

A Study on the Cultural Content Presentation in the New Junior High School English Textbooks

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Abstract: As a crucial component of English curriculum implementation, textbooks contain a variety of cultural content. This study analyzes the cultural presentation in the People's Education Press (PEP) edition and the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press (FLTRP) edition using the Framework for Analyzing Presentation of cultures in English Textbooks that was developed by Zhang Hong. The results reveal significant differences between the two editions in terms of cultural types and categories of countries. The PEP edition focuses more on the presentation of “cultural products” and “cultural practices,” emphasizing the integration of local culture with everyday behaviors. In contrast, the FLTRP edition places greater emphasis on “cultural figures” and “cultural perspectives,” reflecting a stronger awareness of multiculturalism and intercultural communication. The study suggests that future textbook development should further diversify cultural types, balance regional representation, and enhance the inclusion of international cultural content to better support junior high school students in cultivating cultural awareness and intercultural communicative competence.

Keywords: the Framework for Analyzing Presentation of cultures in English Textbooks; contents of cultural presentation; forms of cultural presentation.

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1. Introduction

Textbooks serve as a crucial foundation for the implementation of English curriculum instruction and are embedded with rich cultural content, reflecting specific cultural value orientations. Culture and language are closely interconnected: the dissemination of culture relies on language as a medium, and the process of language learning must also integrate cultural elements—these two aspects complement each other. The Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards clearly state that: “Cultural awareness refers to the understanding of both Chinese and foreign cultures and the appreciation of outstanding cultural

achievements. It is manifested in students' intercultural cognition, attitudes, and behavioral choices in the new era.” The cultivation of cultural awareness is carried out through the cultural content presented in textbooks, making such presentation crucial for fostering students' cultural consciousness. English textbooks are not only tools for learning the language but also serve as “windows to the world”. Therefore, exploring the cultural content in textbooks holds significant importance for teachers in nurturing students' cultural awareness^[1].

2. Literature Review

In recent years, both domestic and international scholars have conducted in-depth

studies on the contents and forms of cultural presentation in textbooks. Comparative studies on cultural content in textbooks can be broadly categorized into two types.

The first type focuses on comparisons between the presentation of Chinese culture in Chinese and foreign textbooks. For instance, through corpus analysis, found that senior high school English textbooks in China tend to emphasize the independent presentation of Chinese culture, whereas international corpora favor co-presented cultural elements, offering a cross-cultural perspective for textbook design. In a comparative study of Chinese and German English textbooks, discovered significant differences between the two countries in terms of the regional origin and forms of cultural content^[2].

The second type involves comparisons among different versions of foreign language textbooks, mainly targeting senior and junior high school levels. Among these, the comparison between the People's Education Press (PEP) and the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press (FLTRP) editions at the senior high school level is most common. For example, compared the PEP and FLTRP senior high school English textbooks and found that both primarily feature home and target cultures. However, the two editions differ in orientation: the PEP edition emphasizes home culture, while the FLTRP edition prioritizes target culture.

Nevertheless, existing studies mainly focus on higher education and senior high school textbooks, with relatively limited research on junior high school English textbooks. Moreover, since the new textbooks were officially introduced in 2024, research on their cultural

content is still sparse. Therefore, this study focuses on the newly released Grade 7 textbooks from PEP and FLTRP, analyzing the characteristics of their cultural content and presentation forms. Based on these findings, the paper will be beneficial to teacher's understanding about cultural contents, thereby better fostering students' cultural awareness and intercultural communicative competence^[3].

3. Research Design

3.1 Research Questions

This study analyzes the cultural contents and forms of presentation in the 2024 editions of junior high school English textbooks published by the People's Education Press (PEP), the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press (FLTRP), based on the Framework for Analyzing Cultural Presentation in English Textbooks. It aims to address the following two research questions:

Question 1: What are the similarities and differences in the cultural content presented in the PEP and FLTRP junior high school English textbooks?

Question 2: What are the similarities and differences in the forms of cultural presentation in the PEP and FLTRP junior high school English textbooks?

3.2 Framework for Analyzing Cultural Presentation

This study adopts the framework developed by Zhang Hong and other scholars to conduct a textual analysis of the new textbooks. The framework classifies cultural contents by region and type. In terms of region, culture is categorized into: Home culture, Target language culture, Other countries' culture and

International culture. In terms of type, culture is divided into: Cultural products, Cultural practices, Cultural perspectives, Cultural communities, Cultural figures. Additionally, the framework distinguishes between two overall forms of cultural presentation: explicit and implicit, which appear respectively in input materials and practice activities. Each form is assigned a specific weight (ranging from 1 to 10 points), and the intensity of presentation is calculated as follows: $\text{Intensity} = \text{Weight} \times \text{Frequency}$ ^[4].

3.3 Steps for Analyzing Cultural Presentation

First, cultural contents from the Grade 7 textbooks of FLTRP and PEP was coded based on dimensions such as cultural region, cultural type, and form of presentation. The coded information includes “country/region,

presentation type, presentation form, textbook version, page number, and location.” The intensity of each cultural item was calculated using the formula: $\text{Intensity} = \text{Weight} \times \text{Frequency}$, and the distribution and frequency were statistically analyzed. The quantitative data were primarily processed using Excel. To ensure the accuracy of the research results, the coding and statistical procedures were independently conducted by two researchers. The results were then cross-checked. In cases of disagreement, discussions were held to reach a consensus, ensuring the reliability of the coding results^[5].

Second, based on the collected data, the study analyzes differences in the cultural presentation between the PEP and FLTRP editions, including differences in regional and type distributions as well as presentation forms.

Table 1 Example of Textbook Coding

content	region	categories of countries	types	presentation	forms	weight	frequency	intensity
BeiJing Opera	China	Home Culture	Product	p35	reading	2	1	2

4. Characteristics of Cultural Content Distribution in English Textbooks

4.1 Analysis of Cultural types

A comparative analysis of the cultural content presented in the Grade 7 (Volumes 1 and 2) English textbooks of the new PEP and FLTRP editions reveals significant differences in both the types of cultural content and their regional distribution.

In terms of cultural types, the PEP edition

primarily focuses on “cultural products” (45.45%) and “cultural practices” (40.00%), which together constitute the overwhelming majority. In contrast, “cultural figures” (3.64%) and “cultural perspectives” (10.91%) are presented relatively infrequently. This indicates that the PEP textbooks emphasize developing students’ understanding of tangible cultural artifacts and behavioral practices.

By comparison, the FLTRP edition demonstrates a more balanced distribution of

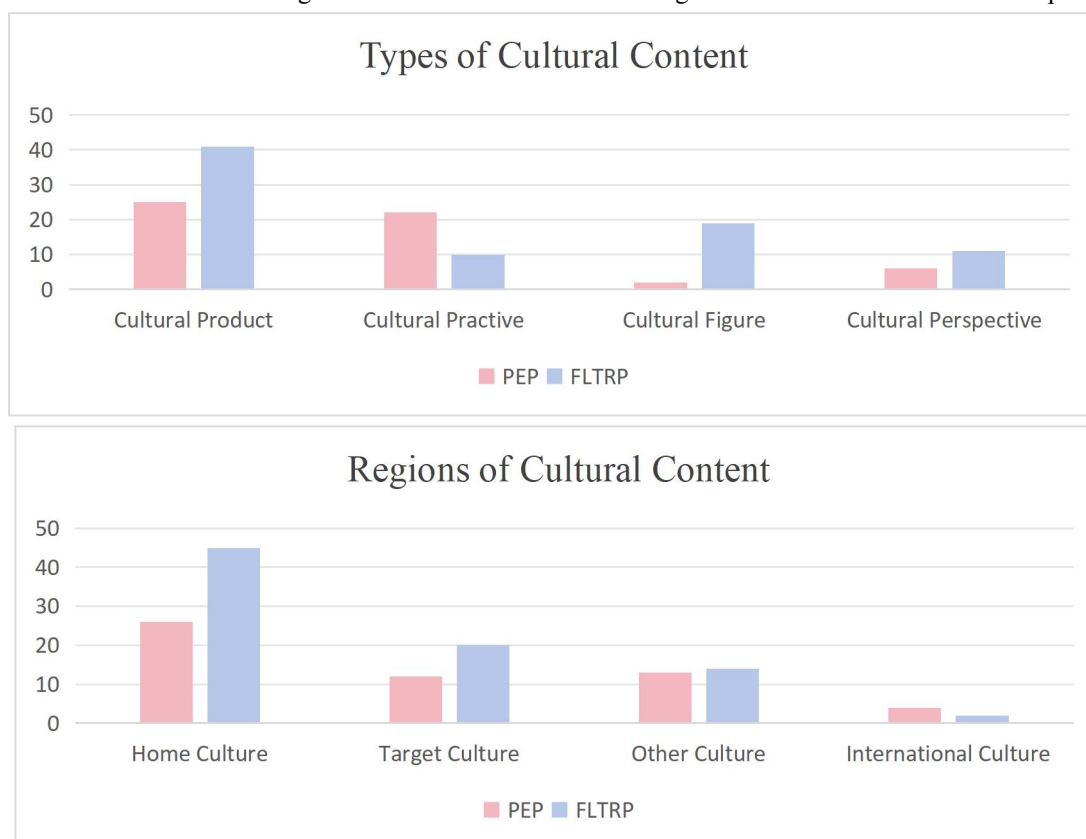
cultural types. Although “cultural products” still hold the largest proportion at 50.62%, the representation of “cultural figures” (23.46%) and “cultural perspectives” (13.58%) is significantly higher than in the PEP edition. This suggests that the FLTRP textbooks place greater emphasis on introducing multicultural viewpoints and representative individuals, thereby deepening students’ cultural understanding.

Cultural products, such as zongzi, lion’s head meatballs, hotpot dishes, and traditional instruments like the erhu and ruan—occupy the highest proportion in both textbook editions. This is because cultural products are easier to present through images, text, and multimodal means, which facilitates student comprehension. Moreover, cultural products are closely connected to students’ everyday lives, thereby stimulating their interest in learning. They also provide a solid foundation for cross-cultural comparison, enabling students to enhance their intercultural understanding and cultural

sensitivity by comparing similar elements across Chinese and foreign cultures.

The presentation of cultural products not only contributes to the organic integration of language and culture learning but also promotes students’ identification with their national culture and fosters cultural confidence to a certain extent. Therefore, using cultural products as an entry point for cultural input is both pedagogically reasonable and of high educational value in textbook development.

In contrast to the FLTRP edition, which gives greater weight to cultural figures, the PEP edition includes relatively few. The FLTRP textbooks reference renowned Chinese poets and writers such as Du Fu, Xunzi, and Lao She, which helps students tell the stories of famous Chinese figures in English and promotes the dissemination of Chinese culture. As a result, it is recommended that future revisions of the PEP textbooks incorporate more content related to cultural figures to enrich students’ cultural input.



4.2 Analysis of Cultural Region Presentation

From the perspective of regional distribution, the PEP textbook presents the highest proportion of home culture (47.27%), followed by other culture (23.64%) and target language cultures (21.82%), with international culture being relatively underrepresented at only 7.27%. This distribution pattern reflects the PEP edition's emphasis on local culture in textbook design, highlighting students' cultural identity and confidence.

In contrast, the FLTRP textbook shows an even greater emphasis on home culture (56.41%), but also allocates notable proportions to target language culture (25.64%) and other culture (16.67%), reflecting a stronger emphasis on cultural diversity and intercultural awareness. However, the FLTRP edition's presentation of international culture is significantly limited, accounting for only 1.28%, which may restrict students' development of a global cultural perspective to some extent.

Overall, each textbook exhibits unique features in cultural presentation. The PEP edition focuses on the integration of cultural behaviors with local culture, emphasizing the everyday nature and practicality of cultural practices.

The FLTRP edition demonstrates a stronger sense of cultural transmission and is more figure-oriented, aiming to stimulate students' intercultural understanding and reflection through rich cultural representations.

Future textbook development should, while maintaining a strong foundation in home culture, further enhance the inclusion of international culture to comprehensively improve students' intercultural communication skills.

5. Conclusion

This study conducted a comparative analysis of the cultural contents presented in the 2024 editions of Grade 7 English textbooks published by the People's Education Press and the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press. Findings show that although the overall distribution characteristics of cultural contents are broadly similar between the two sets of textbooks, they each have distinct features and emphases in terms of cultural types and regional distribution.

In terms of cultural types, the PEP edition leans more towards presenting cultural products and cultural practices, emphasizing students' understanding of tangible cultural entities and behavioral activities. The FLTRP edition, while also prioritizing cultural products, places greater emphasis on cultural figures and cultural perspectives, reflecting a stronger awareness of cultural diversity and a more figure-oriented approach.

Both editions give considerable attention to cultural products, not only because they are intuitive, relatable, and easy to understand, but also due to their effectiveness in integrating language and cultural learning, sparking student interest, and fostering cultural identity.

Regarding regional distribution, although both editions center on home culture, the FLTRP textbook presents a more diversified array of target language and other cultures, reflecting an orientation toward cultivating intercultural awareness. In contrast, the PEP textbook places slightly more emphasis on local culture, reinforcing cultural identity and national confidence. Nevertheless, both editions fall short in presenting international culture, which may

hinder the expansion of students' global cultural perspective.

Future textbook development should maintain the central role of native culture while enriching the variety of cultural types—particularly by strengthening the input of international culture and cultural figures. This approach would support the balanced development of cultural knowledge, cultural identity, and intercultural communicative

competence, thereby better serving the core literacy goals of the English subject.

It should be acknowledged that this study relies on textual analysis and quantitative statistics, which are subject to some degree of subjectivity. Future research could expand on this foundation by incorporating interviews, classroom observations, and other methods to enhance the credibility of the conclusions.

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