Cultural Representations in Primary English Language Textbooks in China

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Abstract

Globalization, fuelled by the wide spread of English, has raised serious questions about the sociopolitical, economic, and cultural of English impacts on the linguistic and cultural integrity of non-English speaking countries. For countries like China where English is paradoxically legitimized as a linguistic means to strengthen national economic and political power, how to balance globalization and nationalism is of great concern.

Situating the discussion of global-local tensions around the rapid expansion of English in the context of China, this study adopts a critical-sociocultural framework to explore the cultural representations in a set of elementary English language textbooks, *Primary English*. Both content analysis and text analysis are employed to examine what national cultures are represented and how they are presented in those textbooks. With critical discourse analysis as research framework, it aims to show how the cultural representations are articulated in relation to sociocultural ideologies and how the written texts build up particular relationships with the students that may shape their cultural identity.

The quantitative and qualitative results show that although there are 15 national cultures included in those textbooks, they are neither equally nor neutrally represented. It is Chinese culture that has been given greatest emphasis: it is portrayed in a more ample and desirable way than any other national cultures. The promotion of Chinese culture in the textbooks has been used to cultivate in students’ a strong sense of national
pride and to foster Chinese national identity. The construction of nationalism embedded in those textbooks clearly reflects the political and ideological concerns in the curriculum discourse, in which the English language has been appreciated as a new language of nationalism and English language teaching has been utilized to resist the hegemonic effects of English.

The findings of this study have important theoretical, political and pedagogic implications. They not only shed light on our understanding of the relationship between English language textbooks, ideology, and identity formation, but also provide a reference for future policy making, curriculum design, and textbook evolution in China and in other contexts at the backdrop of globalization.
Chapter I Globalization and English Language Teaching in China

1.1. Introduction

Globalization has become a symbol of the modern world, “in which the global and the local are constantly interacting with one another” (McKay & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008, p.2) in various dimensions of social life (Tsui & Tollefson, 2007a). In tandem with the intensified integration of knowledge and economy, English has gained global status as the language of international communication. It has become “the fabled Aladdin’s lamp” (Kachru, 1986, p.1), which allows every nation-state to “open the linguistic gates” (ibid.) to knowledge and economic success.

However, the global spread of English is by no means natural, neutral, and automatically beneficial. The dominant status of English “sits in a complex reciprocal relationship with both global and local discourses that have facilitated and been facilitated by the spread and construction of English” (Pennycook, 1994, p.69). While English has been widely played as a global card in local contexts for economic success and an international status (Sonntag, 2003), the political and cultural connotations of this development have also been debated and discussed with regard to the paradigms of the World Englishes (Kachru, 1986), linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992), and cultural politics (Pennycook, 1994). The wide spread of English associated with globalization is also characterized by “global relations of economic dependency and exploration” (Pennycook, 1994, p.19) and the structural inequality between English and other languages and between various forms of culture. Such inequality, according to
Phillipson (1992), reflects and perpetuates continued imperialism and colonialism and connotes for many a loss of diversity and a homogenization of world cultures (Sonntag, 2003).

The hegemony of English has raised serious questions about its sociopolitical, economic, and cultural impacts on the linguistic and cultural integrity of non-English speaking countries (Tsui & Tollefson, 2007b). For countries like China where English is paradoxically legitimized as a linguistic means to strengthen national economic and political power, how to balance globalization and nationalism, and how to become part of the global politics and economy but at the same time maintain linguistic and cultural autonomy is of great political and pedagogic concern (McKay & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008). By and large, those concerns are reflected in language policy making and curriculum design.

In this study, I explore political ideologies and cultural representations embedded in English textbooks for primary school children. Situating the discussion of global-local tensions around English in the context of China, I first provide an in-depth review of the language policies and curriculum developments in China at the backdrop of globalization. In this review I examine how English language teaching (ELT) characterized by moral cultivation serves as an important means to resist the ideological threat of the nationwide promotion of English. Then, drawing on critical theories (Apple, 1992; Luck, 1988) on curriculum and textbooks, I argue that there is a need for a critical understanding of the relations between textbooks, ideology, and learners’ identity formation. Finally, through a brief review of research on cultural representations in
English language textbooks in China, I outline the need, purpose, and significance of a cultural analysis in English language textbooks.

1.2. Globalization and English in China

The status of English in China has undergone many ups and downs (Adamson, 2002; Hu, 2005; Jin & Cortazzi, 2002; Lam, 2002; Mao & Min, 2004; Ross, 1993; Wen & Hu, 2007). The change of its status has been coincided with a pedagogic pendulum “between traditional knowledge patterns for political control and transformed ones for economic development” (Ross, 1993, p.36). Nevertheless, ever since China’s Reform and Opening Policy in 1970s with a “utilitarian emphasis on social and economic efficiency” (Hu, 2005, p.10), English has gained supremacy as the pre-eminent foreign language to serve the needs of the country’s economic development and modernization and has enjoyed unabated popularity with China’s increasing integration into the global community. In many ways, however, the old formula “Chinese learning for fundamentals, Western learning for practice” (Jin & Cortazzi, 2002, p.54) adapted in Qing Dynasty is still the common attitudes towards English. This formula includes learning and using English for the country’s international competitiveness, while retaining a strong feeling of Chinese identity (Adamson, 2002; Jin & Cortazzi, 2002).

1.2.1. Pro-English Discourse

The widespread perception of English as a “symbolic capital” (Bourdieu, 1991) that “enables a nation as well as an individual to compete in the international market” (Wen & Hu, 2007, p.8) has brought about an unprecedented and growing urge and
enthusiasm for English learning, which have resulted in huge national and personal investments in English language education all over China (Hu, 2005; Jin & Cortazzi, 2002; Wen & Hu, 2007). The enthusiasm for learning English has been referred to as “yingyu re (semantically English study zeal),” which can be exemplified by the setting up of many English kindergartens in big cities and by the numerous English learning programs offered to people of different ages, from different trades and for different purposes (Jin & Cortazzi, 2002).

To better prepare the whole nation for the challenges of globalization, sustainable pedagogical reforms at all levels have also been launched by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in China (Hu, 2005; Wen & Hu, 2007) with a renewed emphasis on “quality education” of which the proficiency in English is considered as an essential component (Adamson & Kwo, 2002; Hu, 2005). In January 2001, the Chinese MOE issued a decree requiring English to be learned as a compulsory subject from grade 3 onwards in primary schools located in cities and counties from the fall of 2001 and English teaching to be offered in primary schools in small towns and villages in the following year (MOE, 2001a). Also at the beginning of 2001, English was promoted by the MOE as the main instructional medium at tertiary level for courses closely linked with recent scientific and technological development for the country’s modernization such as information technology, biotechnology, new-material technology, finance, foreign trade, economics, and law (Nunan, 2003; Wen & Hu, 2007). The fast growth of English language education has been further accelerated by two momentous events later in the same year: China’s successful bid to host the 2008 Olympic Games and her entry into the
World Trade Organization (WTO).

Since then, greater efforts have been made to improve the quality of English language teaching (ELT). Based on the National Standards for English Curriculum issued by the Chinese MOE (2001b, 2001c, 2003, 2004), a new round of syllabus improvement was initiated to “incorporate progressive and scientific thinking on education, to apply new theories and findings in the field of foreign language education from around the world, and to improve learning materials, pedagogical practices and methods of evaluation” (Hu, 2005, p.14). The latest syllabi across the board are oriented towards communicative language teaching (CLT) or task-based language teaching (TBLT), characterized by learner-centeredness and whole-person development (Nunan, 2003; Wen & Hu, 2007).

The curriculum reforms have been supported by a continued emphasis on the decentralization of the textbook production since the late 1980s (Adamson & Kwo, 2002; Hu, 2005), which has allowed more autonomy to local agencies and institutions to develop textbooks series for use in different parts of China (Hu, 2002a). More recently, there are more textbooks available produced collaboratively by local and overseas publishers to provide up-to-date teaching materials that reflect international developments in language education (Hu, 2005; Jiang, 2003).

1.2.2. Counter-Hegemonic Discourse

The aforementioned reforms on ELT in response to globalization have clearly illustrated a pro-English discourse; however, the rapid expansion of English in China
has also raised ideological concerns about the potential “corruptive” impact of globalization and the English language on the integrity of Chinese identity.

Ever since the economic reform in 1970s, “the utilitarian emphasis on social and economic efficiency” (Hu, 2005, p.10) has caused a psychological and ideological crisis that “people seem to live in an utterly valueless condition where the goal of life is simply to make money” (Liu, 2005a, p.16). This “get-rich mentality” (Liu, 2005a, p.16) driven by free market economy in some ways has been popularized with the nationwide promotion of English, a language that is associated with blatant materialist and capitalist ideology. This mentality along with an emphasis on the material capital of English has “fuelled a growing tendency to devalue Chinese as a language for development and modernization and are paralleled by a concomitant dwindling pride in and weakening identification with the heritage of Chinese culture” (Hu, 2008, p.220). This tendency, according to the national survey of language use in 2006 (MOE, 2007), was said to be one major factor that has led to a decline of Chinese proficiency and a loss of Chinese traditional cultural values.

This culture crisis has raised criticisms of the utilitarian orientation towards English and education. For example, in terms of the declined level of Chinese proficiency, Wang Dengfeng (Sohu News, 2007), Deputy director of the National Chinese Language Commission and Director of the Language Use and Management Bureau, pointed out that the over-emphasis on English was the direct cause of the loss of traditional culture. He also raised the issue of possible consequences of “linguistic imperialism” (Phillipson, 1992).
To resolve this ideological crisis, the central government of China has made great efforts to protect the status of the Chinese language and revitalize traditional Chinese culture as a means to prevent Westernization and maintain the integrity of the Chinese identity. To avoid the potential threat of English to Chinese, the central government issued *The Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language*, which was put into effect in 2001. This law gives the sole official status of the Chinese language in nearly all domains of social life and allows only limited use of any foreign language. However, the rapid expansion of English with China’s entry into the global economy has brought about many changes in language use that are considered by the government as damage to the standard use of Chinese. To preserve the purity of the Chinese language, more recently, the General Administration of Press and Publication (2010) issued a directive on the further standardization of language use, which imposes particular restrictions on the use of English in press and publications. It has been made clear that “the excessive use of English has had a negative influence on the sound development of the Chinese language” and “the promotion and the standardization of the Chinese language use are of great significance to preserve the heritage of Chinese civilization and facilitate socialist ideological and ethical progress”\(^1\).

In tandem with the official efforts to protect the status of the Chinese language, actions have also been taken to revitalize Chinese traditional culture in order to neutralize the ideological crisis and counteract the moral decay that have been brought

\(^1\) In this dissertation, all translations from Chinese to English are done by me.
about by globalization and the wide use of English. At the Seventeenth National Congress of the Communist Party, the Chinese President, Hu Jintao (2007), highlighted the significance of revitalizing the Chinese traditional culture in the country’s modernization. Later in the same year, the government announced a new national holiday plan that stipulates as public holidays the three traditional festivals, Qingming Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, and Mid-autumn Festival as response to the “over-popularity” of Western holidays in China (State Council, 2007).

1.2.3. Ideological Instruction in ELT Reforms

The preservation of the purity of the Chinese language and the resurrection of traditional Chinese culture reveal a discourse of resistance to the hegemonic and ideological effect of English. For the central government of China, it serves as a resolution to the tensions between “fundamentals” and “practice.” This orientation towards English has also been integrated into the curriculum reforms to establish a new discourse with high moral standards as major sources in order to counteract the ideological challenges brought about by the rapid expansion of English associated with China’s increasing integration into the global community.

The latest basic education reforms since 1992, referred to as “quality education,” aims to promote a learner-centered and an all-around education. It gives priority to moral cultivation in which the mainstream cultural knowledge and perspectives, namely the core socialist values, are transmitted to students to establish the desired attitudes and beliefs (Zhou, 2006; Liu, 2005a). This rationale of “quality education” has also been
incorporated in the reformed *National Standards for English Curriculum* (MOE, 2001c). This curriculum unprecedentedly introduces the concept of integrated language competence as the renewed course goal (see figure 1.1). Specific objectives are also stipulated in five domains: “affect and attitude”, “learning strategies”, “cultural awareness,” “linguistic knowledge,” and “language skills”, but with a shifted focus on the development of “affect and attitude.”

![Diagram of Objectives of the Reformed National English Curriculum](image)

**Figure 1.1. The Objectives of the Reformed National English Curriculum (MOE, 2001c)**

Despite the unchanged emphasis on the practical value of English and ELT, the renewed curriculum takes into consideration the humanistic values of language teaching in the students’ all-round development. ELT is defined not only as a medium to improve students’ language abilities to meet the socioeconomic and personal needs (Hu, 2002a), but also as a value-added practice for students “to widen horizons, to enrich life
experience, to raise cross-cultural awareness, to strengthen patriotism, to establish a sound character and to develop a correct view of life and values” (MOE, 2001c). It is obvious that moral cultivation has become an issue of English education in the reformed curriculum to achieve a balance between “fundamentals” and “practice”.

The ambivalent attitude towards English in this curriculum may be best reflected in the articulation of the teaching objectives in terms of “cultural awareness”. On the one hand, in order to facilitate language learning and cross-cultural communication, the reformed curriculum incorporates the teaching of foreign cultures to “raise and maintain students’ interest and motivation in learning English” and “develop students’ global perspectives” and “positive attitudes towards English and foreign cultures”; on the other hand, to maintain students’ national cultural identity, equal attention has been given to cultivating in learners “a strong sense of nationalism” and “a better understanding of their own culture” (MOE, 2001c).

In terms of textbook production, the reformed curriculum also gives guidance that reflects the same ideological principle. It has been made clear that “English teaching materials should serve the function of moral and ideological inculcation in order to help students establish a sound view of life and value orientation” (MOE, 2001c). To avoid the potential ideological threat of English and western cultures to students’ life view, world view, and value orientation, it further elaborates that “curriculum materials should represent both the traditional Chinese culture and foreign cultures in a way that will help students understand the essence of foreign cultures and develop their critical ability to judge the essence from the dross” (MOE, 2001).
1.3. Purpose of the Study

The curriculum discourse clearly shows that “ideological teaching through school literacy education is a common practice that often reflects contemporary social and political doctrines embedded in Chinese political discourse” (Curdt-Christiansen, 2008, p.99). Evidently, in an era of globalization, ELT also serves to transmit the desired moral code and to build up “correct” beliefs to maintain the country’s cultural autonomy. The emphasis on cultivation of patriotism, national commitment, and Chinese cultural awareness revealed in the curriculum discourse is obvious evidence of attempts to resolve the tension between globalization and nationalism, to resist the ideological threat brought about by globalization and the expansion of English, and to preserve the purity, unity, and coherence of the national Chinese identity. Based on the guidelines elaborated in the curriculum, it is expected that the desired attitudes and cultural identities are to be constructed and inculcated through English language textbooks.

The relationship between textbooks and ideology has been a significant issue in critical curriculum research (Apple, 1992; Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991; Luke, 1988). It has been acknowledged that textbooks are always used by the government and cultural elites as an essential means to transmit the dominant ideology. What is written in textbooks and how the textbooks are written often follow the “selective tradition” (Williams, 1989, p.58) that emphasizes certain ideological discourse and cultural practices but regulate or exclude others. In this sense, the national cultures that are represented in English language textbooks and the ways in which they are represented also embody particular constructions of the social reality that could shape students’
perspectives and identities.

However, despite the increasing volume of critical approach to Chinese literacy textbooks (e.g. Curdt-Christiansen, 2008; Liu, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c; Wang & Pillion, 2010), studies on ideology in English language textbooks in China are sparse. Within the existing studies (e.g. Adamson & Kwo, 2002; Adamson, 2004; Bolton, 2003; Chen, 2010; Yang, 2004; You, 2005; Xiong, in press), very few have been taken from a critical perspective. Most of the studies based on content analyses assume a rather simplistic view of the relation between the ideological nature of English language textbooks and the economic and political conditions, with You’s (2005) and Xiong’s (in press) studies as exceptions. Adopting Marxist theory on ideology, You (2005) conducted a contrastive analysis of two editions (1984 and 1994) of a composition textbook. His analysis shows that there is ideological and cultural tension between reformist discourse and the early Maoist legacy in the early 1980s. Drawing on critical theories on curriculum, Xiong (in press) analyzed two sets of secondary English language textbooks currently used in China. He found that unlike Chinese language textbooks, English textbooks are a site where different perspectives and voices are competing with the dominant ideology. While their findings provide an alternative way to understand how English language textbook discourse relates to the dominant ideology, they also sound an alarm that the cultural contents in English language textbooks could have an influence on students’ value orientation and be a possible threat to students’ Chinese identity.

In this sense, there is a need to examine the representations of national cultures in English language textbooks from a more critical perspective in order to see in what
ways curriculum ideology is interpreted and reflected in those textbooks. For this study, I employ both content analysis and text analysis as analytic methods to examine the cultural representations in a series of English language textbooks for primary schools used in Chengdu, Sichuan, PRC. In particular, I focus on what aspect of Chinese culture and other national cultures are selectively represented and discursively constructed. Furthermore, I discuss what cultural reality is constructed through the selective representations and to what extent it may affect the Chinese students’ perception of their native culture and foreign cultures through the choices of grammatical devices. I aim to show how these cultural representations are articulated in relation to sociocultural ideologies, how the written texts build up particular relationships with the students that may shape their identity. Three research questions are asked to guide this study:

(1) What national cultures are represented in English language textbooks for primary children?

(2) How are national cultures represented in the textbooks?

(3) What ideology and national cultural identity are constructed in the textbooks?

In this study, in line with critical curriculum theories, sociology of education, and critical discourse analysis (Apple, 1979; Fairclough, 1992; Gee, 1996, 2005; Luke, 1988; Pennycook, 2001), I take the position that literacy education entails a socialization process and literacy textbooks are essential cultural objects through which students encounter representations of social identities and roles (Weninger & Williams, 2005). The discussion of identity in this paper focuses only on collective identities of which national identity is a form. Following Stuart Hall (1996), I see national identity as a
form of national cultural identity discursively constructed, and national culture into which we are born as one of the principal sources of cultural identity. Social identity, national identity, and cultural identity are used interchangeably in this paper.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in the following aspects. Firstly, while there have been only a few studies on English language textbooks and curriculum ideology in the context of China, this study can fill the research gap and shed light on the political, cultural, and ideological implications of textbooks and ELT, and on the relationship between textbook ideology and identity.

Secondly, different from the previous studies, this study combines both quantitative and qualitative methods as the analytic framework. While content analysis is used to give a general picture about what national cultures are represented in the textbooks, text analysis complements to offer deeper insights as to how those national cultures are discursively constructed to socialize readers into particular subjective positions. In this way, the findings of this study can provide more information as to how the relationships of power and knowledge are discursively constructed in English language textbooks.

Thirdly, the study sets the research background against the backdrop of globalization; therefore, the findings of this study can help the future policy making and curriculum reforms in China and in other non-English speaking countries as a reference to deal with the tensions between globalization and nationalism.
1.5. Overview of the Thesis

This dissertation consists of 5 chapters. In chapter I, I introduce the topic and delineate the background, purpose, and significance of the study. In chapter II, locating my study in a critical-sociocultural framework, I review the related literature and point out the research gap that the current study is intended to fill. In chapter III, I introduce and legitimate the analytic framework and methods of the study. In Chapter IV, I report the results of the data analysis and discuss the findings in relation to the sociocultural context. In Chapter V, I provide my personal reflection on the study as well as implications and suggestions for further research in this area.
Chapter II Literature Review

In this chapter, I provide a discussion of critical-sociocultural theory to interpret the political and ideological implications of the cultural representations in English language textbooks in China. For this purpose, I first briefly review previous research on culture and language learning in applied linguistics and the dominant approach towards culture teaching and textbook evaluation in ELT. Then, I point out the limitations in this approach as to what cultures should be included and how they should be represented in English language textbooks. I, therefore, argue for a critical-sociocultural approach to examining and understanding the cultural representations in English language textbooks. Based on the sociocultural and critical applied linguistic theories and theory of literacy education, I review the previous cultural studies on literacy textbooks, ideology, and identity and argue that ELT is cultural practice and the cultural representations in English language textbooks need to be understood with regard to global and local politics. Last, I point out that textbook analysis from a critical perspective can enhance our understanding of the political ideologies reflected through ELT in China against the backdrop of globalization.

2.1. Culture and ELT against the Backdrop of Globalization

The role of culture in language teaching has been discussed for some time (e.g. Brody, 2003; Buttjes, 1991; Byram, 1991; Damon, 2003; McKay, 2003; McKay & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008; Nelson, 1995; Jiang, 2000; Rubby, 2009; Saville-Troike, 2003). While it has been widely acknowledged that language learning inevitably involves some
degree of the culture learning (Brody, 2003), no consensus has been reached as to whose
culture should be represented and how it should be represented in textbooks among ELT
professionals.

Research on the role of culture in language teaching can be traced back to 1970s
when the functional aspects of language were given increasing attention in applied
linguistics (e.g. Halliday, 1973). The conceptualization of the relationship between
language and communication has generated a particular discourse of ELT in which the
knowledge of the target culture was considered as an indispensible element to develop
learners’ communicative competence (Hymes, 1971).

Although it seems fairly self-evident that learning a language cannot avoid learning
the culture associated with the language as long as the ultimate goal is effective
communication (Brody, 2003), the model of communicative competence has been
recently challenged by the recognition of English as an international language (EIL) (e.g.
Crystal, 1997). One central problem in this model, as noted by many EIL professionals
(e.g. Buttjes, 1991; Nault, 2006; Saville-Troike, 2003), is that it tends to assume a
one-to-one correspondence between a specific language and a specific culture. Such an
assumption often suggests a unitary view of language and culture. In this view, language
and culture are often linked with certain nation-states. The arbitrariness of the
language-culture link, as criticized by Nault (2006), has led to a US-UK-centric view of
culture in ELT (e.g. Garwood et al., 1993), a misconception that it is in the United States
and Great Britain that one can find the “target cultures” of English. This view, according
to EIL educators (e.g. Buttjes, 1991; Nault, 2006; Nelson, 1995; Saville-Troike, 2003),
not only “wrongly implies a uniformity or homogeneity among native speakers that
does not in fact exit” (Nault, 2006, p.315) but also fails to address the multicultural and
multinational nature of English as an international language against the backdrop of
globalization.

Another problem in the model of communicative competence is the underlying
assumption that successful language learning entails adaption to the target speech
community (Nelson, 1995), that is, learners have to identity with the culture and
community of the target language. In this way, learners are viewed to be both
linguistically and culturally deficient and learners’ native languages and cultures are
considered negatively as interference in their becoming communicatively competent in
the target language. This so-called “deficit model” (Cook, 1999) of language education,
as Nault (2006) points out, is also related to the promotion of American and British
cultures in ELT, which devalues “non-native” learners’ first languages and cultures.
Furthermore, such a view, according to Murray and Christison (2011), also
unfortunately ignores the multiple memberships learners can have and the dynamic
nature of identity construction in language learning.

The central argument of EIL discourse is that as English is increasingly gaining
ground in outer and expanding circles (Kachru, 1986), it has become “a neutral medium
for communication, a language divorced from social, cultural or political concerns, and
a language in which speakers all over the world had equal rights” (Pennycook, 1994,
p.158). Therefore, simple notions of acquisition of or adaptation to the so-called target
cultures of the English language, i.e. U.S. and British cultures, do not justify to today’s
increasing transnational contacts against the backdrop of globalization but only reflect linguistic imperialism and western cultural hegemony (Nault, 2006).

More recently, there is a promotion of an intercultural approach towards culture teaching in ELT among EIL professionals (e.g. Buttjes, 1991; Byram, 1991; Damen, 2003; Nault, 2006) that shifts away from the lopsided emphasis on American and British cultures (Nelson, 1995). The intercultural approach focuses on the cross-cultural nature of communication and on the overcoming the difficulties in cross-cultural contacts caused by cultural differences (Damen, 2003; Nelson, 1995). In this approach, “the development of cross-cultural awareness of cultural differences and the fostering of effective intercultural sensitivity and behavior” is considered “as a means of dealing with these difficulties” (Damen, 2003, p.76). This perspective has put forward a case for the culturally informed teaching of EIL, which highlights explicit culture teaching that includes both learners’ native cultures and diverse foreign cultures. According to Meyer (1991), this inclusion can develop learners’ intercultural communicative competence “to behave adequately in a flexible manner when confronted with actions, attitudes, and expressions of representatives of foreign cultures” (p. 137) and ultimately enhance the effectiveness and quality of cross-cultural communication (Buttjes, 1991; Byram, 1991). In addition, interculturalists such as Byram (1991) also believe that the experiences gained from culture learning can widen learners’ horizons and offer richer identity options beyond state boundary for learners’ self-expression and self-identification.

The intercultural approach towards culture teaching has also had a profound influence on ELT teaching material designs that many language educators advocate ELT
textbooks with an international and multicultural focus. For example, Wandel (2002, p.264-265) points out that if the field of ELT is to take “the reality of English as a ‘world language’ seriously”, it “must enhance its geographical scope and include non-mainstream cultures”. In line with Wandel, Nault (2006) argues that ELT textbooks should reflect the cultural diversities of English—including both learners’ native cultures and diverse foreign cultures—to develop learners’ global perspective. Like other interculturalists such as Byram (1991) and Risager (1991), Nault also points out the importance of ELT textbooks representing local and foreign cultures in a realistic and balanced way to avoid cross-cultural misunderstanding in future international contacts. Alongside those views is a rejection of narrow focuses on either American and British cultures or local cultures in ELT materials. As Nault (2006) argues, textbooks with a focus on American and British cultures can reproduce western cultural hegemony (Mckay & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008), and those with a focus on local cultures can result in students’ ethnocentric view of their own cultures, which denies any possibility of cultural reflection and identity expansion. ELT textbooks in either case, therefore, contribute little to learners’ growth of cultural insights and cross-cultural understanding.

Intercultural approach has some implications for ELT. First, it advocates language and culture teaching for international communication related to learners’ personal cultural experience, instead of taking target-culture norms as the point of departure. Secondly, by acknowledging the multinational and multicultural nature of English in culture teaching, it rejects any cultural hegemony in ELT and, therefore, orients to an education of cultural equality. Apart from that, such an approach towards culture
teaching is also believed to be able to strengthen students’ motivation, cultivate their positive attitude towards foreign cultures, deepen their understanding of their own culture, enhance learners’ identity expression, and thus is conducive to learners’ whole development beyond language teaching (Buttjes, 1991; Byram, 1991; Damen, 2003; Mckay & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008; Nault, 2006). The intercultural approach seems to be dominant in the current ELT discourse. Many non-English speaking countries such as China, Korea, Japan, Malaysia, and Vietnam (Nunan, 2003; Tsui & Tollefson, 2007b) have put growing emphasis on the development of cross-cultural competence in curriculum reform discourse, where effective cross-cultural communication has been set as the major goal.

However, although it “breaks away from perceiving ‘nativity’ as a primary prerequisite” (Sifakis, 2003, p.63) in the earlier model of communicative competence, what remains unchanged in the current approach is the functional view that language is a tool for communication and culture, a support for mutual understanding. Based on a specialist body of knowledge borrowed from cross-cultural psychology, anthropology, linguistics, and sociolinguistics (Smith, Paige & Steglitz, 2003), this approach fails to acknowledge that language and culture are also embedded in social relations and indeed are part of the system that perpetuates inequality (Fairclough, 1992; Swartz, 1997). As Pennycook (2003) points out, while we may not deny the usefulness of English as a global language of communication, we also need to recognize it as the language of “discommunication” (p.5). What Pennycook means is not misunderstanding, but rather the role of English as a language that is linked to inequality, injustice, and the
prevention of communication. In many ways, English has become “a class-based language” (Pennycook, 2003, p.6) that intensifies global disparity and has caused new social, economic, and educational inequities in various local contexts (Hu, 2008; Pennycook, 1994, 2003; Phillipson, 1992).

The constant insistence on the neutrality of English and the equality of all cultures in the current approach seems to generate a simplistic view of ELT as an apolitical entity, which pays little attention to international relations and the politics or sociology of education around culture teaching in ELT. First, English referred as a neutral language of communication in this approach fails to address the global inequalities between different forms of languages and cultures (Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1992). Such inequalities are reflected by the fact that Western cultures, especially American culture, possess more cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991) than other cultures, given American’s great economic and political influence. Second, by emphasizing the equality of local cultures and foreign cultures in ELT, this approach ignores the local politics around ELT, which acts “as agents of social and cultural reproduction in a society marked by significant inequalities” (Giroux, 1983, p.170) between local and foreign cultures in a particular context. Sorely lacking in this approach is a critical stance to understand culture teaching in ELT with regard to local and global politics around English.

The same shortcoming can also be found in the insistence on the neutral and balanced representations of local and foreign cultures in English textbooks in the current approach. This insistence has also led to a naïveté attitude towards evolution of the cultural content in English language textbooks, free from all the political, economic,
social, and cultural concerns involved in textbook production in a particular local context. Instead of taking the global and local politics as point of departure, many language educators (e.g. Matsuda, 2002; Nault, 2006; Skopinskaja, 2003), adopting an intercultural approach to examine ELT materials, often end up criticizing the cultural representation in English language textbooks authorized by local governments. For example, in her content analysis of the representations of uses and users of English in a collection of government-approved textbooks for 7th grade students in Japan, Matsuda (2002) found that there was an emphasis on the uses and users of English in Japan and inner circle countries; the representation in other contexts, particularly those in the outer and expanding circle countries other than Japan was much limited. She thus criticizes that the unbalanced representation in those textbooks does not reflect the cultural diversity of English as an international language. She also laments that the “limited section of the world” may not develop students’ “international awareness” (Matsuda, 2002, p.438) but to generate cultural discrimination over Englishes and English users in contexts other than Japan and inner circle countries. Similarly, Skopinskaja (2003) adapted evaluation checklists mainly from Byram (1991) and Risager (1991) to analyze the cultural content in English teaching materials used in Northern Europe. He also found that locally produced English textbooks tended to have an Anglo-centric focus; apart from that, they were also likely to represent local culture and foreign cultures in a stereotypical way that could not develop learners’ tolerance or empathy towards otherness as well as to challenge their ethnocentric views of the world. Similar results have also been found in other contexts such as Chile, Japan, and Korea, where
textbooks heavily focus on local cultures (McKay & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008). Those “unsatisfactory” findings have led to Nault’s (2006) assertion that “at present, no well-designed ELT course books exist that explicitly focus on cross-cultural and multicultural themes from a global perspective” (p.323). However, this assertion does not withstand under scrutiny. As Saville-Troike (2003) points out, what culture should be taught in conjunction with a language depends on the social context in which that language is being learned and used. Without taking into account the sociocultural contexts where those textbooks are produced, the current intercultural approach towards textbook evaluation tends to universalize the sociopolitical conditions in different contexts and masks more important issues of political and ideological concerns involved in ELT and textbook design. What national cultures should be included and how they should be represented in English language textbooks is not simply an academic matter but political decisions that entail a critical-sociocultural stance towards ELT.

2.2. The Politics of Cultural Representations in English Language Textbooks

2.2.1. Textbook, Ideology, and Learner Identity

The review of the developments of culture teaching in ELT reveals a need to take a critical-sociocultural framework to explore the ideological and political dimensions of cultural representations in English language textbooks. The critical-sociocultural framework adopted in the current study has its roots in cultural studies of the politics of English as an international language (Pennycook, 1994), sociology of education (Freire, 1985), critical theories on textbooks (Apple, 1992; Luke, 1988), and the New Literacies
studies (Gee, 1996, 2005). Underlying the rationale of my discussion is the socio-cultural position that literacy education can never be ideologically neutral (Gee, 1996; Pennycook, 1994). In line with theorists of critical theory, I believe that the selection and construction of school knowledge in textbooks reflect the dominant ideologies in the sociocultural context where they are produced (Apple, 1992; Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991). Such ideologies are “distorted ideational and linguistic representations of economic reality and social relations that have their sources in, and disguise, political and economic functions of class dominance” (Luke, 1994, p.1642). Therefore, textbooks created and distributed in a given society often provide sanctioned versions of cultural reality, “concealing, hiding or otherwise obfuscating the truth for the reproduction of power relations in a society” (Teo, 2004, p.192). Those sanctioned versions of reality are biased representations that serve to influence students’ perception of their relationship to the world and strengthen their identification and compliance with the existing societal structures.

Therefore, to produce uncritical subjects with loyalty and commitment, curricular texts are often found to highlight the uniqueness and glory of a nation or a national culture to promote nationalism, a political ideology involving a strong sense of identification with the nation, and to articulate a pure, unified, and coherent national cultural identity (Lee, 2010; Smith, 1993; Su, 2007; Wodak, et al., 2009). In his critical examination of literacy textbooks used in North Korean at different time periods, Lee (2010) found that texts in those books were used to emphasize the greatness of the North Korean leaders and their families and the superiority of the North Korean social
and political system to generate students’ love and loyalty to their leaders and encourage them to confirm to a collective North Korean identity. Furthermore, the construction of North Korean identity was also facilitated by casting non-North Koreans in a poor light. Americans, for example, were portrayed as enemies of the country, responsible for the social problems in North Korean so that the blames were not placed on North Korean leaders and the social structure. In addition, people in South Korean with a different social system were portrayed as poor and miserable to strengthen the superiority of the North Korean-style socialism. In a same vein, Su (2007) employed a critical approach to analyze government standardized social studies textbooks in Taiwan from 1978 to 1995. He found that the textbooks overtime sustain the ideology of a unified national Chinese identity and Chinese themes of patriotism. To retain “an emphasis on ethnic kinship and national identification with Mainland China” (p.230), critical issues about the relationship between Taiwain and Mainland China were excluded, and ethnic and cultural diversity of aborigines was under-presented or downplayed. Apart from that, similar to Lee’s findings, to highlight the superiority of social system in current Taiwan, a contrast was made between “the political and economic oppression suffered under Dutch and Japanese rule and the progressive modernization enjoyed under Chinese rule” (p.231).

These examples convincingly show that textbooks can be used to achieve political and ideology uniformity, and through interacting with them, learners’ identity formation can be potentially influenced by textbooks and more widely, the power relations in a given social, political, and ideological situation (Murray & Christison, 2011; Mckinney
The emphasis on the interactions between textbooks, power relations and national cultural identity construction in education is subject to a perception of identity informed by feminism, poststructuralism, and critical pedagogy (Shardakova & Pavlenko, 2004). This conception captures the dynamic, multiple, and changing nature of learner identity as a social construct (Norton, 2006), located in “a broader social, historical, political, and cultural contexts in which learning takes place” (Mckinney & Norton, 2008, p.192). In other words, identity is not static nor uni-dimentional, but dynamic, multiple, and a site of struggle (Mckinney & Norton, 2008). Learners’ identities are multiple, changing, sometimes conflicting, constructed by learner themselves and imposed by the power relations through individual social interactions (Murray & Christison, 2011). Their experiences, whether at home or at school, have an impact on learners’ identity construction. Likewise, national cultural identity, one of the identities learners possess, is also a social and political construct. It is essential for self-identification, tied closely to national beliefs and values (Murray & Christison, 2011). As illustrated earlier, national cultural identity can be imposed on by the power relations through education and discursively constructed (Hall, 1996; Wodak, et al., 2009). The dynamic understanding of learner identity has opened up ways for addressing the relationship between English language textbooks, nationalism, and national cultural identity in the following section.
2.2.2. English Language Textbooks, Nationalism, and National Cultural Identity

Drawing on the previous discussion on textbook, ideology, and learner identity, I view English language textbooks locally authorized as sociopolitical products and the selection and representation of national cultures in them as ideological process of knowledge construction. To put it another way, what national cultures are presented and how they are discursively constructed in English language textbooks used in a given society also construct a particular cultural reality that influences learners’ perception of their native and the target language communities and ultimately their identification with their nation for reproduction of social relations. Therefore, to understand and examine the political ideology and national cultural identity inscribed and articulated in English language textbooks need to take into consideration the power struggle between English and the local language and culture.

Just like the globalization of English itself, culture learning in English teaching has become a sword with two blades. While many foreign language educators (e.g., Buttjes, 1991; Byram, 1991) perceive learning English and foreign culture as an opportunity for learners to gain more identity options to invest in their further life (Norton, 1995), others view it as a threat to the purity, unity, and coherence of learners’ national cultural identity, destructive to national and ideological uniformity (Murray & Christison, 2011). Their concerns are not groundless. Recent research in the filed of second language acquisition (SLA) has convincingly demonstrated that learning foreign language and the culture associated with it could lead to significant cultural identity conflicts “in cases where their own linguist and cultural values come into conflict with those imposed on
them by the texts” (Shardakova & Pavlenko, 2004, p.28). Those conflicts could bring about changes to learners’ value orientations and have an influence on their identity formation.

It is because of this that ethnic and regional identifications have gained renewed attention alongside the worldwide expansion of English (Tsui & Tollefson, 2007c). In many non-English speaking countries where English is taught as an international language, various policies and discourses have been adopted to develop a strong sense of national identities as resistance to the global hegemony of English (McKay & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008; Tsui & Tollefson, 2007b). Since national cultures are primary source of national identities (Hall, 1996), in those contexts, there is generally a focus on promotion of local cultures in ELT and English language textbooks (Cortazzi, & Jin, 1999). In some cases, the cultural content of English textbooks is primarily local culture rather than any other foreign culture. For example, in Chile, the Ministry of Education has published English textbooks to promote Chilean culture in order to help Chileans to be able to describe their culture to foreigners in English as a way to resist the dominance of American and British cultures (McKay & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008). Similarly, in Japan, the uniqueness of Japanese culture has also been emphasized in the discourse of ELT to “deconstruct” (Hashimoto, 2007, p.49) the ideological implication of English in order to promote Japaneseness. In other cases, like in South Korea, despite an emphasis on American culture, Korean customs and cultural values are perceived more desirable than American traditions in the locally produced English language textbooks (Yim, 2007). In those local contexts, ELT has been used to rebuild national identities and
“textbooks are without question an element in the struggle for cultural dependence” (Altbach, 1991, p.256). Those examples also illustrate that the current intercultural approach towards culture teaching and textbook evaluation cannot account for the role of English in perpetuating global and local forms of inequality and the sense of agency and resistance in education institutions in various local contexts (Pennycook, 1994, 2003; Canagarajah, 1999).

As long as the global and local inequalities continue to exist, there is no possibility that all cultures be equal in ELT and in the teaching materials produced in a particular local context (Pennycook, 1994). The so-called “unsatisfactory” findings—the emphasis on local cultures or the cultures of core inner circle countries—from textbook evolution in various contexts revealed earlier are clear evidence that ELT and textbook production cannot be separated from the structural force of globalization and the local policy decisions in response to it.

2.3. Situating the Context of English language textbooks in China

The critical-sociocultural framework illustrated earlier has provided a theoretical basis to explore the political ideology embedded in the set of English language textbooks under scrutiny. Within this framework, the analysis of cultural representations in those textbooks should take into consideration the sociocultural conditions where the textbooks are authorized to be in use. In the context of China, those conditions include the curriculum reform discourse of facilitating cross-cultural understanding and communication, the political discourse of promoting Chinese culture and preserving the
integrity of national Chinese identity, and the policy of the decentralization of the textbook production.

In China, textbook production used to be controlled by the Chinese central government. Textbooks were normally published by the People’s Education Press (PEP), which works closely with the Curriculum and Teaching Materials Research Institute, a unit of MOE founded in 1983 (Yang, 2004). In the mid 1980s, the government issued a decentralization policy to encourage local authorities to produce textbooks to serve different regional needs and to further diversify education (Hu, 2002a).

This decentralization policy has brought about a market condition of textbook production, which is characterized by one curriculum standard and multiple sets of competing textbooks. To regulate the market, in 1986, a national textbook censorship committee was set up to grant approval to new materials (Hu, 2005). The national curriculum standard and the textbook censorship committee serve as gate-keep system to make sure that the textbooks used in schools are culturally, politically, and methodologically appropriate.

With China’s increasing integration into the global community, communications between China and the outside world have been greatly enhanced through a variety of cross cultural activities. Many local polishers in China such as Beijing Normal University Press seek for international collaboration in textbook production. They take a more cost-efficient strategy to adapt international textbooks to the curriculum standard so that they are methodologically up-to-date, culturally appropriate, and commercially competitive (Liu, 2009).
The current condition of textbook production in China has provided a foundation for my research on the ideologies and the imposed national cultural identity in English language textbooks for elementary schools. There are two reasons behind my data choice for the current research.

Firstly, since English language textbooks have to be authorized by the government before they are put in use, they are assumed to contain the political ideologies serving the interest of the dominance. Given the traditional high status of textbook in Chinese culture (Hu, 2002b), English language textbooks are the main trusted resources for learners to encounter and learn foreign cultures. Therefore, cultural representations in English language textbooks are believed to play a vital role in determining how the students view their own culture and their relationships with people from different cultural backgrounds (Ndura, 2004). Their perception has a potential effect on learners’ national cultural identity. In China, primary schooling is the initial stage of the compulsory education in China\(^2\), which usually starts when children reach the age of 6. It is said as the critical time for children to be aware of cultural and social difference (Weninger & Williams, 2005). Therefore, the cultural representations in English language textbooks at this stage are assumed to have a greater influence on learners’ perception of the world and their identity formation than textbooks for students of higher levels.

Secondly, while there are considerable studies on textbooks and ideology in areas of other subjects (e.g. Curdt-Christiansen, 2008; Liu, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c; Wang &

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\(^2\) The compulsory education in China is set to be 9-year-long, generally including 6 years of primary schooling and 3 years of junior high schooling (MOE, 2001).
Pillion, 2010), comparatively less attention has been paid to English language textbooks and their structural effects on learners’ identity formation. Among the limited studies on ideology and English language textbooks, there is a lopsided focus on textbooks for junior secondary schools (e.g. Adamson & Kwo, 2002; Xiong, in press). English language textbooks for elementary level are the less researched area. Among the existing studies on English language textbooks, only Yang (2004) presents an overview of primary English teaching in China from a comparative perspective, making particular reference to three sets of primary textbooks published by PEP in three different time periods (1985, 1992, and 2001). Based on content analysis, he found that compared to the 1985 textbooks, emphasis on ideological and political instruction has been shifted to moral instruction in the newer textbooks, “focusing particularly on polite behaviors” (Yang, 2004, p.85). Apart from that, he also found “no passages casting foreign countries in a poor light;” “instead, messages promoting international understanding of other nations, in line with open door policies rather than hardliner ideology, and is in step with the rend of the times” (Yang, 2004, p.85). Those findings lead to his conclusion that that newer textbooks adopt a more communicative approach, displaying more tendencies of internationalization and balance in representations of Chinese and western cultures.

Although Yang’s study provides some information about the textbook developments in China in different period of times, his findings, based on content analysis, seems to suggest a rather simplistic view of the ideological implications and the local and global politics around ELT. This simplistic view of ideology and textbooks
illustrated in Yang’s study could lead to a negligent attitude towards ELT, which, I believe, does not contribute to our understanding of the importance of culture teaching against the backdrop of globalization. What lacks in Young’s study is a more critical analysis on cultural representations in English language textbooks that takes the sociocultural contexts into account. Since maintaining Chinese identity as a resistance to the hegemony of English is still a central discourse in ELT in China and in other Asian regions, there is a need to take a qualitatively and linguistically oriented discourse approach to examine whether the authorized English language textbooks present culture in an appropriate way that does not lead to cultural hegemony over the local culture and language.

The two reasons behind my choice also represent the limitations in the current research on ideology and English language textbooks in China. Those limitations suggest a need for the current study on the ideological and political dimensions of cultural representations in English language textbooks from a critical-sociocultural perspective.

2.4. Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I review the literature on culture and ELT and point out the limitations of the current approach towards culture teaching and textbook evaluation in ETL. In terms of those limitations, I propose and rationalize a critical-sociocultural framework to interpret the global and local politics involved in ELT and textbook production and their structural or material effects on learners’ identity formation. Then
by locating the research in the context of China, I introduce the current condition for textbook development. Informed by the previous studies on ideology and English language textbooks in China, I suggest a need for textbook analysis based on a methodology and research design from a critical-sociocultural perspective, which is the focus of the next chapter.
Chapter III Methodology

In this chapter, I introduce the methodology used in this study. In what follows, I first briefly introduce the research framework. Then, after I describe the data under scrutiny, I introduce the analytical methods used in this study for exploration of the three research questions proposed earlier. Lastly, I describe the procedures for the establishment of coding schemes and data analysis for the reliability and validity of my research design.

3.1. Research Framework

In this study, I undertake a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of the representations of national cultures in the English language textbooks under scrutiny to explore the political ideology embedded in them. CDA has become one of the most influential models in text analysis (Luke, 2002). For critical discourse analysts (Fairclough, 1992; Martin & Wodak, 2003), texts are understood as discourses, related to broader issues of ideology and social belief. CDA is critical in the sense that it calls into question the taken-for-granted ideas and assumptions and views them as means that perpetuates social inequality and injustice by privileging the elite and the powerful at the expense of everybody else. CDA adopts the position that particular textual choices are of ideological significance; those ideological intentions embedded in texts can be revealed and interpreted by examining the way the grammatical mechanisms are employed in relation to relevant sociocultural context (Widdowson, 2007; Gee, 2005, 2011). “The task that CDA sets itself is to discover traces of ideological bias in texts” (Widdowson, 2007, p. 22).
2007, p.71), “to analyze opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language” (Wodak, 1995, p.204). This stance is compatible with the theoretical assumption of critical curriculum studies noted earlier in chapter II.

Drawing upon the research framework of CDA, I perceive English language textbooks as an ideologically mediated discourse through which the dominant ideology in a particular sociocultural context is discursively delivered and a particular national identity is ascribed to the readers. In this way, my analysis of the representations of diverse national cultures in the English language textbooks under scrutiny—namely what national cultures are included and how they are represented in those textbooks—would also reveal certain ideology that reflects the local politics in the context of China in response to the globalization of English.

3.2. Data Source

Data collection

For reasons of scale, only Primary English, one of the authorized English language textbook series for elementary schools, is chosen for examination. This series is widely used in the elite elementary schools in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, People’s Republic of China, a context with which I am most familiar.

Data description

Primary English is an adapted edition of Bingo! English for Children, an international book series that is originally edited by Ken Methold and Linda Curtis and
was first published in 1998. *Primary English*, the adapted edition, is co-edited by Cheng Xiaotang, Wang Qiang, Ken Methold and other editorial committee members from Beijing Normal University and was jointly published by McGraw-Hill Education (Asia) Co. and Beijing Normal University Press. According to the statement on the back cover of each book, this textbook series is edited based on the *National English Curriculum* latest-published by the Chinese MOE in 2001 and is intended to arouse learners’ positive attitude towards English and English learning as well as to develop their learning competence and cross-cultural awareness through creating contexts facilitating to language learning.

*Primary English* consists of 12 books for learners who start to learn English from grade 1, 1 book for each semester throughout the elementary years with each book containing 6 or 7 units. This book series takes a structural syllabus and is story-based: each unit starts with a main text in which the target linguistic items (i.e. sentence patterns, grammatical and lexical items) are situated in the dialogue bubbles of the fictitious characters of a comic strip (see Appendix I). Since the comprehension of the story depends largely on the understanding of the meaning of the linguistic patterns, the main text can be viewed as a preparatory stage to raise learners’ awareness of the target linguistic items. The main text is followed by exercise sections where listening, speaking, reading and writing practices are included to consolidate linguistic knowledge and develop learners’ competence for language use. Such exercises tend to be done often through mechanic or semi-communicative activities in manipulated situations (see Appendix II). At the end of each unit, there is also a story section “Uncle Booky’s
Storytime” in all books except book 11 and book 12. Those stories are either adapted from world literatures (e.g. fairytales, fables, or classic works) or made up by the editors mainly for the purpose of entertainment. But since most of the additional stories are presented in comic strips, like the main texts, they also tend to incorporate the target grammatical patterns in that unit for knowledge consolidation (see Appendix III).

Like other textbooks for students at this age, images are pervasively used in this textbook series to contextualize the target linguistic items for better comprehension. In the comic strips, the strings of pictures are used to create physical contexts for understanding character’s utterances and the development of the story. In the exercise sections, images are also used as prompts or contextual cues to elicit appropriate responses from learners.

However, there is a tendency that the number of images decreases as learners move onto higher grades. The reading passages for comprehension increase gradually from grade 4 upwards (from book 7 to book 12) when the learners are assumed to be competent enough to read the texts without the help of pictures. For example, in the main texts from grade 5 upwards, the comic strips are accompanied with written recounts from the perspective of a particular character involved in the story or from an omniscient point of view (see Appendix IV). In addition, the supplementary stories under “Uncle Booky’s Storytime” in book 9 and book 10 are presented in written forms with illustrations, divided into smaller portions in each unit. In book 11 and book 12, there is no additional story at all; instead, more non-fictional reading passages are included for comprehension purpose.
3.3. Research Design

As illustrated above, there is no separate section systematically introducing cultural knowledge in *Primary English*. Although the primary focus of the textbooks is on linguistic forms or comprehension of a story or acquiring information of a given topic, rich cultural information is incidentally presented. For example, the textual context in which a linguistic item is presented and exercised, the sociocultural context in which a story is situated, the knowledge with which a topic or a concept is associated, all purveys cultural knowledge of diverse nations, whether in a factual or fictitious manner.

To answer the first research question, “what national cultures are included in the textbooks”, I use content analysis to examine the written texts in *Primary English* to see what national cultures are included and what parts of culture are considered representative of those national cultures. With regard to the second research question, “how those national cultures are represented in the textbooks”, I draw on Gee’s (2005) notion of text analysis to analyze the lexical and grammatical devices used to construct different national cultures in those texts so as to explore the ideological effect of those devices on the child readers.

In this way, the differences in quantity and quality of the cultural knowledge about diverse nations represented in the textbooks—the dominance or marginalization of certain national cultures and the discursive construction of those cultures—can be contextual cues to make inferences of the unequal power relations in the wider sociocultural context. Based on the inferences, the third research question, “what ideology and national cultural identity are constructed in the textbooks”, can be
3.4. Procedures of Data Coding and Analysis

The procedures of data coding and analysis is illustrated in figure 3.1, which will be explained in details in the following sections.

3.4.1. Content Analysis

As illustrated earlier, in Primary English, the cultural information is presented as subordinate to linguistic knowledge, without any discernable structure in itself. To understand the cultural content of Primary English in a systematic way, I take content analysis as the analytic method to explore what national cultures are included in those textbooks because of its effectiveness to analyze unstructured information (Krippendorff, 2004).
Content analysis is “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use” (Krippendorff, 2004, p.18). Through content analysis, the symbolic meaning of the texts can be understood in quantified categories to infer contextual phenomena in the wider sociocultural context of which the texts are a part (Krippendorff, 2004).

Although originated from a quantitative analytical method that “involves the counting of instances of words, phrases, or grammatical structures in written texts that fall into specific categories” (Dörnyei, 2007, p.245), content analysis has now been widely used in qualitative research and proved to be a powerful analytical method in making sense of various forms of media (e.g. written texts, images, videos, etc.) and in interpreting issues of culture, power, social discrimination and gender inequality reflected in a particular context (Rose, 2001; Neuendorf, 2002). Content analysis dealing with qualitative texts often includes qualitative procedures that categories are not predetermined but derived from the data (Dörnyei, 2007).

In content analysis, one central idea is that the rich information of data analyzed is simplified and classified into much fewer and more manageable categories (Weber, 1990). Once established, the analytic categories or constructs can be applicable to a variety of texts and may generate consistent results among different analysts (Krippendorff, 2004). However, it is this data-reduction process that is often vulnerable to issues of reliability and validity. For example, the ambiguity of code definitions often leads to inconsistency in coding results. In this sense, it is important to note that the analysis of texts should be based on rigorous coding procedures to generate reliable
categories that are also valid for the research issue under investigation (Rose, 2001). In order to avoid inconsistent results, this study follows the procedures for content-analytic research adapted from Krippendorff (2004) and Neuendorf (2002). Apart from that, I also invited a second coder, an associate professor in applied linguistics from a well established university in China, to take part in the whole processes of data coding and analysis to make sure that inter-rater consistency is achieved.

Unitization

Unitization is the identification of codable units in the data (Krippendorff, 2004). In content analysis, “a coding unit is an identifiable message or message component” (Neuendorf, 2002, p.71) on which variables are measured. In the current study, the coding unit for analyzing representations of national cultures in Primary English is defined as any explicit message about the facts or truths of a particular culture unique to a country. For example, information about a unique animal or an achievement in a country (e.g. cola bear in Australia and the Great Wall in China) counts as a coding unit.

Data Selection

To examine the cultural knowledge of diverse nations represented in those textbooks, I along with the second coder limited the analysis to written texts, which include verbal texts and story recounts in the main texts, all the reading passages in reading sections, model dialogues in speaking sections, and information notes throughout the 12 books. Other written texts in exercises are excluded because they are often decontextualized sentences or manipulated substitution drills aiming to repeating target linguistics items covered in the previous main texts, model dialogues, or reading
passages.

Since not all the written texts possess cultural messages about diverse nations, I along with the second coder independently examined all the written texts and classified them into two groups: the culture-neutral and the culture-specific. Culture-neutral texts are defined as texts presenting information not explicitly described to be associated with any specific national or regional culture; by contrast, culture-specific texts present explicit cultural information about a particular nation or region. In this study, all the texts are examined at a manifest level (Neuendorf, 2002). In other words, only the explicit information is examined to determine whether a text is culture-neutral or culture-specific. For example, an information passage or a non-fictional text about “big cats”, namely lions, is not considered culture-specific if no explicit information is given about the land or area in which the lions are located. But if a story takes place in Mexico or involves fictitious characters from Mexico, the text would be considered culture-specific as Mexico is introduced as a factual country. When examining fictional texts, we didn’t attempt to explore the deep meaning, i.e. the hidden values or ideologies conveyed by discursive techniques, because those values and beliefs are inclined to be subject to different interpretations by different analysts from different or even the same sociocultural contexts. Although this may be one of the limitations of the study, analysis at a manifest level can present more objective and consistent results free from the biases of the researchers (Neuendorf, 2002).

After the classification was finished, the inter-rater reliability was tested by Krippendorff’s alpha at .93. Disagreements were resolved through discussions which
lead to the revision of the classification criteria. After revision, the reading passages, whether culture-specific or not, are examined along with the pre-reading questions attached to them, because those questions can frame comprehension and give significance to certain part of cultural information. For example, the content of a reading passage about the habits of four wild animals, gorilla, lion, koala bear, and pelican, would be considered culture-neutral. But because of the pre-reading question “which one of the following animals is from Australia”, this passage was identified as culture-specific. At last, the written texts that are culture-neutral were excluded and only those culture-specific texts were numbered for further coding and analysis.

In this way, a message as small as a word or as large as a passage in any culture-specific written text, a main text, a reading passage, a model dialogue or a information note which explicitly describes a festival, a product, an animal, or even a city name as uniquely belonging to a country can count as a coding unit or factual message. Since a written text may contain more than one factual message, there is a possibility that the number of the factual messages is larger than that of the selected written texts, but factual messages about the same element of a national culture were only counted once.

Operationalization

Operationalization is the process of developing measures (Neuendorf, 2002). For content analysis, this means the development of coding schemes. It is of great importance for subsequent data analysis because the quality of coding schemes can largely determine the success or failure of content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004). At this
stage, the identified coding units with similar characteristics are grouped into meaningful categories, both exhausted and mutually exclusive (Neuendorf, 2002). In this study, the coding schemes were developed following the procedures taken from grounded theory (Hennink & Hutter, 2011). The procedures combine both inductive and deductive strategies.

The deductive category “nationality” was developed at the design stage. Since answering the research questions is related to comparisons of the frequency counts of the representations of cultures in terms of nationality, the factual messages would be categorized according to nationality. However, the variables under the category “nationality” were still examined inductively, grounded in the selected data. Altogether, the factual messages are related to cultural information of 15 countries: China, America, Britain, Greece, Australia, Mexico, Egypt, France, Canada, Italy, Brazil, Germany, Japan, Russia, and Singapore. Cultural messages that can not be identified in terms of nationality were identified as “nationality undetermined”.

To develop more inductive categories, I worked independently to read and reread the data. Then I identified all the cultural messages and create memos with descriptions of the messages. Based on the descriptions, I classified the factual messages with similar characteristic into more abstract categories until a point of saturation was achieved. The identified categories and their corresponding definitions are presented in Table 3.1.
Table 3.1.
Identified Categories and Definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>territorial knowledge such as country name or city name in a particular country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>cultural knowledge about historical figures or role models in a particular nation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values and Beliefs</td>
<td>explicit explanation of the hidden values and beliefs behind certain activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custom and Festivals</td>
<td>cultural knowledge about customs and festivals in various national cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>information about sports, household chores, leisure activities, and literacy learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievements</td>
<td>information about material national achievements such as historical buildings and industrial outcomes as well as non-material national achievements such as literature works and space explorations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material Products</td>
<td>information about material products in a particular national culture such as a kite and a teddy bear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Language</td>
<td>information about the national language of a particular nation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Resources</td>
<td>knowledge about animals and natural landscape such as rivers in a particular nation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the developed categories, I coded the data independently. After the initial coding, two months later, I coded the selected data again. The intra-coder reliability was tested through Krippendorff’s alpha. High intra-coder reliability was reached at .97. Then I explained the criteria of coding and the statements of measures to the second coder so that ambiguous expressions would be revised after discussion.

Coding
According to the established coding criteria, the second coder and I coded all the data independently. The inter-rater reliability was also tested through Krippendorff’s \textit{alpha} (.95). Incongruent results were resolved through discussions, which also lead to the revision of the coding criteria. For example, both the sports baseball and the value of playing baseball with family members in an information passage were identified by the second coder as two factual messages belonging to American culture but identified by me as “nationality undetermined” because there is no obvious evidence in the passage that indicates the information is about America. However, after discussions, I found American life is the topic of that unit, so I accepted the second coder’s idea and recoded the selected written texts, which brought about the change that the cultural orientation of a passage should be judged with consideration of the topic of a unit of which it is a part.

Data Analysis and Reporting

After all the data were coded, the results were presented in tables. The numeric frequencies of the factual messages in terms of nationality were compared to see what national cultures are represented and dominant in the textbooks. To explore the depth and the repertoire in which the messages are provided in terms of nationality, the frequencies of other categories and subcategories of the factual messages were also counted.

3.4.2. Text Analysis

After the cultural messages were classified through content analysis in terms of nationality and sub-categories, I, taking Gee’s (2005) notion of discourse analysis,
conducted a text analysis to explore how different national cultures are represented in terms of the sub-categories in the pedagogical texts through various linguistic devices.

Analyzing micro-level linguistic choices on the lexical and grammatical level has long been a key procedure to uncover hidden positions and values (Curdt-Christiansen, 2008; Fairclough, 1992; Liu, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c). The linguistic choices are a sensitive index of social purposes and value position. It indicates a particular way of interpreting the social relations and constructs particular significance that has “indoctrinating effects” (Widdowson, 2007, p.72) or “ideological influences” (ibid.) upon the readers. The dominance of particular perspectives leads to the construction of what Raymond Williams describes as “selective version of a shaping past and a pre-shaped present” (1989, p.58) which provides “historical and cultural ratification of the social order and are an important element of the ‘hegemonic culture’” (p.34), “powerfully operative in the process of social and cultural definition and identification” (p.58). Therefore, the analysis of linguistic mechanism used to construct national cultures in the textbooks under examination can be used as reference to infer the political ideology and the national cultural identity constructed in those textbooks and the unequal power relations in the wider sociocultural context where the textbooks are produced.

In this study, the text covers two themes: “political ideology” and “national cultural identity.” The theme “political ideology” deals with whether texts about diverse national cultures under scrutiny are intended to present “internationalism,” respecting cultural diversity and to offer learners opportunities for cross-cultural understanding and
reflection, or “nationalism,” to elicit love, loyalty, and commitment to their country, representing ethnocentric view of world cultures. The theme “national cultural identity” is closely related to the first theme in the sense that the promotion of the ideology “internationalism” or “nationalism” in those textbooks can either offer alternative identity options or impose a view of world that elicit and construct a centralized and unified national cultural identity.

The text analysis involved examining linguistic devices in the texts. More specifically, it included an examination of “text types,” “cohesive ties,” “lexical choices,” “comparison and contrast,” and “sequencing and juxtaposition” that may connote students’ negative or positive feelings towards a particular nation. Sometimes, for a better understanding, the analysis also involves visual pictures as a complementary means. The analysis results will be presented in terms of the nine sub-categories of a national culture.

3.5. Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I introduce the analytical framework and methods employed in this study. Based on CDA, I take both content analysis and text analysis as analytical methods to examine the representations of national cultures in Primary English. While content analysis is used as a means to provide quantitative statistic about what national cultures and cultural aspects are represented in those textbooks, text analysis is used to uncover how those national cultures are discursively constructed to project certain subjective positions to the child readers. In the next chapter, the findings from content
analysis and text analysis will be presented.
Chapter IV Findings and Discussion

In this chapter, I present both the quantitative and the qualitative results of the present study to show what national cultures are represented in *Primary English* and how they are presented. Firstly, I summarize and report the descriptive statistical results of the content analysis of the representations of cultural knowledge. In addition to the quantitative results, I also provide text analyses of the main sub-categories to illustrate how cultural knowledge in terms of different nations is built and represented through different linguistic devices in the texts. Lastly, I summarize and discuss the results in relation to the sociocultural context of China so as to explore the ideology embedded in those textbooks.

4.1. Results from Quantitative Analyses

The cultural representations in *Primary English* were examined through content analyses of 38 written texts including model dialogues, main texts, reading passages, and notes containing factual cultural knowledge belonging to a particular nation or region. Table 4.1 illustrates the content analysis of the texts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Num. of texts</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Num. of cultural messages</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>60.5%</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>70.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.1 shows the distributions of culture-specific texts and the cultural messages presented in those texts. The number of the texts and cultural messages increase progressively from lower grades to higher grades. Altogether, 82 cultural messages were found in the 38 texts, but only 72 of them were further analyzed with regard to their national linkage. Messages containing the same cultural information but mentioned by more than one text such as “Monkey King,” “Beijing,” “the Chinese language,” and “koala bear” were only counted once. The 72 cultural messages were further analyzed with regard to their national linkage as shown in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2. Cultural Representations by Nationality**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undetermined</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 summarizes the national linkage of the 72 cultural messages. As shown in the table, there are 15 national cultures represented in *Primary English*. Of those cultural messages, 17 are of China (23.6%), 15 are of America (20.8%), 6 are of Britain
(8.3%), 5 are of Greece (6.9%), 4 are of Australia (5.6%), 4 are of Mexico (5.6%), 3 are of Egypt (4.2%), 3 are of France (4.2%), 2 are of Italy (2.8%), 2 are of Canada (2.8%), 2 are of Singapore (2.8%), 1 is of Brazil (1.4%), 1 is of Germany (1.4%), 1 is of Japan (1.4%), and 1 is of Russia (1.4%). Apart from that, 6 of them (8.3%) reflecting cultural information shared by more than one nation were coded as “nationality undetermined”: “the Alpines,” “Children’s Day,” “Father’s Day,” “Teacher’s Day,” “Christmas Day,” and “tlachti” (an ancient North American ball game). The distributions of cultural messages in terms of nationality clearly show that while the textbooks do try to raise students’ global awareness, there is a lopsided emphasis on Chinese and American cultures.

To provide more detailed information about the national differences in representations of cultural knowledge in Primary English, the 6 nationality-undetermined messages were excluded and the remaining 66 cultural messages were further classified into 9 sub-categories, as illustrated earlier in Table 3.1: “Geography (Geo)”, “People (Pp)”, “Values and Beliefs (VB)”, “Customs and Festivals (CF)”, “Activities (Act)”, “Achievements (Ach)”, “Material Products (MP)”, “National Language (NL)”, and “Natural Resources (NR)”. Table 4.3 summarizes the cultural representations according to the sub-categories (see Appendix V for more detailed information).
Table 4.3. Cultural Representations by Sub-Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-categories</th>
<th>Geo</th>
<th>Ach</th>
<th>Act</th>
<th>Pp</th>
<th>CF</th>
<th>NR</th>
<th>VB</th>
<th>MP</th>
<th>NL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>48.5%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
Geo=geography; Ach=achievements; Act=activities; Pp=people; CF=custom and festivals; NR=natural resources; VB=values and beliefs; MP=material products; NL=national language.

As shown from the table, among the 66 cultural messages, 32 are about geographic information (48.5%), 10 are about achievements (15.2%), 8 are about activities (12.1%), 4 are about people (5.6%), 3 are about customs and festivals (4.5%), 3 are about natural resources (4.5%), 2 are about values and beliefs (3.0%), 2 are about material products (3.0%), and 2 are about national languages (3.0%). The large amount of information about national geography seems to suggest that those textbooks are intended to develop students’ sense of national territory.

To provide more information about the national differences in cultural representations in those textbooks, I further categorize the 66 cultural messages in terms of their national linkage and sub-categories. The results are presented in Table 4.4.
Table 4.4. Cultural Representations by Nationality and Sub-Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>NC</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Geo</th>
<th>Ach</th>
<th>Pp</th>
<th>Act</th>
<th>NR</th>
<th>CF</th>
<th>MP</th>
<th>VB</th>
<th>NL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>America</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NN</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>66</strong></td>
<td><strong>32</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
NC=Number of sub-categories covered; NN=Number of nation covered.
Geo=geography; Ach=achievements; Pp=people; Act=activities; NR=natural resources; CF=custom and festivals; MP=material products; VB=values and beliefs; NL=national languages.

In Table 4.4, the 15 nations are ranked in descending order in terms of the number of covered sub-categories. As shown in this table, among all the 15 national cultures, the cultures of Brazil, Canada, Germany, Japan, Russia, and Singapore are most underrepresented: no more indigenous cultural knowledge is provided apart from geographic information. And obviously, American culture with cultural aspects covering 8 of the 9 sub-categories is most sufficiently represented, closely followed by Chinese culture.

In the sub-category of “Geography,” although a certain amount of geographic information is given for all the 15 national cultures, with 6 out of 32 cultural messages...
being about China, there seems to be a slight over-emphasis on Chinese territorial knowledge.

In the sub-category of “Achievements,” the 10 cultural messages are only associated with 6 nations: 4 are of China, 2 are of Britain, 1 is of America, 1 is of Egypt, 1 is of Mexico, and 1 is of France. Clearly, it is the achievements by Chinese people that are more sufficiently represented.

In the sub-category of “People,” only the historical figures or role models in the 4 nations, China, America, Australia, and Italy, are represented in those textbooks.

In the sub-category of “Activities,” the 8 cultural messages cover only 4 nations: 4 are of America, 2 are of Greece, 1 is of China, and 1 is of Britain. It is American culture that is dominant in this sub-category.

In the sub-category of “Natural Resources,” only the natural resources of the 3 nations, America, Australia, and Egypt, are represented in those textbooks.

In the sub-category of “Customs and Festivals,” there are 2 cultural messages about China and 1 about America, customs and festivals in other national cultures are not represented. Likewise, only 1 product in China and 1 in America are introduced in the sub-category of “Material Products.”

While the 2 cultural messages in the sub-category of “Values and Beliefs” are all about American culture, it is the Chinese language that is exclusively emphasized in the sub-category of “National Languages.”

A closer look at Table 4.4 also reveals that certain cultural aspects in certain national cultures are given more emphasis than others in those textbooks. For example,
with 6 out of 17 cultural messages on “Geography,” the territorial knowledge of China seems to be given greater emphasis than other cultural aspects. Apart from the geographic information, it is the human achievements that are more represented in Chinese and British cultures than in American and Greek cultures.

The descriptive statistics in this study have provided some important findings about the national differences in quantity and, to some degree, quality of cultural representations in *Primary English*. Although there are 66 cultural messages about 15 national cultures presented in those textbooks, they are disproportionately distributed in terms of nationality and sub-categories. This reveals that different degrees of importance are attached to different national cultures and different cultural aspects. Even so, it is the knowledge of Chinese and American cultures that have been given more emphasis and are more amply represented than that of other cultures.

However, given the quantitative nature of content analysis, the quantitative analyses based on decontextualized information present inconclusive results as to what national culture is given the greatest emphasis. The reversed order of Chinese and American cultures in Table 4.2 and Table 4.3 suggests that cultural messages about China is larger in number, while cultural messages about America is wider in distribution. Finding out what national culture is given the greatest emphasis in those textbooks entails more detailed qualitative analyses as to what cultural elements in different national cultures are represented and how those cultural elements are portrayed in the textbooks. Consequently, a text analysis of the represented cultural messages in the selected texts was conducted to provide more concrete information about the
national differences in cultural representations in *Primary English*.

### 4.2. Results from Qualitative Analyses

The text analyses reveal both congruencies and discrepancies between the quantitative and qualitative results. On the one hand, in accordance with the statistics shown in Table 4.2 and Table 4.4, the text analyses reinforce the earlier impression that the cultural knowledge is disproportionately represented in those textbooks, with a heavy emphasis on Chinese and American cultures. On the other hand, the qualitative analyses of the selected texts illustrate that discrepancies exist in the textual construction of certain cultural knowledge with regard to different nations. Those discrepancies are most saliently reflected between the textual representations of Chinese culture and other national cultures.

A further examination of the differences in textual representations between Chinese and other cultures would be helpful to answer what national culture is most amply presented. In the following part, I mainly take Gee’s (2005) notion of discourse analysis to examine the most representative texts that contain more concrete information about the cultural representations with regard to the major sub-categories in order to uncover how certain rhetorical strategies are manipulated to serve certain purposes so that the curriculum ideology promoted in *Primary English* can be explored.

#### 4.2.1. Geography

While the statistics in Table 4.3 and Table 4.4 suggest a considerably larger proportion of geographical information in representations of cultural knowledge, the
text analyses show that “Geography” is in fact the sub-category given least attention. In most cases, the geographic information is presented as background knowledge for a certain topic, sparsely distributed in the selected texts. This can be well illustrated in the following text about “Sea cow” (*Primary English*, Book 12 for Grade 6, p. 63): “This is a large animal and it lives in the water. People love this animal but there are only about 1,500 left in the waters near Florida, USA.” In this text, the country USA and the place Florida is introduced as the background information about where the animal sea cow lives. The knowledge about the natural resources (the animal, sea cow) and the geography of America is presented in an objective and plain way.

However, in line with the quantitative results shown in Table 4.4, the text analyses of cultural messages on “Geography” indicate a particular emphasis on the territorial representations of China. The geographic knowledge of China is portrayed more thoroughly not only in quantity but also in quality.

The geographic information about China is not presented merely as subsidiary background knowledge but as important facts to construct students’ sense of the national territory of their own country. In some cases, the geographic knowledge is illustrated with a national map to show the locations of different places such as Beijing and Hong Kong in China, among which the capital city Beijing is often marked with a red star. With this input, students are likely to acquire a good knowledge of their own national territory.

The text analyses also reveal that among the 6 messages of regional information about China, the capital city Beijing is the only one depicted through both illustrations
and words. As a matter of fact, no other city in any other country is considered to be of equal importance. Throughout the textbooks, Beijing is repeatedly portrayed as a global tourist attraction with interesting places (e.g. Beijing Zoo, the Great Wall, and the Tiananmen Square), delicious food (e.g. Beijing duck), and nice weather. The positive portrayal of Beijing is typically reflected in a letter from a Singaporean girl, Su Yun, to her Chinese friend Liu Yinyin (Primary English, Book 12 for Grade 6, p.52):

Text 1

Dear Yinyin,
How are you? I’m back in Singapore now. It’s warmer here than in Beijing. I stayed in Beijing for only one week. I didn’t have enough time for all the interesting places in Beijing. There are so many! I will come again next year. Please tell me more stories about the city.
Take care,
Su Yun

In this text, Beijing is constructed as an attractive city with nice, cool weather and many interesting places. Although this message is not explicitly expressed in Su Yun’s words, it is conveyed through several “cohesive devices” (Gee, 2005, p.191-192). First, after the routine greeting, a comparison in the third sentence between the weather in Singapore and in Beijing is established through the pronoun “here,” which is linked to “in Singapore” in the preceding sentence. In this comparison, the weather in Beijing is portrayed as cooler and, therefore, much more comfortable.

Then there is a causal relationship between the forth and fifth sentences, in which “I stayed in Beijing for only one week” is the reason why “I didn’t have enough time for all the interesting places in Beijing.” The word “only” in the forth sentence indicates that even one week is not long enough to visit all the interesting places in Beijing and
thus helps to highlight the large size of the city. And then, with the omission of the information “interesting places,” the ellipsis used in the seventh sentence “There are too many!” foregrounds the phrase “too many” and therefore successfully emphasizes the large number of interesting places in Beijing. The exclamation mark at the end of the sentence signals Su Yun’s strong feeling of surprise with regard to the number of interesting places in the city. Given all the good things stated about Beijing, the reader would not be surprised that Su Yun expresses her wish to “come again next year” in the next sentence. In this letter, Su Yun’s strong admiration for Beijing is manifested not only by her regrets but also by her eagerness to receive “more stories about the city” from her Chinese friend Liu Yinyin, as expressed in the last sentence, which, I believe, was the main purpose of her writing this letter.

Apparently, the positive portrayal of Beijing in this personal letter by a Singaporean is likely to arouse Chinese students’ pride of and love for their capital city and their country.

4.2.2. Achievements

As shown in Table 4.3 and Table 4.4, there are ten cultural messages in the sub-category “Achievement,” among which 4 are of China, 2 are of Britain, 1 is of America, 1 is of Egypt, 1 is of Mexico, and 1 is of France. A further examination of the sub-types of achievements show that the achievements introduced in those textbooks not only include material achievements such as historical buildings (i.e. Eiffel Tower in France, Pyramids in Mexico and Egypt, and the Great Wall in China) and industrial
achievements (i.e. one of the earliest railways in China), but also non-material achievements such as literary works (i.e. King Arthur and Harry Potter in Britain and Monkey King in China) and space explorations (i.e. the first moon landing by America and the first space trip by China). Clearly, it is the achievements by Chinese people that are more amply represented in this sub-category.

In line with the quantitative analyses, the text analyses show that the differences in the representations of achievements between China and the other 5 nations are not only reflected in quantity but also in the discursive construction of this specific knowledge. The achievements of China are more vividly depicted in the texts than those of other nations. Moreover, in terms of different types of national achievements, different discursive devices are employed to attach significance to the various aspects of Chinese culture. The following text is a good example to show how language can be used to construct a positive image of the material achievements of China (Primary English, Book 10 for Grade 5, p.68).

Text 2

Hi, Lisa,
I can’t wait to tell you this! I went to the Great Wall today! It is amazing! The Great Wall has a history of more than 2,000 years and it is about 6,000 kilometers long! Wow! I was really excited and took many photos. I will show you later. And guess what? I went by train! I met a girl, Lina, on the train. We talked all the way to the Great Wall and we became friends. She told me something about the railway. It is one of China’s earliest railways! Isn’t that interesting?
Yours,
Lydia

In this text, two material achievements by Chinese people are highlighted: the Great Wall and one of the earliest railways in China. In the first paragraph, the Great...
Wall is portrayed as an “amazing” place. Lydia’s amazement at the Great Wall is clearly elaborated in the fifth sentence “The Great Wall has a history of more than 2,000 years and it is about 6,000 kilometers long!” The quantifiers “2,000” and “6,000” make it impressive and almost unbelievable that even as early as more than 2,000 years ago, the Chinese people were able to build a significant construction as long as 6,000 kilometers. The sixth sentence “Wow!” is an obvious positive evaluation mixed with surprise and admiration towards both the Great Wall and the skills and efforts of the ancient Chinese people.

In the second paragraph, the railway to the Great Wall is depicted as of good quality. Although there is no direct evaluative word used to describe the railway, the positive portrayal is constructed implicitly through cohesive ties between the last three sentences. The pronoun “something” in the sentence “She told me something about the railway” is linked to the fact “It is one of China’s earliest railways!” which is considered as “interesting” in the last sentence. The logical relationship between “something” and “interesting” is established by the exclamation mark at the end of the penultimate sentence, which indicates Lydia’s surprise at the fact that even though it has been in use for a long time, the railway still works well. The fact is “interesting” because it is unusual and unexpected. In this context, the word “interesting” contains appreciation of the quality of the railway and the skill of the people who built it. The good quality of the railway, to some degree, indicates that the Chinese industry was highly developed even many years ago. The positive portrayals of the historical building and the industrial outcome discursively construct the image of China as a strong nation.
from the past to the present and of the Chinese people as a people of knowledge and skill; this supports Gee’s (2005) assertion that language, indeed, can be used to construct a particular perspective of the reality.

In this letter, Lydia’s strong personal feeling, her excitement at and admiration for the Great Wall and the old railway, is fully illustrated by her eagerness to share her experience with her friend Lisa (e.g. “I can’t wait to tell you this!” and “And guess what?”) and conveyed through grammatical devices such as the pervasive use of the first person pronoun “I” and the exclamation mark. The informality of the language use in this personal letter creates a “fairly equal status” (Gee, 2005, p.57), a dialogic relationship between the writer and the reader and therefore helps to generate resonance in the reader’s mind. In this way, the favorable impression of the material achievement of China is likely to evoke Chinese students’ pride in and love for their country and the great efforts of their people.

As shown in the preceding part, interactive texts such as personal letters and conversations are widely used as a tool to portray and promote Chinese culture in an emotional and favorable manner, while knowledge of other national cultures are often presented in information texts in a more objective and neutral way. A text about “Ancient Egypt” would be helpful to make a contrast between the discursive construction of the material achievements in Chinese and Egyptian cultures (Primary English, Book 11 for Grade 6, p.9).

Text 3

Ancient Egypt

Egypt is one of the oldest countries in the world. It is in Africa. Most of the
country is desert but there is rich land along the Nile. The Nile is the world’s longest river. It is 6,671 kilometers long. The Nile was very important for ancient Egyptian life. Many great buildings were built along its banks, for example, the great pyramids. There are three pyramids and the highest is 137 meters tall. The Nile is still important for transportation and farming.

In this text, different aspects about the ancient Egypt are introduced: history, location, the environment, and the pyramids. Notice how the pyramids are portrayed in this text. In the sentence “Many great buildings were built along its banks, for example, the great pyramids,” the word “great” is used twice to describe them, but how great those pyramids are is not further illustrated except the information that “There are three pyramids and the highest is 137 meters tall.” It is obvious that the quantifiers “three” and “137m” are unable to generate any sort of amazement or admiration for the buildings like that created by the text about the Great Wall. The objective description of the pyramids as an informational text can also be shown in the absence of evaluative words or punctuations that convey strong personal feelings. Although the word “great” possesses certain positive connotations, it is too general to leave an impression of the pyramids as deep as that of the Great Wall.

The sharp contrast in the discursive constructions of the cultural knowledge between Chinese and other cultures may transmit an implicit message that Chinese culture is the greatest culture in the world and generate a sense of cultural superiority among the Chinese students. And this superiority can be further shown in the following dialogue among three kids, in which the non-material achievements, namely works of literature in Chinese and British cultures are compared (Primary English, Book 10 for Grade 5, p.41).
Text 4

Turn 1: Peter: Hi, Ken. What are you reading?

Turn 2: Ken: Hi. I’m reading King Arthur. It’s a very interesting story.

Turn 3: Peter: Oh, King Arthur! I know the story. But I think Harry Potter is more interesting.

Turn 4: Jean: Well, I agree. But it’s more difficult to read. I’m reading Monkey King. I think it’s the most interesting story of all!

In this text, three kids, Peter, Ken, and Jean are talking about the books that they find interesting. The turn takings in this dialogue form a progressive understanding of the significance of the Chinese classic literary work Monkey King. According to Gee (2005, p.11), language can be used to “make things significant (to give them meaning or value) in certain ways, to build significance.” In this dialogue, different degrees of significance are attached to the three books through the adjective “interesting,” its comparative form “more interesting,” and its superlative form “the most interesting.”

In the first turn, Peter initiates the conversation by asking “Hi, Ken. What are you reading?” Ken answers in the second turn “Hi. I’m reading King Arthur” and makes comments on the book “It’s a very interesting story.” The discursive marker “Oh” and the repetition “King Arthur!” in the third turn seem to show Peter’s alignment with Ken. However, the conjunction “but” signals an adversative relation between Peter’s and Ken’s opinions on the book. Instead of disagreeing directly, Peter continues with an alternative option “I think Harry Potter is more interesting.” In this way, the significance of King Arthur is downplayed and that of Harry Potter is emphasized.

In the forth turn, similarly, Jean uses the discursive marker “Well” and “I agree” to show her alignment with Peter; however, the conjunction “but” indicates that her alignment is just a politeness strategy (Brown & Levinson, 1987) used to mitigate
face-threatening effect. After the conjunction “but,” she immediately states her confronting opinion that the difficulty of language in *Harry Potter* may cause reading problems. What should be noted here is the logical relationship established by the comparative form “more difficult” in the sentence “But it’s more difficult to read,” through which *Harry Potter* is compared not only with *King Arthur* but also with *Monkey King*. The implied meaning is that *Harry Potter* is more difficult to read than both *King Arthur* and *Monkey King*. The comparative logical relationship successfully downplays the significance of *Harry Potter* and highlights the significance of *Monkey King*. The significance of *Monkey King* is further promoted in the last sentence, “I think it’s the most interesting story of all!” In this way, *Monkey King* is discursively portrayed as the most interesting of the three books, easy for children to read, which indicates the implicit causal relationship between “I’m reading *Monkey King*” and the rest of the sentences in the forth turn. It shows that Jean’s choice, *Monkey King*, is a wise one, based on comparisons between the three books with regard to the two aspects: interestingness and the difficulty of language.

In this dialogue, both *King Arthur*, representing classic literature, and *Harry Potter*, representing contemporary literature in Britain are portrayed as either less interesting or more difficult to read than *Monkey King*. The significance of the British literary works illustrated in turn 2 and 3 simply serves as “a background context and launching off point against which” the significance of the Chinese classic work *Monkey King* “is foregrounded as the main or focal point” (Gee, 2005, p.3).

The text analyses show that presenting different cultures in a comparative way is a
common device, used to promote Chinese culture while at the same time downplaying other national cultures. The following conversation excerpt about the non-material achievements, space explorations, can be a good example to show how the achievement of China is more positively depicted (Primary English, Book 10 for Grade 5, p.62).

Text 5

Turn 1: Mocky: Look, who is he?
Turn 2: Ann: He is an American astronaut.
Turn 3: Ann: He is the first man on the moon.
Turn 4: Mocky: What did he do on the moon?
Turn 5: Ann: He walked on the moon and took photos there.
Turn 6: Mocky: Who is the first man in space?
Turn 7: Ken: I don’t know.
Turn 8: Ken: But I know the first Chinese man in space is Yang Liwei.
Turn 9: Mocky: Wow, he is so great.

This conversation takes place in a space museum between Ann, Ken and the anthropomorphized monkey, Mocky. Notice how differently the space explorations by America, the Soviet Union (Russia), and China are portrayed through the descriptions of their three representative astronauts. When it comes to the American astronaut, Neil A. Armstrong, the only information provided is about his nationality—“He is an American astronaut”, his personal achievement—“He is the first man on the moon,” and what he did on the moon—“He walked on the moon and took photos there”. Surprisingly, there is no information about the astronaut’s name and any comments on his personal achievements. The significance of the first landing on the moon for all mankind is largely downplayed. What the astronaut achieved is plainly described as something that everyone can do: walking and taking photos. When it comes to the first trip in space, strikingly, no information at all is provided that relates the great event to
the Soviet Union (Russia) and its famous astronaut, Yuri Alekseyevich Gagarin, let alone any comments on its epoch-making significance for the entire world.

However, the conversation interestingly shows that although Ken doesn’t know who the first man in space was, he clearly knows Yang Liwei and that he was “the first Chinese man in space”. The conjunction “but” in turn 8 seems to imply that the space exploration by China is more well-known and, therefore, more significant than the first space trip by the Soviet Union and the first moon landing by America. There is not only information provided about the name of the Chinese astronaut but also positive comments on him. The word “Wow” in turn 9 clearly shows Mocky’s admiration for Yang Liwei, a “great” Chinese person. Apart from that, additional information is also presented in the main text alongside the conversation in terms of when and what Yang Liwei did in his space trip. Apparently, the additional information, “He went around the earth in a spaceship on October 15th, 2003” (Primary English, Book 10 for Grade 5, p.63) depicts China’s space exploration in a more glorious way, compared to that about America’s first moon landing, since going around the earth in a spaceship which must be supported by advanced science and technology seems to be more challenging and significant than simply walking and taking photos on the moon.

Through selective representations of the reality, the achievements of U.S.A. and the Soviet Union (Russia) are unfortunately downplayed so as to highlight the extraordinary achievement of Chinese people. Clearly, the positive portrayal of Chinese people as great people and China as a modern nation with advanced science and technology is aimed at strengthening Chinese students’ pride in their own country.
The text analyses in terms of achievements illustrated in this part reveal an emphasis on the promotion of the achievements of China. Through various discursive devices, China is consistently constructed as a great and strong nation with proud achievements throughout history. From the Great Wall to the railway, from the railway to its successful attempt on space exploration, the texts establish a unique image of China as a modern nation of long history, characterized not only by its past glory, but also by highly developed modern industry and advanced science and technology, distinctive from its counterparts. However, for the other 5 national cultures, there are only partial representations. The selected achievements in the other 5 nations may mislead the students to believe that there are no other achievements in Mexico and Egypt than the ancient pyramids, and possibly the Eiffel Tower is the only great thing reflecting France’s past industrial development, and there may not be any achievements of the past or present that American people can feel proud of, except its advanced science and technology.

4.2.3. People

As Table 4.4 shows, there are only 4 cultural messages about people in 4 nations, namely, Yang Liwei in China, President Roosevelt in America, Marco Polo in Italy, and Lawrence Hargrave in Australia. However, the text analyses show that the four people are not discursively constructed in the same way. The following text containing information about Marco Polo and Lawrence Hargrave can be a good example illustrating the discursive differences in knowledge construction in terms of different
nations (*Primary English*, Book 12 for Grade 6, p.33).

**Text 6**

**Kites**

Do you know how to fly a kite? Do you know how to make a kite? Can you describe the shapes of kites? Today, people all over the world make and fly kites for fun.

Kites were the first flying machines. People in China used kites as flying machines more than 2,000 years ago. In Marco Polo’s report, the Chinese used big kites to carry people up into the sky.

The idea of kites helped people to make planes. In 1894 in Australia, Lawrence Hargrave made four very big kites. These four kites lifted him 5 meters into the air. Today, the wings of planes are just like kites.

Now people around the world use kites in festivals. Kites can have all kinds of colors and shapes, but the most important thing is to fly well.

In this text, both Marco Polo and Lawrence Hargrave are introduced as the background information about “kites.” What’s interesting is in the second paragraph, Marco Polo is indirectly introduced not as a national figure of Italy but as historical evidence to show that kites has a long history in China; even 2,000 ago, ancient Chinese people were able to use “big kites to carry people up into the sky.” It was not until 1894 that the Australian engineer Lawrence Hargrave was inspired by kites and started to build flying machines, much later than Chinese people. Given the generic features of informational text, this text presents the knowledge in a very objective way without any comments on either Marco Polo or Lawrence Hargrave’s personal achievements. This presentation of cultural knowledge, although not in an explicit way, reinforces the image of China as a nation of long history and the Chinese people as a people of great ability.

In a same vein, in a text about how the toy teddy bear came into being, the former US President Theodore Roosevelt is simply introduced as the person whose name was
given to the toy to commemorate his not killing a small bear while hunting. Although in this text Roosevelt is described as a kind person, his good deed may not be considered as “great” as that of Yang Liwei by Chinese students.

As shown in Text 6, the Chinese figure Yang Liwei is portrayed as a “great” person. His “great” image is even further constructed by a realistic picture of him along with the conversation, in which Yang is in his astronaut suit, smiling and waving his hands against the backdrop of the national flag of China. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996), visual display can construe evaluative stance. The picture of Yang is a close-up shot, mainly showing his head and shoulders, creating a short, almost intimate distance from the viewer while Yang’s facial features are presented in an easily recognizable way. Moreover, with the white suit in sharp contrast to the red national flag, the picture helps generate an unforgettable impression of Yang Liwei and impart a strong sense of admiration for him.

It is worth noting that in those textbooks, Yang Liwei is the only Chinese person in reality that has been represented. This selective presentation of Chinese people reveals an emphasis on constructing the image of China as a modern nation with advanced science and technology. The promotion of Yang Liwei as a great person and an icon of science and technology may have its roots in and reconstruct the political discourse of “pro-science and technology” (Liu, 2005a) in China where science and technology are considered important means to the country’s modernization and economic development. In promoting Yang Liwei as a great person, the textbook may also try to set him as a role model for Chinese students to follow and arouse their enthusiasm for science and
technology.

4.2.4. Activities, National Language, and Customs and Festivals

As shown in Table 4.4, there are 8 cultural messages about activities, among which 4 are about America, 2 are about Greece, 1 is about China, and 1 about Britain. While Kongfu is introduced as representative of traditional activity in Chinese culture and the Olympic Games and Marathon as representative of sports originated in Greece, the activities representing American culture are household chores, baseball, children’s literacy learning, and extracurricular activities. For Britain, only the literacy learning is mentioned.

Although at first sight, it seems that American culture is dominant in this sub-category, the 2 cultural messages about the literacy activity in America and Britain are, as a matter of fact, American and British kids learning the Chinese language. This, however, gives an indirect representation of the global influence of the Chinese language, as shown in the text (Primary English, Book 11 for Grade 6, p.4): “Children in America and Britain also learn foreign languages. Some of them learn Chinese. The tones of Chinese are the most difficult for them.” Although the text indicates that only “some” children in America and Britain learn Chinese, the word “also” seems to equate the status of the Chinese language to that of the English language: both of them are learned as foreign languages in other countries. This ideal equation masks the fact that English, as an international language, is more widely learned around the world than any other language. Moreover, it also ignores that fact the global spread of English has
resulted in complacent and dismissive attitudes towards other languages among people in Anglophone countries (Crystal, 1997). Those attitudes, as pointed by Mackay and Bokhorst-Heng (2008), can be clearly reflected in the declining number of students studying modern foreign languages in America and Britain.

Although the representation of the popularity of the Chinese language is biased, this representation clearly reflects the recent movements to preserve the status and purity of the Chinese language in political field, illustrated earlier. While learning English has been promoted nationwide by the central government as the means for achieving modernity and global power, great concerns have also been given to its side effects that the status of the Chinese language could be undermined by English, and that Chinese culture could be “contaminated” by conflicting ideologies associated with the English language. In this sense, the representation of the popularity of the Chinese language in America and Britain can be considered as resistance to Westernization and the global influence of English.

The emphasis on the popularity of Chinese culture can be further shown in the following text excerpt (Primary English, Book 12 for Grade 6, p.51).

Text 7

Mark lives in New York. He likes Kongfu every much. He goes to a Kongfu class twice a week. And now he’s learning Chinese. He thinks he can speak a lot, but his writing is bad. Mark is a baseball player on his school team.

In this text, the portrayal of the popularity of Chinese culture in America is illustrated by Mark, the American boy’s love for the traditional Chinese activity Kongfu and his enthusiasm for learning Kongfu and the Chinese language. When Chinese
students read this text about their own culture being loved and learned by people in other counties, it is likely that they will experience a strong sense of pride in their own language and their own culture.

However, the portrayal of the popularity of Chinese culture in other countries, typically in America, is often accompanied by a resistant and ethnocentric stance toward American culture. This stance can be clearly illustrated in the different attitudes shown by the Chinese girl, Tanya and the American boy, Kevin, towards foreign cultures in the following conversation (Primary English, Book 12 for Grade 6, p.43).

**Text 8**

Turn 1: Tanya: Kevin, tell me something about Halloween. It is a big festival in your country, isn’t it?
Turn 2: Kevin: Yes, it is a big festival in USA. It’s on October 31st.
Turn 3: Tanya: What do you do on the festival?
Turn 4: Kevin: In the evening, we often dress up and go to our neighbors’ houses. We knock at the door and ask for candies. We also make pumpkin lanterns.
Turn 5: Tanya: Pumpkin lanterns? That’s interesting. We have a special festival with lanterns.
Turn 6: Kevin: That’s the Lantern Festival, isn’t it? When is the festival?
Turn 7: Tanya: It is usually in February, but sometimes it is in January.
Turn 8: Kevin: What do you do on the festival?
Turn 9: Tanya: Well, we make lanterns for the festival. In the evening we usually have a lantern show. We also eat a special food tangyuan for the festival.
Turn 10: Kevin: Wow, tangyuan, sounds great. It must be very delicious.

In this conversation, the American boy, Kevin, and the Chinese girl, Tanya, introduce the festivals in their own cultures, Halloween and the Lantern Festival, to each other. Interestingly, Tanya does not show obvious interest in Halloween, although the conversation is initiated by her. Her attention is mainly focused on pumpkin lanterns,
something also shared by the Chinese Lantern Festival. In turn 5, “That’s interesting,” followed by “We have a special festival with lanterns” implies that the comment “interesting” is not on Halloween or pumpkin lanterns but on the similarity between Halloween and the Lantern Festival. In this way, Tanya successfully changes the topic to the Lantern Festival, and the fact that China also has a festival with lanterns to some degree downplays the uniqueness of American culture. Then in turn 10, after Tanya introduces the Lantern Festival, Kevin shows great interest in the special food, tangyuan, with the word “Wow,” followed by positive evaluations—“sounds great” and “It must be very delicious”. What’s interesting is that even without knowing what tangyuan is made of, Kevin strongly believes that “it must be very delicious” simply because it “sounds great.” Undoubtedly, the exaggerative portrayal of the popularity of Chinese culture among people in Anglophone countries, especially those in America, in this conversation and elsewhere would help Chinese students to establish pride in their own culture. They may also take it for granted that Chinese culture is as influential as, and even superior to, American culture.

The different attitudes of Tanya and Kevin towards Halloween and the Lantern Festival are an evident sign of promotion of Chinese culture and resistance to American culture; it also reflects how Chinese and American cultures are unequally represented in those textbooks. Although the quantitative statistics suggest that American culture is wider than Chinese culture in distribution of sub-categories, the text analyses show that American culture is often presented as objective knowledge without any attempt to promote it. The following text about baseball, a popular sport in American culture,
would be helpful to make this point clear (**Primary English**, Book 12 for Grade 6, p.9).

**Text 9**

Play baseball with the family

The weather gets warmer and warmer. My family begins to play baseball in the backyard. We play for hours in the afternoon. My sister and I learn a lot of skills from this. We learn how to throw a ball, how to hit, and how to catch.

Our dad usually works as a coach. With his help, we learn how to play the sport. While playing, we also learn from each other and help each other.

The game of baseball is a chance for everyone to learn and grow. It is a team game. And the most important thing is to have fun. Winning isn’t important. We don’t sit at home the whole summer! Playing baseball with the family is really fun!

In this text, although baseball is described as an important family game, a “fun” activity, the focus of this text is on explicit explanation of the value of this game, namely why playing baseball with the family is important in American culture. The central idea that “the baseball game is a chance for everyone to learn and grow” is presented, elaborated and restated throughout the text. Given the expository nature of the text, the use of the first pronouns “we” and “our” excludes the reader and creates a distant writer-reader relationship, making the fun of playing baseball with the family far from convincing for Chinese students, as baseball is not part of their culture. In this way, this text may only serve as informative input for Chinese students rather than raising their love for the game.

4.3. The Construction of National Identity and Nationalism in Primary English

The findings from the quantitative and qualitative analyses show that although cultural knowledge about different nations is provided in **Primary English** textbooks, it is not proportionately nor neutrally represented. Greater emphasis has been on the
representation of China and Chinese culture as distinctive from that of other nations and national cultures: not only is there more cultural knowledge about China, but it is presented in a more ample and favorable way.

Since the emphasis on the uniqueness of a nation and a national culture is essential to the discursive construction of national cultural identities (Wodal, et al., 2009), the distinctive way of representing China and Chinese culture in those textbooks helps to construct a particular perspective of reality, through which a distinctive Chinese identity can be projected to the child reader. Firstly, by presenting geographic knowledge of China, the textbooks writers not only intend to raise the students’ sense of national territory, but also to inject a sense of pride in and love of their country and its capital city Beijing. Through selective representation of national achievements in China and in other nations in a comparative way, the authors also try to reinforce the sense of national pride by downplaying the significance of achievements in other nations and asserting the greatness, uniqueness, and superiority of Chinese culture over other national cultures. The sense of national pride and cultural superiority is further cultivated through a portrayal of the global influence and popularity of the Chinese language and Chinese traditions, typically in Anglo-American countries.

Moreover, by highlighting the significance of the modern achievements, there is an obvious attempt to reconstruct the image of China not only as a country with ancient civilization but also as a modern nation with proud achievements in industry and astronautics. The attempt to construct the new image of China is clearly reflected in the selective representation of Chinese people, Yang Liwei. By setting him as a role model,
the textbook writers also try to develop Chinese students’ interest and enthusiasm for science and technology, which is essential for the country’s success in the global competition of today and in the future. Incorporating the discourse of “pro-science and technology” (Liu, 2005), the texts in Primary English illuminate “the vision of further achievements” through which “the orientation of the nation” (Tsui & Tollefson, 2007, p.10) could be anticipated and a sense of commitment to the nation’s further development evoked and strengthened.

The selective representations of diverse national cultures and various textual and discursive devices employed in Primary English help Chinese students develop a sense of national pride and love for their country and make them more willingly identify with their national cultural background. Apparently, the discourse of Primary English is a discourse of nationalism, in which the unique image of China and Chinese culture is being pursued through the very language of English. This discourse clearly shows that like many Asian countries (Tsui & Tollefson, 2007a) such as Japan (Hashimoto, 2007) and Korea (Yim, 2007), while English teaching is promoted as an important means to strengthen China’s economic and political power in an era of globalization, it has been appropriated and reconstructed as a new language of nationalism, a mediational tool to foster national identity and national pride in Chinese culture.

The discourse of nationalism in those textbooks is clearly an echo of the curriculum rhetoric that English teaching should strive to cultivate nationalism and patriotism and establish a sound view of life (MOE, 2001c). Obviously, the sound view of life established in Primary English is a sense of pride and love for China and Chinese
culture. However, with too much emphasis on promoting Chinese culture, the textbooks also under-represent and in some ways downplay other national cultures and fail to represent cultural knowledge in a realistic way. As a consequence, the biased representations are likely to generate an ethnocentric attitude with disregard of other nations’ cultures. This attitude may be an obstacle to achieve the goal of “cross-cultural understanding”, expressed in the curriculum.

The findings seem to call into question Yang’s (2004) conclusion that the newer textbooks represent national cultures in a balanced manner and has a shifted focus on international understanding instead of ideological and political instruction. Instead, the current study indicates that while various national cultures are included to feature a certain degree of “internationalism,” much more efforts have been made by the textbook writers to promote Chinese nationalism. To meet this political purpose, the texts in those textbooks more or less cast “foreign cultures in a poor light,” which contributes little to “international understanding of other nations” (Yang, 2004, p.85). The findings from the current studies seem to indicate that content analysis without a critical-sociocultural framework on which Yang’s study is based may have simplified the complexity of sociopolitical issues involved in textbook production. Given the elementary English language textbooks examined in Yang’s are also authorized by the Chinese government, the same ideology should also have been reflected in those textbooks.

The closed discourse of nationalism constructed in *Primary English* seems to reinforce the essentialist view of the relation of textbook discourse to dominant ideology, incongruent with the assumption (You, 2005; Xiong, in press) that English textbooks are
“heterogamous sites where alternative and different perspectives and voices are competing with the dominant discourses” (Xiong, in press). However, the discrepancies may be due to different data resources. While both You and Xiong focus on English textbooks for students at tertiary and secondary levels respectively, the textbooks analyzed in this study are for primary students. Since childhood is the critical period to raise children’s awareness of cultural and social differences (Weninger & Williams, 2005) and written texts are resources for socializing them into a particular culture (Curdt-Christiansen, 2008), there might be pedagogic concerns that textbooks with conflicting discourses could have a negative impact on learners’ construction of national cultural identity at this level. However, it would be less likely that students at secondary or tertiary level lose their national identity after they have completed their socialization into their first culture.

Although the closed discourse of Primary English may provide little opportunity for students to question the status quo, the emphasis on Chinese nationalism in English education functions as a counterexample of the linguistic imperialism argument (Phillipson, 1992). It highlights the local agency in the context of China in mitigating the side effects of learning English and shows how English is appreciated for the country’s linguistic and cultural autonomy, “rather than serving as a ‘Trojan Horse’ to promote Anglo-American values at the expense of undermining the local cultural and linguistic integrity” (Xiong, in press, p.14).
4.4. Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the results of the present study and attempted to account for the national differences in representations in those textbooks under scrutiny. The discussion reveals that the selection and representation of national cultures in textbooks have political and ideological connotations. By deliberate choices of various textual and rhetorical devices, the texts in Primary English construct the uniqueness of China and Chinese culture and position the child readers to read in ways that privilege a particular version of the world, through which they are willing to identify themselves with their nation. The findings from this study may have several implications, which constitute the major subject in the next chapter.
Chapter V Conclusion

In this chapter, I review and summarize the major findings of this study, discuss the important theoretical and practical implications for language teaching, policy making, curriculum design, and textbook evaluation. To conclude, I also point out the limitations of the study and offer suggestions for future research.

5.1. Summary of the Study and Major Findings

This study has examined the local policy responses in the context of China to the tension between the need to promote English learning and the need to preserve national cultural identities. The in-depth review of the language policy decision making and curriculum developments against the backdrop of globalization in China clearly shows that policies promoting the acquisition and use of English are linked to discourses of resistance to the hegemonic effect of English and preservation of a strong sense of Chinese national identity. The pro- and counter-hegemonic discourses around English have also been reflected in the national English curriculum rhetoric: while culture learning is promoted to strengthen cross-cultural communications and to develop learners’ global perspective, equal emphasis has been given to the cultivation of a strong sense of nationalism.

To explore how the political ideology is delivered to the child readers through ELT, I have conducted an analysis of the cultural representations in one of the authorized series of English language textbooks, Primary English. Adopting CDA as the analytical
framework, I use both content analysis and text analysis to divulge what national cultures are represented and how they are represented in those textbooks to explore the embedded ideology.

The findings show that there are 15 national cultures included in the textbooks, but they are neither evenly nor neutrally represented. Although the quantitative statistics based on content analysis suggest an equal emphasis on American and Chinese cultures, the text analysis reveals that great emphasis has been given to the promotion of Chinese culture in those textbooks. Through selective representations and various linguistic devices, the textbook authors successfully construct a particular discourse of nationalism that emphasizes the uniqueness of China and Chinese culture while downplaying the significance of others. In those textbooks, China is frequently portrayed as a modern nation of long history, immense geographic size, and great achievements, the Chinese people is portrayed as a people of ability, and the Chinese language and Chinese traditions as something that enjoys global popularity. The positive image of China and Chinese culture discursively constructed in those textbooks helps to cultivate in the child readers a strong sense of national pride and commitment, on which a distinctive Chinese national can be constructed and positioned to the child readers.

5.2. Implications of the Study

The study has both theoretical and practical implications for textbook evolution and curriculum design, and English language teaching. Theoretically, drawing on the framework of CDA, it provides empirical support to the widely asserted assumption that
textbooks are essential means to transmit the dominant ideology (Apple, 1992; Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991) that influence learners’ identity formation (Shardakova & Pavlenko, 2004). There is no exception for English language textbooks. The findings clearly show that ELT is not a neutral entity but cultural practice, which has to be understood in relation to its historical perspective and sociocultural context. Likewise, what national cultures should be included and how they should be represented in English language textbooks need to be understood with regard to the global and local power relations. The findings from the current study clearly show that the cultural representations in Primary English are ideological conditioned, which reflect the local politics in resolving the paradox of preserving national cultural identity and promoting a foreign language that embodies different values, cultures, and traditions. The essential discourse of “Chineseness” revealed in Primary English indicates that like in other non-English speaking countries such as Japan and Korea, the “new policies to promote early English study in elementary school are rationalized within a nationalist framework” (Tollefson & Tsui, 2007, p.264). Within this framework, fostering national pride and national identity are crucial components in the national project of teaching English to resolve the global-local tensions.

Those findings from the current study also problematize the current approach in EIL discourse towards culture teaching and textbook evolution that celebrate diversity and focuses on international understanding and effective communication “as if it had no links to social inequality and no structural or material effects” (McKinney & Norton, 2008). By illustrating how the cultural representations in those textbooks relate to the
wider sociopolitical context, this study may function as a good example of analysis of cultural content in English language textbooks from a critical, sociocultural perspective.

In this study, the analyses of the texts in *Primary English* show that certain linguistic devices can be used to construct particular perspectives of the reality and influence how students understand their relationship to the society and culture of the language they are learning and thus determine how they identify with the society and culture they are living with. Therefore, the current study also contributes to the understanding of the role of language teaching in learners’ identity construction by making connections between textbooks, political ideology, and learners’ national cultural identity. While it is often assumed that nationality is subsumed in race and ethnicity (Murray & Christison, 2011), the national Chinese identity discursively constructed in *Primary English* clearly shows how learners’ identity construction relates to their experiences in their interactions with the larger sociopolitical context. It is not solely determined by “the physical evidence of assignment of citizenship by birth” (Murray & Christison, 2011, p.6) but positioned, placed, and shaped by the structural forces in a given society (Tollefson & Tsui, 2007c). English language textbooks, as one of social sources students interact with, play a role in influencing students’ identity formation. Apart from that, it also indicates that language is not a neutral tool to represent the world but a powerful means of “control and persuasion” (Widdowson, 2007, p.72), in this case, to construct child readers’ national cultural identity. Since national identification is fundamental to human life and has become more and more significant in an era of intense globalization (Tollefson & Tsui, 2007c), the current study
also has practical implication for English language textbook authors to design texts that can more effectively deliver the dominant certain ideologies.

More importantly, this study also has pedagogical implication for language education. By addressing how textbooks are related to political ideology, it can foster language teachers’ critical reading and understanding of curriculum texts and help them to guide students to discover the ideology embedded in textbooks. Since the textbooks authorized by the government often provide sanctioned perspectives of the reality, alternative texts can be used to help students identify contradictions within these dominant ideologies. As Carlson (1989) notes, “Only when students are exposed to varied perspectives and interpretations can they develop critical thinking skills and a more complex understanding of historical events and developments” (p. 54). As for culture teaching, multiple viewpoints of different national cultures in this world can, in a real sense, widen students’ horizons, enrich their life experience, offer opportunities for cross-cultural reflection and identity expansion, and ultimately facilitate learners’ whole-person development.

5.3. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Although this study has offered some implications, it must be noticed that there are also limitations that should be address in further research in this area. Since the primary interest of this study is to explore what and how different national cultures are represented in English language textbooks, my analysis of the cultural representations in *Primary English* only focuses on the explicit information about the cultural knowledge
of particular nations in the written texts. For the purpose of reliability and validity of the research, the analysis of the fictional texts only limits to a manifest level, without taking into consideration the hidden values or ideologies embedded in them. As I mentioned earlier, although this selection can generate more objective and consistent results, there may be important information missed in this study. The excluded texts as well as the selected fictional texts may contain cultural knowledge that need to be analyzed in further research so as to explore whether the values and cultural assumptions have an influence on the construction of Chinese identity.

The focus on written texts also indicates another limitation of this study that leaves visual texts untouched. Since images are pervasively used in textbooks at primary level and are said to have more direct impact on children’s perception of the world (Rose, 2001), further research involving analyzing both the written and visual texts may hopefully provide more information about how multimodal discourses orient values in texts and shape perspectives and identity of the child readers.

Finally, although the findings of this study suggest that there is an ideological effect of textbooks on students’ national identity construction, the meanings constructed in textbooks cannot ultimately be guaranteed (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991). As Hall (1980) argues, the dominant-hegemonic position in which the reader accepts the preferred meaning is only one of several reading positions which are possible. And indeed research confirms that oppositional readings do occur and teachers and students can seek to subvert specific ideological content (Canagarajah, 1999). Since this study only focuses on the inscription of meanings rather than on the ways in which such
meanings may be challenged in the classroom, further empirical studies as to how the textbooks are actually used by teachers and students and what kind of effect has been actually impacted on them would be helpful for us to understand the complex relationship between textbooks, ideology, and learners’ identity.
References


for English curriculum—For senior high schools]. Beijing: Beijing Normal University Press.


Appendices

Appendix I Sample Main Text

Unit 5 He’s my father

1. Hi, Mocky. Come in.
2. She’s my mother. That’s her car.
3. Mom, this is Mocky.
4. Hello, Mocky.
5. He’s my father. That’s his boat.
6. Dad, this is Mocky.
7. Hello, Mocky.
Appendix II Sample Exercise

Learn to Say

He's my father. That's his boat.

He's my friend, Mooky. That's his bag.

She's my sister, Kate. That's her computer.

She's my mother. That's her car.

Listen to This

Listen and draw lines.
Appendix III Sample Uncle Booky’s Storytime

1. Daddy, Daddy...
   Let me help you.

2. Is he your Daddy?
   No, he isn’t.
   He’s a snake.

3. Is he your Daddy?
   No, he isn’t.
   He’s a frog.

4. Is he your Daddy?
   No, he isn’t.
   He’s a turtle.

5. Are you his Daddy?
   No, I’m not. I have no baby.

6. Help! Help!
   Come on, my baby. Follow me.
Appendix IV Sample Story Recount in Main Text

It was Sunday yesterday. Ken and Ann didn’t go to school. They went to the museum with Mooky. They saw many photos of planets there. Mooky was excited. He saw photos of the moon and the earth. They looked beautiful.
Then they saw a photo of an astronaut. It was the first man on the moon. The man walked on the moon and took some photos. Who was the first man in space? Ken didn't know, but he knew Yang Liwei is China's first astronaut in space. He went around the earth in a spaceship on October 15th, 2003.
### Appendix V Distributions of Cultural Messages by Nationality and Sub-categories

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**Notes:**
Geo=geography; Ach=achievements; Act=activities; Pp=people; CF= custom and festivals; NR=natural resources; VB=values and beliefs; MP=material products; NL=national language.