, that is unfeasible for most EFL students; hence, the crucial role of English textbooks in the EFL context becomes apparent. These textbooks are expected to provide cultural content that helps students acquire comparative knowledge of various cultures, develop essential attitudes and skills for intercultural interactions, and employ them for successful communication (McKay, 2002). Therefore, the extent to which EFL textbooks meet the ICC goal set out in the national curriculum merits close examination.

The present study aims to measure the extent to which Korean middle-school EFL textbooks, developed under the 2015 national curriculum, align with its goal of cultivating ICC in students. The study focuses on middle-school textbooks because English class hours increase considerably at this level. Elementary school students have 85 (40-minute) English classes per year, whereas middle-school students have 113 (45-minute) English classes per year (Ministry of Education, 2015b). Such a substantial increase in class hours suggests that the cultivation of students' ICC could hinge significantly on the quality of instruction received in middle school.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

To what extent EFL textbooks effectively contribute to the cultivation of ICC in students, has been a much-studied topic in various EFL contexts: Japan (Efron, 2020; Takahashi, 2014; Yamanaka, 2006); China (Lei & Soontornwipast, 2020; Ping, 2015); Indonesia (Agustina & Kencana, 2023; Silvia, 2015); Vietnam (Dang & Seals, 2018); Bangladesh (Mostafa & Jahan, 2024), Iran (Ghasedi & Azizi, 2020); and Colombia (Henao et al., 2019), among others. These studies point to a common conclusion: efforts to promote students' ICC are undermined by several limitations.

First, all of the studies report the superficiality of cultural presentation. They find that cultural contents in textbooks largely consists of simple, factual descriptions and visual materials designed more to arouse curiosity rather than to promote deeper understanding. For example, Dang and Seals (2018) observe that cultural presentations in Vietnamese elementary school EFL textbooks are mostly superficial and even stereotypical, as exemplified by the representation of Japan with an image of a kimono. Second, some studies note a bias in cultural presentation (Dang & Seals, 2018; Efron, 2020; Ping, 2015; Yamanaka, 2006). They report that cultures from inner-circle countries, where English is used as a native

language (Kachru, 1985), and other European countries predominate over other cultures. For instance, Yamanaka (2006) notes that Japanese middle- and high-school EFL textbooks feature more cultural content related to the US and the UK than to all other countries combined. Interestingly, two studies also highlight the ethnocentric presentation of one's own culture as a major obstacle to developing ICC (Efron, 2020; Ping, 2015). Specifically, Ping (2015) finds that the cultural contents of the elementary-school textbooks she evaluated are skewed toward Chinese culture, emphasizing its distinctiveness. Third, other studies report the lack of activities suited to promoting intercultural attitudes and skills (Efron, 2020; Henao et al., 2019; Silvia, 2015). Henao et al. (2019), for example, note that, in the Colombian high-school EFL textbooks they evaluated, "more than 80% of the activities do not develop intercultural awareness and among those that do, the majority regard only intercultural knowledge" (p. 190).

ICC assumes that people from different cultures meet and speak English in various accents to communicate with each other. Moreover, interactions in English between non-native speakers occur far more frequently than those between native and non-native speakers nowadays (Jenkins, 2015). Therefore, the questions regarding what types of people are presented as interlocutors and what accents they use are also relevant. Some studies address the issue accordingly. Takahashi (2014), for instance, reports that most of the 64 dialogues included in the Japanese middle-school EFL textbooks that she analyzed take place between native and non-native interlocutors, so that only nine took place between non-native interlocutors. Takahashi takes this a failure to reflect the reality that the majority of interactions in English take place between non-native speakers. As for accents, Dang and Seals (2018) find that the Standard British English accent is exclusively used in the dialogues they examined, so students are deprived of opportunities to become familiar with English spoken in different accents.

The topic at hand has also received much research attention in Korea. However, most of the available studies examine textbooks published under the 2007 national curriculum. A possible reason is that the 2015 national curriculum was applied in stages. It was first applied to English textbooks for Grade 7 in 2018; to those for Grade 8 in 2019, and lastly, to those for Grade 9 in 2020. In other words, not until 2020 were all middle-school EFL textbooks developed and authorized under the 2015 national curriculum. Only a few studies are available on such EFL textbooks: Kong and Sung (2021); Ku (2020); Kwon and Lim (2018); Lee (2021); and Shim (2020). Their overall findings are consistent with those of the non-Korean studies reviewed above: the effectiveness of Korean EFL textbooks for the cultivation of students' ICC is undermined by: (1) superficial cultural presentation (all of the five studies); (2) biased cultural presentation (Kong & Sung, 2021; Ku, 2020; Shim, 2020); (3) absence of activities for the development of intercultural attitudes (Ku, 2020); and (4) predominance of interactions between native and non-native speakers, and exclusive use of

the Standard American English (Shim, 2020).

Of the five Korean studies, three (i.e., Kong & Sung, 2021; Ku, 2020; Shim, 2020) are concerned with middle-school EFL textbooks, which is the subject of the current study. Considering the significance of middle-school English education for the cultivation of Korean students' ICC, the relationship between the cultural content of middle-school EFL textbooks and the curricular goal of ICC as expressed in the 2015 curriculum merits further research. Moreover, the three studies on middle-school textbooks reveal notable gaps. None of them consider visual materials. Yet, visual materials - such as illustrations, animations, photos and video clips - are essential, constituent parts of textbooks for middle-school students. In addition, as mentioned earlier, ICC assumes that people from different cultures meet and speak English in various accents to communicate with each other. For the cultivation of ICC, therefore, students need to be exposed to people from different cultural backgrounds. In this light, an examination of a diversity of people is warranted, and, for the examination of a diversity of people, visual materials are important. The three studies' narrow scope of investigation is yet another area that demands further inquiry. Kong and Sung (2021) examine sections specially designated for cultural presentation only; Ku (2020) looks at culture sections and main texts only; and Shim (2020) focuses dialogues and main texts only. To get a fuller picture, the research scope needs to be broadened, and more components of the textbook must be examined concurrently.

Considering the findings of the reviewed studies and aiming to fill existing gaps in the scholarship, the present study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. How diverse are people presented in visual and textual materials?
2. What characterizes the interactions in textbook dialogues?
3. Which cultures are primarily presented, what aspects of these cultures are favored, and how are they represented?
4. What statements are included to promote the development of intercultural attitudes?

III. METHODOLOGY

1. Selection of Textbooks

Thirteen sets of middle-school English textbooks were published by nine different publishers. Each set consisted of textbooks for Grades 7-9. Four of the 13 sets were randomly selected for examination (see Table 1). The random selection was made for three reasons: because the centralized authorization system makes the textbook format largely homogeneous; book sales data were not accessible; and there is no significant difference in

reputation among the publishers. The four sets were all published in March, 2020. This means that they were all developed and authorized under the 2015 curriculum guidelines. For the sake of convenience, the four sets are referred to as A, B, C, and D. The three textbooks in each set are differentiated by adding a number after the letter (e.g., A-1, A-2, A-3).

TABLE 1
Textbooks Selected for Examination

Set	Publisher	Publication Date
A	Darakwon	March, 2020
B	Visang	March, 2020
C	NE Neungyule	March, 2020
D	Chunjaegyoyuk	March, 2020

2. Framework of Analysis

In order to find answers to the research questions given at the end of the previous section, this study focused on the following four dimensions, targeting visual, textual and audio materials in the textbooks. It also employed both qualitative (content) and quantitative (frequency-counting) analysis.

1) Diversity of People

Because ICC assumes interactions between people from various cultures who speak English with various accents, what types of people are presented as interlocutors is a relevant question. To find answers to this question, visual materials deserve more attention than they have hitherto received. However, illustrations and animations are not suitable for this purpose because the national, racial or ethnic origins of characters presented through them are frequently ambiguous. In the present study, therefore, only the racial/ethnic origins of the characters presented through photos and video clips were identified and divided into one of the following groups: Korean, non-Korean Asian, White, Black, and Other. The frequency of each group was then counted. Characters were also textually represented. Nationalities of textually-represented characters were generally known, and, therefore, they were categorized as: Korean, American, European, and Other.

2) Interaction Patterns and Accents

Interaction patterns are most clearly observed in dialogues, while different English accents can be distinguished in the audio recordings of the dialogues. Therefore, dialogues were

classified into the following five categories on based on the interlocutors' personal names. Then, use of different accents was analyzed in the audio recordings.

Pattern 1 - Korean vs. inner-circle interlocutors
Pattern 2 - Korean vs. non-inner-circle interlocutors
Pattern 3 - inner-circle vs. non-inner-circle interlocutors
Pattern 4 - between interlocutors from the same group
(e.g., between Korean interlocutors only)
Pattern 5 - unnamed vs. un/named interlocutors

Note that the personal-name-based classification may be problematic because personal names from inner-circle countries are often used in non-inner-circle countries. However, as Shim (2020) notes, "English names with which Korean students are familiar such as Lily, Jason, Kevin, Alex, Jenny, Jake, Anna are generally considered as names for persons from the inner-circle" (p. 10). In addition, in quite a few cases, the context makes it possible to identify the nationalities of interlocutors. Therefore, although not always precise, personal-name-based classification useful for observing general trends in the presentation of interaction patterns.

3) Cultural Diversity

The investigation of cultural diversity involved two stages. First, countries to which cultural items belong were identified and classified into five groups: Asian countries (including Korea but excluding Middle Eastern countries); inner-circle countries; European countries; African countries; and others. The number of countries in each group was then tallied. Second, identified cultural items were grouped according to common features, such as food, arts, etc. During this process, items related to Korean culture were listed separately to examine which aspects of Korean culture were presented and how.

4) Statements for Intercultural Attitudes

Statements intended to develop students' ICC, such as reading materials that encourages openness, tolerance, or respect for differences, were identified in dialogues, reading materials, and visual materials. Their contents were analyzed when applicable.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Diversity of People

Table 2 below demonstrates that the four sets make efforts to ensure the diversity of people by presenting people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds through photos and video-clips. Nonetheless, the visual presentation reveals bias. White individuals are presented most frequently, followed by Koreans. Interestingly, black individuals are presented more frequently than non-Korean Asians. In reality, the likelihood that Korean EFL learners encounter individuals from other Asian countries is far greater than the possibility of them encountering people of other races, including whites. In 2018, approximately 28.7 million Koreans traveled abroad, with 81% of them visiting Asian countries (Korea Tourism Organization, 2020). Additionally, about 15.6 million foreigners visited Korea in 2018, 83% of whom were from Asian countries. There were also about 2.4 million foreign residents in Korea, 80% of whom came from Asian countries (Korea Immigration Service, 2019).

TABLE 2
Frequencies of Photographic/Video-clip Presentations of People

Publisher	Koreans	Non-Korean Asians	Whites	Blacks	Others
A	49	4	186	33	8
B	50	0	275	27	4
C	68	12	208	57	2
D	66	19	164	25	10

The bias observed in the visual presentation is compounded by textual representation. In all four sets, Americans and Europeans outnumber Koreans, who in turn outnumber ‘others’. Moreover, Americans and Europeans are qualitatively superior, in the sense that they are generally portrayed as respected professionals or historical figures. In contrast, ‘others’ are often portrayed as victims of (and activists against) prejudice.

Table 3 below shows an example. In the set D, eleven Americans and Europeans, five Koreans, and two others are textually represented. Americans and Europeans are mostly white, and they are described as a former president, a designer, a writer, a scientist, a humanitarian, an educator, and a famous chef, whereas one of the two women in the ‘others’ category is a Pakistani activist who fought for female education.

TABLE 3
Textual Presentation of Characters

Set	Characters
D	Koreans: Mandeok Kim (woman humanitarian in the Joseon Dynasty); Soyun Kim (woman rock climber); Gwansun Ryu (independence activist); Sunsin Yi

	(famous 16th-century admiral); Dongju Yoon (poet)
Americans:	Jimmy Carter (president); Abraham Lincoln (president); Patricia Moore (pioneer of universal design); William Sydney Porter (writer)
Europeans:	Euclid (Greek mathematician); Audrey Hepburn (actress/humanitarian); Ada Lovelace (English mathematician); Maria Montessori (Italian educator); J. K. Rowling (author of the Harry Potter series); an Italian chef, an Italian woman who was illiterate but succeeded in writing letters to her husband
Others:	Masako Wakamiya (oldest Japanese woman game app. developer), Malala Yousafzai (Pakistani activist for female education/Nobel Prize winner)

This kind of biased presentation can be problematic in two ways. First, it fails to reflect the reality that Korean EFL students are far more likely to encounter and communicate with Asians than with white Americans or Europeans. More importantly, it may reinforce existing stereotypes about whites and non-whites. Therefore, to more effectively promote the development of ICC, English textbooks should offer students more opportunities to become familiar with non-white Americans and Europeans.

2. Interaction Patterns and Accents

The frequencies of individual interaction patterns are shown in Table 4 below. The table reveals that Pattern 5 (i.e., interactions between unnamed and named/unnamed interlocutors) is the most frequent in all four sets. All interactions of this type aim at to practice grammatical forms, phrases or roles, and they are culturally neutral.

TABLE 4
Frequencies of Interaction Patterns

Set	Pattern 1	Pattern 2	Pattern 3	Pattern 4	Pattern 5	Total
A	24	1	1	8	277	311
B	12	0	1	2	295	310
C	10	0	0	4	196	210
D	11	1	0	23	399	434

The frequencies of Pattern 1 (i.e., interactions between Korean and inner-circle interlocutors) and 2 (i.e., interactions between Korean and non-inner-circle interlocutors) deserve a closer look. The frequency of Pattern 1 is higher than that of Pattern 2. At the same time, in all of the sets, the frequency of Pattern 2 is so low that it is almost negligible. Pattern 3 (i.e., interactions between inner-circle and non-inner-circle interlocutors) is also rarely presented. In particular, no interlocutor has a name which can be recognized as a typical African name (e.g., Kwame, Ekon).

This imbalance in the frequencies of interaction patterns seems to indicate that the textbook developers assumed that Korean students' main interaction partners would be native English speakers from the inner circle. This assumption fails to take into account the

reality that interactions between non-native English speakers outnumber that those between native and non-native speakers (Holliday, 2015). Moreover, as discussed above, the interaction counterparts of Korean students are increasingly non-native English speakers from Asia, like themselves. Therefore, to promote the cultivation of students' ICC more effectively, Korean EFL textbook developers must move away from the current prioritization of interactions between native and Korean English speakers over those between (Korean) non-native and non-native speakers, and increase opportunities for Korean students to become familiar with the latter pattern of interaction.

Moreover, in all interactions, interlocutors speak with the Standard American English accent. Even Korean interlocutors use that accent. For example, of the 210 dialogues included in Set C, 12 involve Korean interlocutors, and they all speak with the Standard American English accent. Figure 1 shows a typical example, where the illustration depicts a Korean senior explaining a Korean antique lock to Peter, a visitor from the US.

FIGURE 1
A Korean Speaking in a Standard American English Accent (C-2, p. 62)



The senior and the American exchange the following dialogue:

Grandfather: Hi, Peter! Have you ever seen this kind of lock before?
Peter: No, I haven't. It's so old that I can't really tell, but is it a fish?
Grandfather: Yes. For a long time, Koreans have thought that fish are good guards. Fish don't close their eyes, even when they sleep.
Peter: That's interesting. (C-2, p. 62)

Contextually, the senior is apparently a non-native English speaker living in Korea, but, in the audio version of the dialogue, he speaks with a perfect Standard American English accent.

The exclusive use of the Standard American English accent suggests the impact of what is often called native-speakerism. This ideology, characterized by the belief that the native speaker (i.e., of Standard American English) is an ideal speaker whom EFL learners must emulate (Holliday, 2015), dominates the four sets of EFL textbooks. However, this ideology is not suitable for EFL students. As Byram (2020) notes, it creates "an impossible target and consequently inevitable failure" (p. 17) for most EFL students who will not be able to achieve nativelike fluency. It merely fosters feelings of inadequacy among EFL students. More importantly, with its focus on inner-circle varieties of English and on their users, native-speakerism may lead to disrespect toward non-inner-circle varieties, the people who speak these varieties, and their cultures (Ishikawa, 2017). This contradicts the goal of cultivating ICC in students. Native-speakerism must be reconsidered. According to Alptekin (2002), discourse between non-native English speakers should be a pedagogical goal in the EFL context. At the very least, the visibility of non-native English speakers with various accents should be increased in Korean EFL textbooks.

3. Cultural Diversity

The numbers and regions of countries whose cultures are represented in the four sets are shown in Table 5 below. To take one specific example, Set D included 34 countries in five regions: 12 Asian countries (Bangladesh, Brunei, China, India, Japan, Korea, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam); four inner-circle countries (US, England, Australia, and New Zealand); nine European countries (Denmark, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, and Sweden); an African country (Kenya); and eight 'Others', such as Middle Eastern and Latin American countries (Israel, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, UAE, Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, Peru).

TABLE 5
Numbers of Countries Included in the Four Sets

Region / Set	Asian countries	Inner-circle countries	European countries	African countries	Others	Total
A	8	4	12	3	5	32
B	11	4	8	0	9	32
C	8	4	8	1	5	26
D	12	4	9	1	8	34

Moreover, diverse aspects of culture are covered. To give just one example, in Set A, non-Korean cultures are explored through various features such as tourist attractions, music, film, painting, literature, food, festivals, traditional games, martial arts, currency, schools, projects, institutions, proverbs, superstitions, odd jobs, odd houses, and more. Korean culture is also

substantially presented in a similar manner. Each set includes at least two lessons specifically addressing Korean culture. Set A, for example, features "Katie's Stay in Seoul" (A-1) and "Welcome to Korea" (A-3). In addition, various aspects of Korean culture, including tourist attractions, music, food, game, festival, and martial arts, are presented in the four sets.

In this sense, it can be said that the four sets made considerable efforts to diversify cultural content. Nonetheless, there is much room for improvement. First, the presentation of culture is permeated by the tourist gaze, which refers to tourists' way of seeing places and people (Vinall & Shin, 2019). For instance, D-2 includes the world-famous selfie, "Around the World in 360º Degrees," which showcases Alex Chacón's three-year journey in just three minutes. The video highlights major sites and exotic places in over 36 countries. A similar approach is frequently adopted in all four sets, where a number of simple references to well-known tourist attractions or icons are made, typically accompanied by all-too-familiar pictures that can easily be found in travel guidebooks. Figure 2 illustrates this point well.

FIGURE 2
An Example of a Tourist Gaze (C-1, p.72)



The tourist gaze is also manifested in the presentation of Korean culture. Most items relate to traditional Korean culture, which is thought to be most appealing to foreign visitors. For example, Set A features an old palace (Gyeongbokgung), traditional villages (Bukchon Hanok Village, Yongin Folk Village, Gyeongju), an old fortress (Suwon Hwaseong), a traditional market (Busan Jagalchi Market), traditional music (pansori, samulnori), traditional food (kimchi, tteokbokki, bibimbap, japchae), a traditional game (tuho), and a traditional martial art (taekkyeon). Set A includes only five non-traditional items: gimbap, K-pop, Namsan Seoul Tower, and the Haeundae Polar Bear Festival. This slant toward

traditional culture creates the impression that Korean students are expected to function as tour guides who can explain traditional aspects of Korean culture to foreign visitors.

Visual images and sights selected and presented from a tourist's viewpoint can be easily be presented in EFL textbooks. However, they tend to be simplistic and superficial, often bringing with them the danger of misrepresentation. ICC calls for a deeper understanding and appreciation of the differences and similarities between cultures. More diverse cultural elements or features must be presented from a comparative perspective so that students can understand and appreciate these differences or similarities This knowledge, in turn, enables them to successfully interact with people from various cultural backgrounds. In fact, there is a case that illustrates the comparative perspective. Lesson 7 in D-2 presents photos of different calligraphic styles developed in China, Europe, and the Middle East. The examples include a "*Chusa*-style" calligraphy created by a Korean scholar in the early nineteenth century and the handwriting style used for Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* in the fourteenth century. The lesson adds an explanation about different historical, religious, and artistic contexts for the development of those styles. This kind of approach may be useful for the development of critical cultural awareness, allowing students to understand Korean culture in various cultural contexts.

Second, the tourist gaze is compounded by favoritism toward American and European cultures. This favoritism is conspicuous in the field of the arts. As Table 6 shows, music, film, paintings, and literature predominantly originate from the US or European countries. This skewed presentation hampers students' deeper understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity and reinforces stereotypes that they may hold about the West and the rest of the world.

Table 6
Arts Included in Set A

Aspect	Countries/items
music	US (hip hop, *The Wizard of Oz*, Michael Jackson's "You Are Not Alone,"); UK (Eric Clapton's "Tears in Heaven"); Germany (Johann Pachelbel's "Canon")
film	US (*Pinocchio*, *Big Hero*, *Frozen*, *The Avengers*, *Life of Pi*)
paintings	France (Jean Francois Millet's "The Gleaners"); Netherlands (Vincent van Gogh), Italy (Leonardo da Vinci's "Mona Lisa")
literature	US (Ernest Hemingway's *Old Man and the Sea*, Mark Twain's *The Adventure of Tom Sawyer*); UK (J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series); France (Antoine de Saint-Exupery's *The Little Prince*); Germany (stories collected by the Grimm brothers); Norway (Suzanne Barchers's *The Boy and the North Wind*); Aesop's fables

Third, all four sets provide most of the cultural content through special sections designated solely for the purpose of presenting cultural items. Set A includes a section called "Into the World;" Set B, "World Culture;" and Set C, "Culture Link." Set D even features two different sections, "Link to the World" and "Culture." In each textbook, the culture section appears

three or four times, and each time, it presents cultural items centered around a specific theme with brief descriptions and photos. This way of providing cultural content can be interpreted as expedient to obtain authorization. This impression is reinforced by the fact that the culture sections are often filled with sensational items. For example, “World Culture” in Set B showcases odd trees (e.g., Dracaena cinnabari of Yemen), odd museums (e.g., the Museum of Broken Relationships in Croatia), and other unusual things (e.g., an ice hotel in Sweden). While such items may be effective for stimulating curiosity, they are not conducive to promoting a deeper understanding of cultural diversity among students, which is essential for the cultivation of their ICC.

4. Statements for Intercultural Attitudes

As for statements, two potential candidates were found. The first candidate is a report on *Hidden Figures* in D-3. This 2016 American film is based on the real experiences of three African-American female mathematicians who overcame racism and sexism to play a vital role in the early years of the U.S. space program. The report could provide a valuable opportunity for students to [desire to] gain a deeper understanding of racial and gender discrimination while becoming more open-minded and respectful toward people of different races and genders. However, the social and political aspects of the film are underplayed, as the report ends with the remark, “Watching this movie, I could learn how to face challenges in life” (D-3, p. 71). Racism and sexism are treated merely as personal issues, which individuals must overcome to move forward in their lives, rather than as social or political matters. This interpretation is supported by the fact that such terms as racism, sexism, and discrimination are absent from the report, despite the inclusion of *discriminate, prejudice, race, and sex* in the vocabulary list for middle-school English of the 2015 national curriculum.

The other candidate is in Set D, which includes descriptions of the Amish in the US and Cheonghakdong residents in Korea. These two religious groups share similarities in their avoidance of modern conveniences. Therefore, they could have served as a starting point for discussion on various religions, potentially helping students better understand the differences between various religions and fostering respect. However, the descriptions treat these groups as if they are merely oddities, which makes them fun to learn about. In fact, religious topics are otherwise notably absent from the four sets. None of the textbooks address with Buddhism, Islam, or any other non-Christian religion. One possible reason for this absence is that religion was considered a controversial topic, better avoided than addressed. However, this is the very reason why it should be discussed, as part of the effort to promote the cultivation of ICC in students.

Intercultural attitudes are deemed an essential component of ICC, perhaps even more

important than fragmentary knowledge about cultural sights or dishes. EFL textbooks should include more statements that promote open-mindedness and respect for people of different backgrounds and their cultures.

V. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Overall, the four sets of Korean middle-school EFL textbooks demonstrate substantial efforts to diversify cultural content in order to achieve the goal of cultivating ICC as outlined in the 2015 national curriculum. However, these efforts are undermined by several problematic tendencies: (1) bias in the visual presentation of people; (2) an inner-circle-centered approach to interaction patterns; (3) dominance of native-speakerism; (4) a preference for American and European cultures; (5) an excessive focus on traditional Korean culture; (6) the use of specially designated sections for cultural presentation; and (7) a lack of statements supporting intercultural attitudes. Of these findings, (1) and (6) are unique to the current study, while the others corroborate the findings from previous research.

The findings of this study indicate that the cultural content of the Korean middle-school EFL textbooks does not sufficiently support the curricular goal of cultivating ICC in students. There remains room for further improvement. It is obvious that expecting EFL textbooks to represent every aspect of every culture in the world is unrealistic. However, it is equally clear that limited or skewed portrayals of cultures are not appropriate for the cultivation of ICC. This underlines the need to make a strategic choice, one in which textbooks include far more extensive and unbiased descriptions and treatment of diverse cultural contents and different perspectives and contexts. This will help Korean middle-school EFL students to attain deeper knowledge and more inclusive attitudes toward different cultures, to develop critical awareness of cultural differences, and to employ them as successful intercultural communicators.

The findings have implications for major constituents of EFL education: authorization agencies, textbook developers, and teachers. First, the textbook development guidelines and authorization rubric prepared by KICE need to be revised. With regard to ICC, the guidelines include only one recommendation: “Select materials and topics which are useful for understanding diverse cultures around the world” (Korea Institute for Curriculum & Evaluation, 2016, p. 55). Similarly, the authorization rubric includes only one rating category, which merely emphasizes impartiality: “Are descriptions of regions, countries, institutes, groups, religions, races, gender, persons, or products impartial and objective?” (Korea Institute for Curriculum & Evaluation, 2016, p. 61). These guidelines and standards are overly simplistic and not very useful. The textbook development guidelines and the authorization rubric must be revised to be more specific about what should be presented, and

how, to better promote the students' ICC.

Second, textbook developers need to take the ICC goal more seriously, and select and present cultural contents in a way that reflects not only cultural diversity but also the reality in which Korean EFL students live. At least, textbook developers should be concerned with the consequences of a biased presentation of the diversity of people, favoritism toward American and European cultures, preference for traditional Korean culture, and the lack of materials appropriate for the development of intercultural attitudes.

Third, teachers are essential agents in the cultivation of students' ICC. Wilberschied (2015) states that "the increasing emphasis on the need to promote the growth of ICC in students requires educators to reexamine their own focus, philosophy, goals, curriculum, praxis, and methods" (p. 14). The findings of the current study may help Korean EFL teachers reflect upon their perceptions and practices in culture teaching, assess whether a gap exists between their perceptions and practices and the ICC goal as represented in the 2015 national curriculum, and work to minimize that gap.

Here, teacher education programs have a role to play. Kim (2011) found that Korean EFL teachers felt that pre- and in-service training was not only limited but also inappropriate regarding the ICC goal. This finding still seems to hold true today. Teacher education programs should provide teachers with systematic intercultural training. One of the aims of such training should be to transform a teacher into what Kramsch (2004) describes as an "intercultural go-between," whose role includes "mediating between commercial interests of textbook publishers and students' needs" (p. 46). Teacher education programs should guide EFL teachers to be able to examine the cultural contents of English textbooks, identify bias, stereotypes, or absence, and, if present, counterbalance these by providing more appropriate information, materials, and activities.

Finally, this study has potential limitations. First, it examined only four of the thirteen sets of middle-school English textbooks published in Korea. Moreover, the study focused primarily on cultural aspects and less on linguistic ones, particularly interactional skills, which are traditionally studied in sociolinguistics (Byram, 2020). Consequently, it largely concentrated on how many different cultures are presented, which aspects of these cultures are highlighted, and the manner of their presentation. Although this decision was made to keep the study practicable, further research into the other sets and linguistic areas may be necessary to provide a more complete picture of the alignment between the ICC goals expressed in the national curriculum and the cultural content of Korean middle-school English textbooks.

It must also be noted here that this study analyzed textbooks published before the implementation of the revised 2022 national curriculum, which could be considered a limitation of the study. Nevertheless, the new curriculum will be applied sequentially to the development and publication of middle-school English textbooks, starting in 2025 and

concluding in 2027. Therefore, the 2015 national curriculum is currently the most up-to-date, and the findings of this study still offer significant insights into the cultivation of ICC through English textbooks.

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Received: July 4, 2024
Reviewed: August 20, 2024
Revised version received: September 25, 2024