

Presentation of Cultural Information in a Series of English Textbooks

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Abstract

Although several studies have been conducted on the analysis of the cultural information in the English textbooks in Thailand, none of them focused on the presentation of the types of culture and their presentation in the four skills of language learning. With the use of the framework based on Lee's (2009) and Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001), the cultural information in the textbooks was analyzed in terms of Big "C" and Small "c" Culture. The findings revealed that Big "C" Culture were slightly more prominent than Small "c" Culture and both were presented in the receptive skills of listening and reading more frequently than in the productive skills of speaking and writing. This study sheds some light on the types of cultural information addressed in English textbooks to facilitate the learning of culture as a component of intercultural communicative competence and to prepare EFL students for international communication settings.

Keywords: English Textbooks, Cultural Information, Receptive and Productive Skills

1. Introduction

In line with the status of English as an international language, many scholars (Byram, 1997; Crystal, 2003; Jenkins, 2003; Kachru & Smith, 2008; Kirkpatrick, 2010; Kramsch, 1998; McKay, 2003) highlighted that foreign language teaching should include cultural information to prepare ESL or EFL learners for international communication settings. The increasing number of English users from the outer circle countries where English is used as an official language e.g. India, Philippines, Singapore and expanding circle where English

is used as a foreign language e.g. China, Korea, Thailand (Crystal, 2003) implies that Thai students may not only be communicating with native English-speakers, but also with non-native speakers of English. When communication takes place with people from different cultural and social backgrounds, interlocutors may need not only linguistic abilities such as proficiency in grammar, pronunciation, and discourse, but also the knowledge of culture, which is one of the components of intercultural communicative competence proposed by Byram (1997). According to Byram (1997), if the knowledge of culture is promoted in English classroom, learners will be aware of their own and others' culture, share their own culture, as well as appreciate cultural differences. In this connection, the Thai Ministry of Education (2008) sets a policy in which English classrooms in Thailand should raise learners' awareness of their local culture and others', so they may be able to appreciate similarities and differences of language and culture and use them in various settings in the global society.

Language and culture are inseparable and textbooks are believed to be one of the sources of input of both language and culture (Brown, 2001; Cunningsworth, 1995; McKay, 2002). Several researchers had studied cultural information presented in English textbooks in recent years, such as Kaewsakul and Teo (2016) in Thailand, Jing and Laohawiriyanon (2010) in China, Lee (2009) in Korea, Yamada (2010) in Japan, Matic (2015) in Serbia, and McKay (2003) in the USA. Cortazzi and Jin (1999) emphasized the importance of textbooks as they serve as a teacher, map, resource, trainer, authority, and ideology. They are the central part of the curriculum and syllabus design. Richards (2001) added that a lesson without textbooks is ineffective because textbooks provide the content of the lesson and balance of the skills taught. However, in some cases, schools and teachers adopt English textbooks without conducting a systematic analysis of cultural contents and they are bound for the decision of the higher office of education (Cunningsworth, 1995). Having this in mind, the purpose of this study was to analyze the presentation of cultural information, specifically how the types of culture: Big "C" Culture as the visible culture and Small "c" Culture as the invisible culture are distributed in the skills of language learning in a series of *Access* English textbooks. The result of this study may provide useful insights into the teaching of culture in the English classroom in Thailand. It may also serve as additional information to administrators, educators, and publishers on how to conduct a cultural content analysis and what cultural information may be included in designing course materials or textbooks that may help raise students' awareness of cultural diversity and enable them to communicate appropriately in a wider range of communicative settings.

2. Literature Review

2.1 *EIL and Knowledge of Culture*

English is nowadays recognized as an international language because it is the most common language used as a second or third language for interaction across cultural borders, serving as a lingua franca for a mutual relationship and communicative purposes (Crystal, 2003; McKay, 2003; Yamada, 2010). As second or third language speakers of English especially from the outer and expanding circles continue to migrate abroad, and there is an uprising demand for the use of English in every sector in our globalized society. In fact, as of 2003, non-native speakers of English outnumbered native speakers of English by a ratio of three to one (Crystal, 2008). Perhaps the imbalance would continue to increase as hundreds of millions learn more English. Therefore, it is suggested that the educational goal

of learning English is to enable students to communicate their ideas and culture beyond the English native speakers (Kachru and Smith 2008; McKay 2003; Smith, 1976).

As mentioned earlier, being eloquent in grammar and discourse may not be enough when interaction takes place across cultures. Students should be more prepared to connect to the global community by discovering appropriate ways to relate to people from different cultural backgrounds (Sinicrope, Norris & Watanabe, 2012). Therefore, there is a need for second language learners to be not only communicatively competent but also cross-culturally competent (Byram 1997). When an English language learner gains knowledge of his/her and others' culture, he/she will be able to share his/her culture, appreciate cultural differences, and possibly turn intercultural encounters into intercultural relationship (Byram, 1997).

2.2 Types of Culture in English Textbooks: Big "C" and Small "c" Culture

Since language and culture are closely related and textbooks serve as the provider of valuable input of both language and culture for raising students' awareness of cultural expression and diversity (Brown 2001, Byram 1997; Cunningsworth, 1995; McKay 2003; Richards, 2001), it is necessary to understand how English textbooks present cultural information. Lee (2009) and Peterson (2004) divided culture into two types: Big "C" and Small "c". For Peterson (2004) the Big "C" and Small "c" Culture are like a top and a bottom of an iceberg. The top is the visible culture, and the bottom is the invisible culture. The Big "C" Culture is a type of culture that refers to a set of facts easily observed and remembered. They are often described as objective or highbrow culture such as history, architecture, and geography (Peterson, 2004). When Big "C" Culture is acquired it usually elicits pride and loyalty by English language learners because it adds meaning and significance reassuring the national identity of the native speakers of English (Kramersch, 2013). For instance, someone who has gained knowledge about the history of America liberating Europe from Nazism may look up to America as a super power nation and as a hero.

On the other hand, the Small "c" Culture is considered the subjective culture because it is not easily and immediately observed or understood such as people's thinking, belief and custom (Peterson, 2004). Kramersch (2013) added that Small "c" Culture is considered the most important to study because it represents the norms of appropriateness and politeness of the language. For example, someone who has learned how to talk to the elderly or authorities in Thailand may sound polite and have good manner. Once Small "c" Culture is learned, it can help interlocutors preclude misunderstanding amidst interaction between individuals from different cultural backgrounds (Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993). As mentioned by Kramersch (2013), research in the cultural component of the language has been deeply interested in the sociolinguistic appropriateness of the language used in everyday life, and students exposed to Small "c" Culture can behave appropriately in any cross-cultural settings.

In recent years, a number of studies have been conducted on cultural presentation in English textbooks used by different levels of learners both locally and abroad. For instance, the studies conducted by Jing and Laohawiriyanon (2010), Kaewsakul and Teo (2016), and Lee (2009) reported that Big "C" Culture (e.g. literature, geography, and history) is mostly presented in the textbooks. On the other hand, Matic (2015) reported that the type of culture dominated in EFL materials was the Small "c" Culture (e.g. living condition, everyday living, and interpersonal relationship). In addition, Böcü and Razi (2016) and Hamiloğlu and Mehdi (2010) reported a different result that most of the cultural information in English

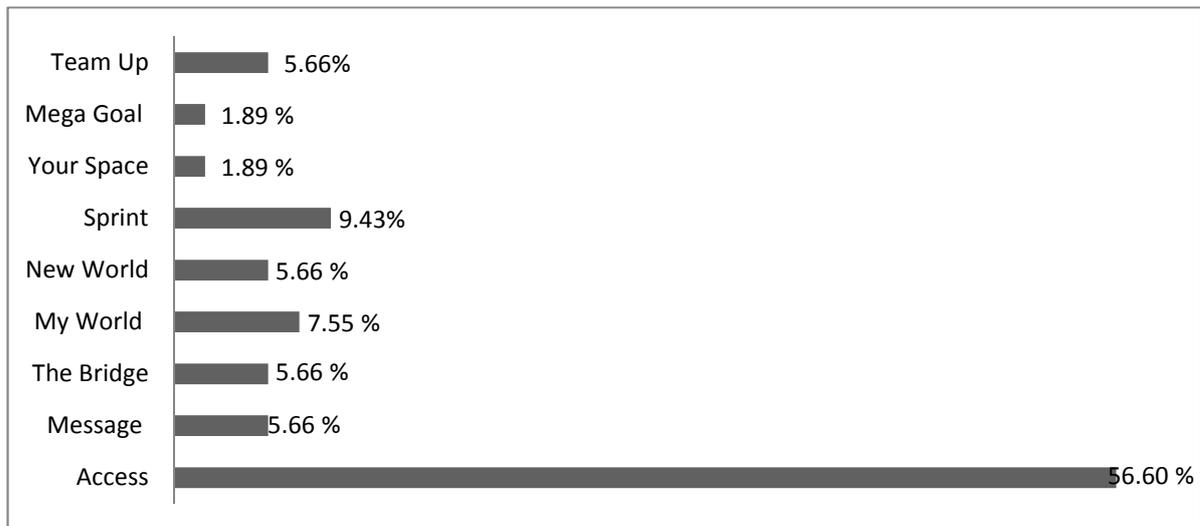
textbooks was presented in the receptive skills of listening and reading. However, in Thailand, several studies have been done on the cultural presentation in English textbooks, but none focused on the lower secondary level (Matayom 1-3) age 13-15 years, and on the presentation of cultural information in the skills of English language learning, receptive skill (listening and reading) and productive skill (speaking and writing). This study, thus, attempts to fill this research gap.

3. Methodology

3.1 Textbooks

The textbooks chosen for this study is *Access* English textbooks. These textbooks were chosen because it is a series of three textbooks published by a famous publisher in Thailand (Aksakorn Chareon Tat. Co., Ltd.), which are endorsed by the Office of the Basic Education Commission and designed based on Thai Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (2008), Importantly, they are widely used by the majority of secondary schools in Region 16 (Satun and Songkhla provinces) for teaching English to lower secondary students (Matayomsuksa 1-3). Table 1 below delineates the use of textbooks.

Table 1: Use of Textbooks by Lower Secondary Schools in Region 16 (Satun and Songkhla provinces)



As shown in Table 1, although nine different textbooks: *Access*, *Message*, *The Bridge*, *My World*, *New World*, *Sprint*, *Your Space*, *Mega Goal*, and *Team Up* are used by the lower secondary schools in Region 16, the survey in 2017 revealed that out of 53 schools in Region 16, 56.60% or more than half of schools use *Access* for teaching English to lower secondary students. The *Access* textbooks are designed by Virginia Evans and Jenny Dooley based on task-based learning approach, which emphasizes teaching English through tasks. The textbooks for lower secondary students consist of a series of three levels, Matayomsuksa 1-3. Each level consists of one student’s book, one workbook, and one teacher’s book. The whole series consists of nine textbooks.

However, only three student's books and three workbooks making a total of six textbooks were finally chosen for this study because they were regularly used in the classroom and for students' independent studies. With regards to the structure of the textbooks, each textbook consists of ten modules or units constituting a total of thirty modules for a series of three textbooks. Every module contains seven sections, namely module topic, grammar, vocabulary, reading and listening, speaking and functions, writing, and culture/curricula.

3.2 Analysis of Cultural Information

In this study, the unit of analysis focused on tasks related to Brown's (2001) receptive skills (listening and reading) and productive skills (writing and speaking), which contain cultural information. Tasks related to vocabularies, pronunciation, and grammar were excluded from the analysis. To analyze the cultural information presented in every unit from the series of *Access English* textbooks, the researcher adapted Lee's (2009) framework for cultural content which classifies culture into two types: Big "C" and Small "c". To cover all the principal themes in this study, the twenty-two themes under Big "C" Culture of Lee's (2009) framework were reduced to eight, namely geography and races, arts and architecture, clothes and fashion, education, literature, history, music, and politics. To account for themes belonging to Small "c" Culture, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001) containing seven cultural themes was used because it provides detailed and concise knowledge of sociolinguistic appropriateness. Moreover, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages is also adopted by the Thai education for teaching English along with culture since it provides a framework for wider communication settings. The seven themes of Small "c" Culture are everyday living; living condition; interpersonal relations; values, beliefs, and attitude; body language; social convention; and ritual behavior. In addition, a category called culture-free was added to the framework to account for every occurrence of a unit of analysis that contains no information pertaining to culture. (See appendix for frameworks for the analysis of Big "C" and Small "c" Culture used in the study and samples of the analysis of cultural presentation).

Table 2 summarizes the total number of units of analysis containing cultural information and culture-free units in *Access English* textbooks.

Table 2: Units of Analysis

Units of Analysis	Units with Cultural Information	Culture-free Units
Receptive Skills (Listening and Reading)	397	169
Productive Skills (Speaking and Writing)	304	109
Total	701	278

The above table shows that the series of *Access* English textbooks contains 979 units in total. However, only 701 units were further analyzed for its cultural presentation because the remaining 278 units were categorized as culture-free. The 701 units were analyzed for the type of cultural information they contain by first identifying the unit of the analysis, then finding the cultural content of the unit, and finally using the frameworks to analyze the cultural information in the unit. Since the weakest form of analysis is when it is done alone (Weber, 1990), double-checking, discussion and cross-examination between researchers were made to avoid subjectivity of the interpretation to attain conjoined decision and veracious judgment.

4. Findings and Discussion

The 701 units with cultural information in a series of *Access* English textbooks were analyzed for types of culture: Big “C” and Small “c” and their distribution in receptive skills (listening and reading) and productive skills (speaking and writing).

4.1 Big “C” and Small “c” Culture

Table 3 shows the distribution of Big “C” and Small “c” Culture in the series of *Access* English textbooks.

Table 3: Distribution of Big “C” and Small “c” Culture

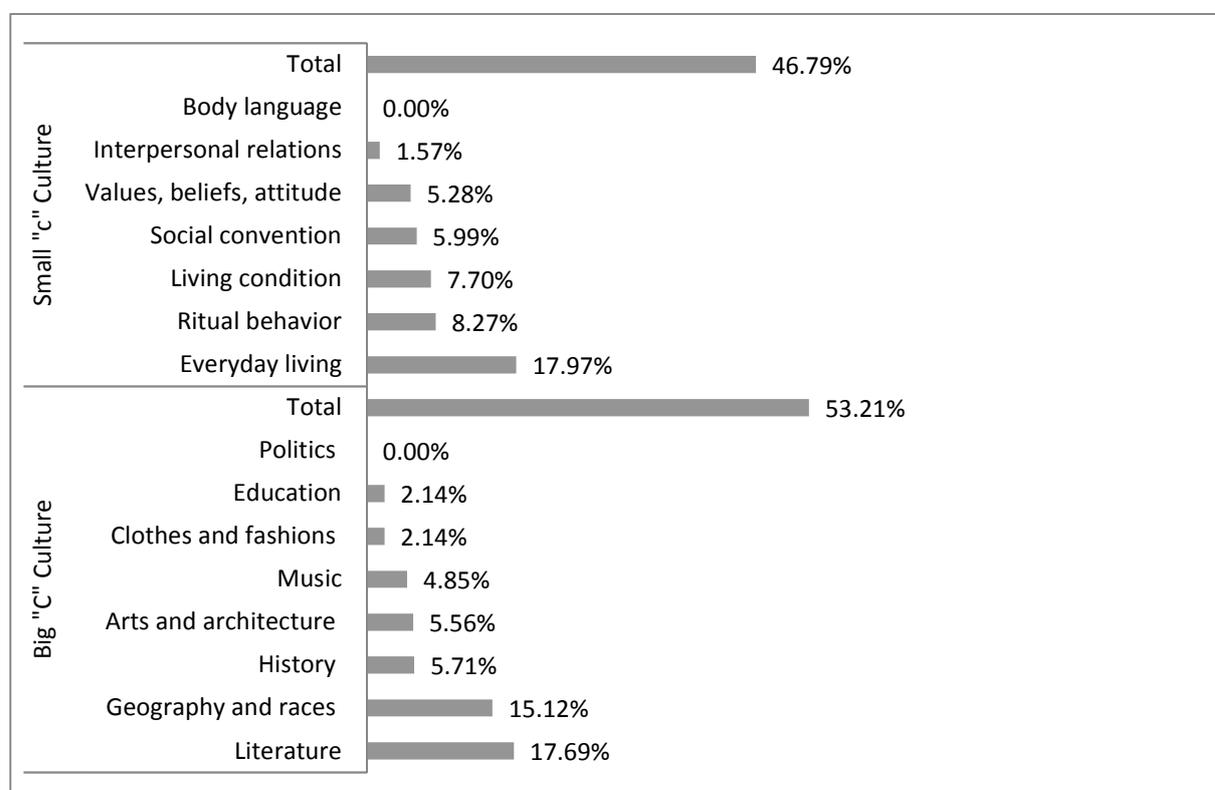


Table 3 reveals that more than half (53.21%) of the total themes were devoted to Big “C” Culture, whereas Small “c” accounts for a lower frequency (46.79%). When all the

fifteen themes of Big “C” and Small “c” Culture were ranked in order, it shows that the top five most frequent were two themes of Big “C” Culture, namely “literature” (17.69%) and “geography and races” (15.12%). Apparently, three themes were under Small “C” Culture, namely “everyday living” (17.97%), “ritual behavior” (8.27%), and “living condition” (7.70%). Another interesting finding is that three themes of Big “C” culture, namely “history” (5.71%), “arts and architecture” (5.56%) and “music” (4.85%) and the two themes of Small “c” Culture, namely “social convention” (5.99%) and “values, beliefs, attitude” (5.28%) almost acquired similar proportion. In addition, the themes “education” (2.14%) and “clothes and fashion” (2.14%) of Big “C” Culture were equally presented while the theme “interpersonal relations” (1.57%) of Small “c” Culture was presented almost at the lowest frequency. However, there was an absence of the theme “politics” (0.00%) under Big “C” Culture and the theme “body language” (0.00%) under Small “c” Culture.

It is obvious that the result of the analysis revealed that Big “C” Culture is more frequently presented than Small “c” Culture in a series of *Access* English textbooks. This is because the Big “C” Culture consists of the large classical themes of culture or the grand themes and are easily visible to those from another culture. The outcome of the analysis is in agreement with the studies conducted by Jing and Laohawiriyanon (2010) in China, Kaewsakul, and Teo (2016) in Thailand, and Lee (2009) in Korea. However, the slight difference in frequency between Big “C” and Small “c” culture in this study indicates that students may not only be heavily exposed to the visible cultural facts or culture on the top of an iceberg (e.g. history, literature, music) but also the cultural themes hidden at the bottom of an iceberg (e.g. everyday living, ritual behaviour, living condition). This implies that knowledge about social groups and cultures in own country and in other countries, which is one of the components of Byram’s (1997) intercultural communicative competence can be facilitated in the classroom by exposing students to a wide range of cultural information in the English textbooks. Another striking result shows that the theme “politics” of Big “C” Culture and the theme “body language” of Small “c” Culture were not presented in the textbooks. Not presenting the theme “politics” might be in connection to the complexity of this topic or perhaps students aged thirteen to fifteen years may find this topic irrelevant to their life. However, completely dropping out the theme “body language” in the textbooks would probably deprive students of opportunities to learn about the appropriate gestures, facial expression, and posture useful for international communication settings.

4.2 Big “C” and Small “c” Culture in Receptive Skills and Productive Skills

Table 4 shows the distribution of Big “C” and Small “c” Culture in the receptive skills and productive skills in the series of *Access* English textbooks.

Table 4: Distribution of Big “C” and Small “c” Culture in Receptive Skills and Productive skills

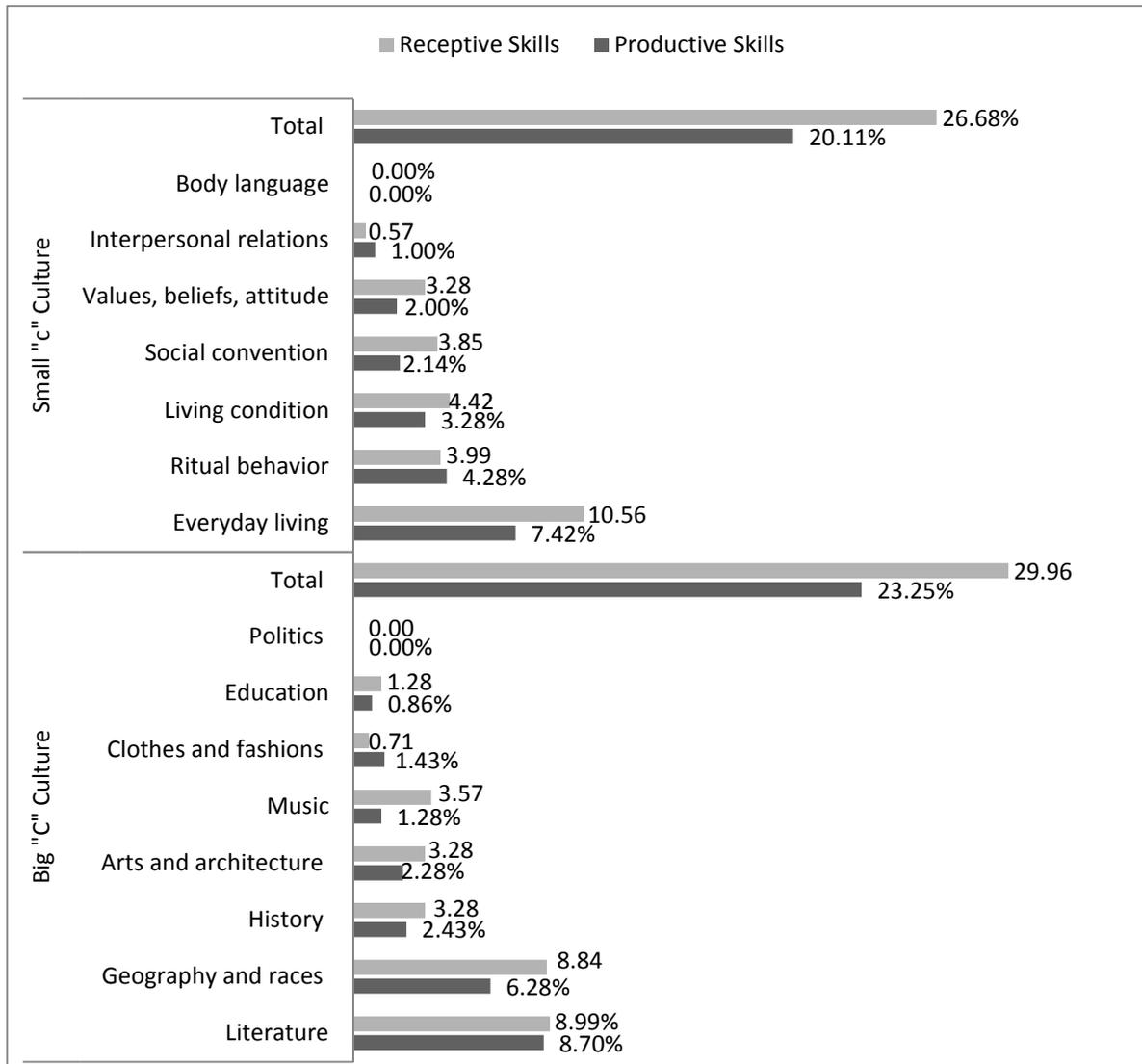


Table 4 reveals that among all the units with cultural information in the series of *Access English* textbooks, 29.96% of units with themes of Big “C” Culture and 26.68% of those with themes of Small “c” Culture were presented in receptive skills. Only one theme of Big “C” Culture “clothes and fashions” (1.43%) and two themes of Small “c” Culture “interpersonal relations” (1.00%) and “ritual behavior“ (4.28%) were presented more frequently in productive skills. The analysis shows that 23.25% of the units containing themes of Big “C” Culture and 20.11% of those containing themes of Small “c” Culture were presented in productive skills. In total themes of both Big “C” and Small “c” Culture were more frequently presented in receptive skills (56.64%) than in productive skills (43.36%). Interestingly, the first three cultural themes on the top were presented in the receptive skills, namely “everyday living” (10.56%) of Small “C” Culture, “literature” (8.99%) and “geography and races” (8.84%) of Big “C” Culture.

The result revealed that most presentation of Big “C” and Small “c” Culture were devoted to the receptive skills (listening and reading) more than to the productive skills (speaking and writing). It might be because when English becomes global, students should

concentrate on developing their comprehension skills that are their listening and reading of receptive skills more than their writing and speaking of productive skills (Crystal, 2010). Moreover, this finding may support the suggestion of some scholars and research studies that the main provider of linguistic and cultural input in learning the second language is the receptive skills (Brown, 2001; Chastain, 1988; Crystal, 2010; Hamiloğlu & Mehdi, 2010; Krashen, 1981). The difference in frequency of cultural themes between the receptive skills and productive skills implies that students may not remain culturally passive, but they may be encouraged to become active learners through exposure to various tasks in the textbooks that may enrich the knowledge of their own culture and allow them to share it, as well as appreciate cultural difference. In addition, it is noticeable that the top three cultural themes namely “everyday living” of Small “c” Culture, and “literature”, and “geography and races” of Big “C” Culture were presented in the receptive skills. This can be a good indication that students are provided with cultural inputs or knowledge of both the visible and invisible cultures which can prepare them for connecting with people and interacting successfully when communication takes places across cultures.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

This study analyzed cultural information in a series of *Access English* textbooks based on the framework of Lee (2009) for Big “C” Culture and Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001) for Small “c” Culture. A little difference in frequency between Big “C” and Small “c” Culture in the textbooks is a good indication that students may not only be gaining knowledge of the objective cultures or cultures that are easily seen (e.g. geography, literature, music), but also the subjective aspects or cultures that are hidden (e.g. everyday living, interpersonal relations, social convention). In addition, as supported by some scholars (Böcü & Razi, 2016; Chastain, 1988; Crystal, 2010), the proportion of Big “C” and Small “c” Culture that were devoted most in the receptive skills denotes an implication that students may develop their comprehension skills or build their cultural schemata which facilitate the gaining of knowledge of various types of cultures. Moreover, the top three themes that were presented in the receptive skills namely “everyday living”, “literature”, and “geography and races” implies that students may internalize cultural information that are most common when conversing with someone from different culture for establishing common ground, mutual understanding, and building relationships. For recommendation, it might be worth investigating the reaction of teachers concerning the disappearance of themes “politics” of Big “C” Culture and “body language” of “Small “c” Culture in the textbooks and how they react to the presentation of cultural information in the skills of language learning. For example, further research may investigate whether cultural presentation in receptive skills facilitates the learning of knowledge of different types of cultures more than that in productive skills or vice versa.

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APPENDIX

Table 1: Framework for Analysis of Big “C” Culture Adapted from Lee (2009)

No	Themes	Definition (Based on Oxford Advanced Learners’ Dictionary)	Examples
1	Geography	One of the main groups that humans can be divided into according to their physical differences. Nature and relative arrangement of places and physical features	Locations, regional division, landscapes, rivers, mountains, human movements
2	Arts and Architecture	The use of the imagination to express ideas or feelings The design or style of a building or buildings	Painting, sculpture, furniture Modern architecture, Thai architecture, Japanese Architecture
3	Clothes and Fashion	The things that you wear	American suit, Chut Thai phra ratcha niyom, barong
4	Education	A process of teaching, training, and learning, especially in schools or colleges to improve knowledge and develop skills.	Primary/ elementary education, secondary education, further/higher, postsecondary education, curriculum
5	Literature	Pieces of writing that are valued as works of art.	Novels and poems, e.g. French literature, Thai literature, Malaysian Literature
6	History	The study of the past as it is described in written documents.	Bang Rajan, D-Day, Roman Gladiator
7	Music	Sounds that are arranged in a way that is pleasant or exciting to listen to. People sing music or play it with instruments.	Classical music, modern music, musical instruments
8	Politics	The activities involved in getting and using power in public life, and being able to influence decisions that affect a country or society.	Political policies and issues, and government acts

Table 2: Framework for Analysis of Small “c” Culture Adapted from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001)

No	Themes	Definition (Based on Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary)	Examples
1	Everyday Living	The phrases daily life of living, daily life, and routine life refer to how people typically act, think, and feel on a daily basis. Everyday life may be described as mundane, routine, natural or habitual.	Eating, leisure activities, daily routines,
2	Living Condition	Living conditions refer to the circumstances of a person's life—shelter, food, clothing, safety, access to clean water, and such	Housing standard, living conditions, welfare arrangement
3	Interpersonal Relation	An interpersonal relationship is a strong, deep, or close association or acquaintance between two or more people that may range in duration from brief to enduring. This relationship may be based on inference, love, solidarity, regular business interactions, or some other types of social commitment.	The class structure of society, the relation between sexes, relations between generations, relations at work
4	Values, Beliefs, Attitude,	The regard that something is held to deserve an acceptance that a statement is true or that something exists. A settled way of thinking or feeling about someone or something	In relations to social class, occupational groups (academic, management, public service, skilled and manual workforces), minorities (ethnic, religious), religion, superstitious beliefs, taboos
5	Body Language	The process of communicating nonverbally through conscious or unconscious gestures and movements	Pointing, gesture, facial expression, posture, eye contact, body contact, proxemics
6	Social Convention	A convention is a set of agreed, stipulated, or accepted standards, norms, social norms, or criteria, often taking the form of a custom.	Concerning giving and receiving hospitality, punctuality, dress, refreshments
7	Ritual Behavior	A sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects, performed in a sequestered place, and carried out in accordance with a set sequence	Religious observances, birth, marriage, death, ceremonies, and festivals

Sample 1: Analysing Big “C” Culture (Source: *Access 1*, 2012, p. 103)

1 How much do you know about Scotland? Play the board game in groups and check.

Project
2 Work in groups. Make a board game about your country. Exchange your game with another group and play!

This unit of analysis concerns the productive skill of speaking. Students play a board game about places in Scotland. The theme is geography, which belongs to Big “C” Culture. One count is given to the productive skill of speaking. Another is given to the theme geography of Big “C” Culture.

This unit concerns the productive skill of speaking. In groups, students play a board game about places of their country. The theme is geography of Big “C” Culture. One count is given to the productive skill of speaking. Another is given to the theme geography of Big “C” culture.

Sample 2: Analysing Small “c” Culture (Source: *Access 2*, 2012, p. 27)

Culture 2d corner
US Food Festivals
Watermelon Thump

In Luling, Texas, USA, every June people celebrate the Watermelon Thump. More than 30,000 people come every year to see the **contest** for the largest watermelon. Each year the **locals** send the **record** watermelon to famous Americans. There is also a watermelon **carving** contest. The only **rule** is that whatever you **carve** needs to fit on the head as a hat. People can also see the **seed spitting** contest and **taste** delicious watermelon products. Every year people **crown** a watermelon **queen** to **ride** in the parade.

1 Look at the title of the text.
 What do you know about this festival?
 What else would you like to know about it?
 Write three questions. Listen and read.
 Can you answer your questions?

2 Explain the words in bold. Use the words in the list to make sentences about the festival.

- record watermelon • carving contest
- rule • fit • seed spitting contest • taste
- watermelon products • crown • parade

3 Question words

4 In pairs ask and answer questions about the festival using the words below.

- when • where • what • how often
- who • how many

A: Where's Luling?
 B: In Texas, USA.

4 Plurals (revision)

4 What are the fruits below in your language? Which of them grow in your country?

- melon • apple • orange • watermelon
- strawberry • banana • pineapple • pear
- avocado • grape • cherry • peach

What are these words in the plural?
 Check in your dictionaries.

► melon – melons

Project

5 Are there any food festivals in your country? In groups, collect information under the headings. Tell the class.

- Name • Place • Date • Activities

Workbook 2d 27

This unit of analysis concerns the receptive skill of listening. Students listen to the audio about the watermelon festival. The theme is ritual behaviour of Small “c” Culture. One count is given to the receptive skill of listening. Another is given to the theme ritual behaviour of Small “c” Culture.

This unit of analysis concerns the productive skill of writing. Students write sentences about the festival. The theme is ritual behaviour of Small “c” Culture. One count is given to productive skill of writing. Another is given to the theme ritual behaviour of Small “c” Culture.

This unit of analysis concerns the productive skill of speaking. Students tell the class the festival of their country. The theme is ritual behaviour of Small “c” Culture. One count is given to the productive skill of speaking. Another is given to the theme ritual behaviour of Small “c” Culture.

This unit of analysis concerns the productive skill of speaking. Students answer questions about festival. The theme is ritual behaviour of Small “c” Culture. For frequency, one count is given to the receptive skill of speaking and another is given to the theme ritual behaviour of Small “c” Culture.