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Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Urmia University

Evaluating the Global Orientation of Chinese Senior Secondary English Textbooks: A Global Englishes Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the extent to which the 2019 edition of New Senior English for China (NSEFC 2019), a widely adopted English textbook series developed in response to China's 2017 national curriculum standards, conceptualises English as a global language from a Global Englishes (GE) perspective. Using an adapted Global Englishes Language Teaching framework, it investigates whether the textbook series reflects key GE tenets across four dimensions: English users and communication, models of English, cultural representation and explicit GE-related concepts. Findings reveal partial and uneven alignment between the representations in NSEFC 2019 and key GE perspectives. While the textbooks broaden cultural representation and introduce concepts such as English varieties and intercultural communication, English-user diversity is represented unevenly, with limited inclusion of non-Chinese L2 users, and native-speaker norms remain prominent in language models. Furthermore, the textbooks display coexistence of discourses of diversity and native-speaker normativity within the same textbook units, revealing an internal tension between acknowledging English as a global language and maintaining traditional pedagogical assumptions. The research calls for clearer curricular guidance on the global diversity of English, more systematic integration of GE-related perspectives in textbooks and critical mediation of such materials in classroom practice.

Keywords: global Englishes; global Englishes language teaching; English language teaching; teaching materials; textbook

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: 27 July 2026 **Revised version received:** 06 Oct. 2026

Accepted: 07 Oct. 2026 **Available online:** 31 Oct. 2026

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doi 10.30466/ijltr.2026.57735.3510

Introduction

The global spread of English, driven by globalisation and a substantial increase in the number of English speakers, has resulted in significant changes in language use. At present, the number or L2 English users has far exceeded that of L1 English users (Crystal, 2003). Consequently, English is increasingly used as a lingua franca across international contexts, creating a wide variety of communication forms (Jenkins, 2015; Galloway & Rose, 2015). These developments have given rise to the field of Global Englishes (GE), which examines the diversity, plurality and fluidity of English use, users and functions in today's multilingual world (Marlina, 2025; Rose et al., 2021).

Despite the fact that the hierarchical pattern of global language has been continuously shifting (Pan, 2015), traditional English language teaching (ELT) continues to privilege native-speaker norms and Anglophone contexts (Rose & Galloway, 2019). The tension between the global spread of English use and the normative authority of native-speaker English has become a central concern in GE scholarship. This inevitably raises the key question for ELT: how far do contemporary teaching materials reflect the dynamic and complex sociolinguistic realities of the language they aim to teach?

Textbooks are a particularly important aspect for examining this issue. As fundamental components of ELT, they are the main source of language input and practice in classrooms (Richards, 2001) and also key tools for transmitting language and cultural knowledge (Cunningsworth, 2002). Although textbooks only account for one side of classroom practice, they hold considerable and often unavoidable influence on language teaching and how students perceive English (Matsuda, 2012b). Due to this influence, textbooks play an important role in reflecting the changes int the status of English and its global diversity. However, many ELT materials continue to privilege 'standard' UK and US varieties (Lindqvist & Soler, 2024; Matsuda, 2012b; Shin et al., 2011), a pattern that seems also prevalent in Chinese ELT materials (Fang et al., 2022; Hu & McKay, 2014; Wen, 2012).

In China, the reforms of the National English Curriculum (NEC) in recent years have responded to the changing role of English, emphasizing the importance of international communication, intercultural competence and awareness of cultural diversity (Fang et al., 2022; Liu & Fang, 2022). These curricular orientations provide a relevant background for examining whether and how the global diversity of English is reflected in widely used educational materials. Nevertheless, despite the growing attention to global dimensions in the NEC, there remain insufficient research on how Chinese ELT textbooks have represented the diversity of English.

Against this background, the present study adopts a GE perspective to examine the 2019 edition of *New Senior English for China* (NSEFC 2019 hereafter), one of China's core senior secondary English textbook series (Lu et al., 2022), published by the People's Education Press (PEP), a major textbook publisher administered by the Ministry of Education (MoE). Given PEP's central role in translating national curriculum requirements into teaching materials, examining NSEFC 2019 provides an important lens into textbook representations of linguistic and cultural diversity within the national curriculum context. Drawing on an adapted GELT framework, the study analyses four dimensions of representation: English users and communication, models of English, cultural representation and concepts related to GE. By identifying to what extent textbooks reflect language and cultural diversity of English users in today's world, the study makes practical contributions to textbook development and ELT practice to ensure that future materials better meet the evolving needs of English learners in a globalised landscape.

Global Englishes and Global Englishes Language Teaching

Kachru's (1996) influential Three Circles model provides a useful starting point for understanding the global diffusion of English across the Inner, Outer and Expanding Circles (IC, OC and EC). While the model remains valuable for describing the worldwide distribution of English, the increasing fluidity of English in the contemporary world challenges the fixed boundaries between these categories. This shift has prompted scholars to adopt more dynamic perspectives, most notably the framework of GE.

GE offers a robust paradigm for examining the 'linguistic, sociolinguistic, and sociocultural diversity and fluidity of English use and English users' (Rose & Galloway, 2019, p. 4). It serves as an umbrella term that includes World Englishes (WE), English as a lingua franca (ELF), English as an international language (EIL) and translanguaging while drawing on the Multilingual Turn (Rose & Galloway, 2019). In addition, GE also involves some peripheral issues such as globalisation, linguistic imperialism, education, language policy and planning (Galloway & Rose, 2015).

GELT translates GE principles into a pedagogical approach, representing a necessary paradigm shift for the contemporary sociolinguistic landscape. By calling for an epistemic break (Kumaravadivelu, 2012), GELT shifts focus away from traditional owners of English, emancipates learners from native-speaker norms, alters language models and relocates culture within English (Rose & Galloway, 2019). Originally proposed by Galloway (2011) to guide research and curriculum innovation, the GELT Framework has consistently evolved to address calls for change in ELT, with the latest iteration illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Global English Language Teaching Framework (Rose & Galloway, 2019)

	Traditional ELT	**GELT**
Target interlocutors	Native English speakers	All English users
Ownership	Inner circle	Global
Target culture	Static NE cultures	Fluid cultures
Norms	Standard English	Diverse, flexible, and multiple forms
Teachers	Non-NE-Speaking teachers (same L1) and same L1 teachers	Qualified, competent teachers (same and different L1s)
Role models	NE speakers	Expert users
Source of material	NE and NE speakers	Salient English-speaking communities and users
Other language and cultures	Seen as hindrance and source of interference	Seen as resources as with other languages in their linguistic repertoire
Needs	Inner circle defined	Globally defined
Assessments criterion	Accuracy according to prescriptive standards	Communicative competence
Goals of learning	Native-like proficiency	Multicompetent user
Ideology	Underpinned by exclusive and ethnocentric view of English	Underpinned by an inclusive Global Englishes perspective
Orientation	monolingualism	Multilingual/translingual

The framework encourages practitioners to challenge deeply rooted monolingual ideologies by recognising the value of speakers' complete linguistic repertoires and semiotic systems. While the GELT Framework has informed some subsequent research (e.g., Galloway, 2017b; McKinley, 2018; Syrbe & Rose, 2018), it is emphasised that the GELT Framework is 'used to inform, rather than direct' (Rose & Galloway, 2019, p. 27). Building on this principle, the present study adapts the framework to examine to what extent GE-oriented principles are reflected in English textbooks in China.

Global Englishes in English language teaching textbooks

Beyond supporting basic language teaching, textbooks also convey linguistic ideologies and values through their representation of language and cultures, thereby influencing how learners perceive English and its users (Vo & Tran, 2025; Curdt-Christiansen & Weninger, 2015). Thus, they constitute a critical venue for studying how GE principles are transformed into classroom practice. From a GE perspective, textbooks should not be the idealized replication of native-speaker norms; its authenticity lies in whether materials reflect language encounters in the real world (Rose & Galloway, 2019).

Syrbe and Rose (2018) provided one of the earliest research examples in this area, using an adapted GELT framework to reveal an over-reliance on UK models and static cultural depictions in German textbooks. Their framework was further refined by Rose and Galloway (2019) for textbook evaluation, and later extended by Marlina (2021), who proposed key principles for GE-oriented ELT materials, arguing that textbooks should represent diverse English users and their interactions, expose learners to multiple varieties of English and include activities fostering intercultural communicative competence. Over the past few years, GELT principles have been increasingly applied to textbook design (e.g., Boonsuk, 2026; Fang et al., 2022; Marlina, 2025; Vo & Tran, 2025; Widodo et al., 2022) as well as curriculum development and analysis (Liu & Fang, 2022; Marlina, 2021). While this suggests that GE has gradually moved beyond theoretical discussions to actively gaining a voice in practical domains (Fang et al., 2022), most studies have led to less satisfying results.

Studies across diverse educational contexts indicate that the hegemony of standard native-speaker norms remains resilient. In Italian secondary textbooks, references to WE and ELF have become extremely limited and superficial (Vettorel, 2024). Similarly, Swedish upper-secondary textbooks continue to emphasise Inner Circle standards, despite the introduction of progressive curriculum policies in 2011 (Lindqvist & Soler, 2024). This consistency with monolingualism and standard English norms is also mirrored in studies across Thailand (Boonsuk, 2026), Vietnam (Vo & Tran, 2025), and China (Fang et al., 2022; Lu et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, some of the latest studies show emerging changes in the ways GE-related perspectives are represented in ELT textbooks. Vettorel (2024) and Vo and Tran (2025) note that ELT textbooks are shifting towards greater cultural pluralism, which indicates that cultural representation seems to be the first dimension to extend beyond Inner Circle contexts. Where the curriculum policy explicitly advocates a global perspective and a cross-cultural perspective, a broader integration of global English-related content can be observed. For example, Marlina (2025) found that the newly developed Cambodian ELT textbooks explicitly incorporated diverse English users, multiple English varieties and intercultural communication, suggesting that policy-driven curriculum reform can more effectively promote the integration of GE into ELT materials.

In China, recent curriculum reforms have fostered a deeper understanding of the global role of English. Liu and Fang (2022) examined the 2011 NEC from a GE perspective, suggesting that although it made some reference to the global use of English, its expressions on phonology and

language learning are still more strongly influenced by the ideology of native-speakers. However, more recent curriculum standards for senior high schools (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China [MoE], 2017) and compulsory education (MoE, 2022) have further mentioned English as a lingua franca and placed intercultural and multicultural awareness in an important position at different stages. In China's state-regulated education system, textbooks become important carriers for translating curriculum objectives and educational orientations into instructional materials.

Previous research has noted greater attention to multilingual awareness in NSEFC 2019 (Fang et al., 2022). However, the relationship between the explicit discussion of linguistic and cultural diversity and the representations and learning expectations embedded elsewhere in the series remains insufficiently examined. Investigating this relationship can help distinguish the inclusion of GE-related content from a broader GE-oriented approach to textbook design. Accordingly, the present study employs an adapted GELT framework encompassing four dimensions: English users and communication, models of English, cultural representation and explicit GE-related concepts. By examining these dimensions together, the study addresses two research questions:

(1) How diversified does NSEFC 2019 represent the diversity of contemporary English use, users and cultural contexts?

(2) To what extent do the textbook representations and learning activities align with GE principles?

Methodology

Sampling

Three compulsory textbooks from the 2019 edition of NSEFC, published by PEP, were selected for analysis. The selection was based on PEP's institutional role as a textbook publisher administered by the MoE and the status of its senior secondary English textbooks as the most widely used in China (Liu et al., 2022).

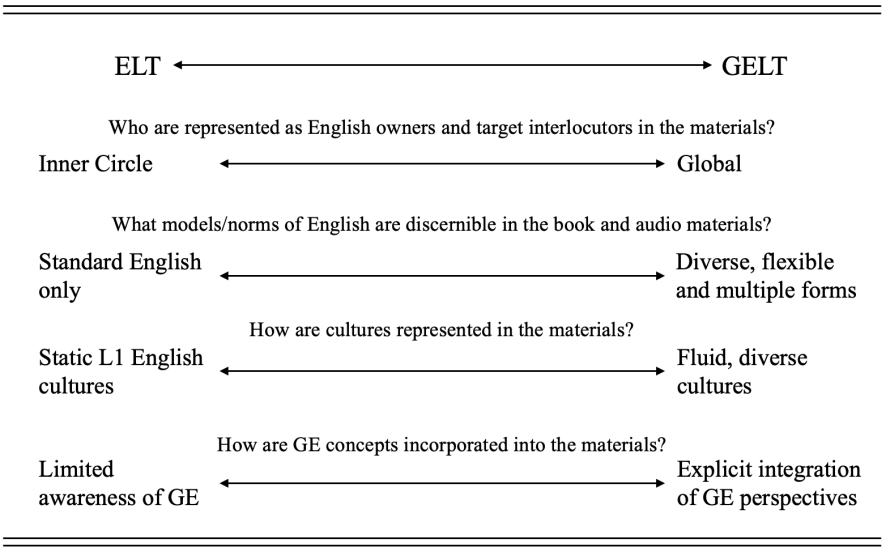
In addition to a Welcome Unit in the first volume, the other two volumes are composed of five units, each with separate sections, including listening, speaking, reading, writing, pronunciation, structure, project, video time and workbook. The research data comprised all text, audio and video materials, excluding the workbook.

Analytical Framework and Coding Procedures

The present study drew on Marlina's (2025) GELT-oriented framework for textbook evaluation and developed an adapted framework for examining NSEFC 2019. Informed by Rose and Galloway's (2019) GELT framework, Marlina proposes three main areas: diverse English users and their interactions, multiple varieties of English, and diverse cultural references and intercultural communication activities. These areas inform the first three dimensions adopted here. A fourth dimension, explicit GE-related concepts, is added to distinguish the representation of diversity from its explicit treatment as a topic for learning and reflection. This enables this study to examine not only the users, language models and cultural contexts represented in the textbooks, but also how they discuss the global diversity of English. Table 2 lists the four-dimensional framework.

Table 2

Adapted GELT Textbook Evaluation Framework Adopted in this Study



The first three dimensions examine complementary aspects of textbook representation (Marlina, 2025). English users and communication concerns who is depicted as using English, with whom and for what purposes, including the interlocutors envisaged in communicative tasks. Models of English examines the varieties presented and their status as instructional models or learning benchmarks. Cultural representation considers both the range of cultural references and whether cultures are portrayed as fixed national categories or as diverse and negotiated through interaction.

The fourth dimension examines whether the textbooks explicitly address GE-related topics, including English varieties, the global role of English, multilingualism, multiculturalism and communication across linguacultural backgrounds, drawing on the scope of topics identified by Takahashi (2014). Content is included in this dimension when a GE-related issue is explicitly explained, discussed or addressed in a learning activity. Adding this dimension enables comparison between the textbooks' explicit recognition of diversity and the linguistic norms they promote, revealing patterns of alignment and tension across dimensions and within individual units.

To this end, the coding categories (Table 3) were created and adapted after coding different aspects of the first textbook. These categories include identifying the *owners of English* and/or the *target interlocutors* represented in the textbooks. Speakers are first classified as L1 or L2 English users, with L2 users further distinguished as those from China (L2|C) and those from other countries (L2|NC). Each distinct character is counted once, even if they appear in more than one conversation. Where a task specifies multiple target interlocutors, each is counted separately. *Type of communication* classifies interactions according to the L1/L2 status and, where applicable, the national or regional identities of the participants. Each conversation is treated as a complete communicative event and counted separately, including conversations involving recurring characters.

Cultural content was counted at the lesson level and categorised into IC, OC, or EC, according to the Three Circles model (Kachru, 1996). Repeated references to the same cultural element within a

lesson are counted once, while distinct cultural elements are counted separately, even if they originate from the same country. As for the fourth dimension, explicit references to GE-related issues were identified and recorded when reading through the textbook materials, guided by the focus of the adapted framework without predetermined coding categories. The related contents were examined qualitatively to consider how the issues were presented for students' understanding and discussion.

Table 3

Coding Categories Adopted in this Study

Aspects	Coding categories
Owners of English/Target interlocutors	L1
	L2 (L2|C; L2|NC)
	Unspecified
Type of communication	L1-L1
	L1-L2(L1-L2|C; L1- L2|NC)
	L2-L2 (L2|C-L2|C; L2|C-L2|NC;
	L2|NC-L2|NC)
Cultural contents of in circle categories	IC
	OC
	EC (EC|C; EC|NC)

The preliminary categories were tested across the first three units and refined before being applied to the remaining materials. Consistent with previous research (Rose & Galloway, 2019), when a speaker's linguistic background could not be established from the materials, the case was coded as unspecified. Relevant content could be examined under more than one dimension when it provided evidence for distinct analytical questions. Cross-dimensional comparison then considered how explicit GE-related content related to the representations, instructional models and learning expectations identified elsewhere in the textbooks.

During the analytical process, two researchers independently coded the textbook materials without access to each other's coding decisions. A third researcher then checked both sets of coding against the original materials and reviewed any discrepancies with reference to the coding criteria to determine the final classification. The resulting coding decisions formed the basis of the reported frequencies and qualitative analysis.

Global Orientation of the *NSEFC 2019*

Uneven representation of English users and communication

To examine how English speakers and communication are represented in the textbooks, both textual materials and communicative tasks were analysed. Textual materials, including spoken and written interactions, reveal who is portrayed as English owners and how English communication is represented in the 'real world'. Communicative tasks, meanwhile, were analysed to investigate the learners' imagined future interlocutors, with whom students are expected to use English beyond the classroom (Syrbe & Rose, 2018). Together, the analysis reveals that while English-user diversity is represented unevenly, the textbooks exhibit emerging GE-oriented features by depicting English as a global lingua franca within specific thematic contexts.

A total of 41 conversations were identified from the textual materials, involving 71 English-speaking characters. Table 4 shows the proportion of these English users, while Table 5 lists the types of English conversations that appeared in the textbooks.

Table 4

Proportion of English Speakers

English Speakers	Number	Percentage
L1	15	21%
L2|C	23	32%
L2|NC	7	10%
Unspecified	26	37%

As Table 4 shows, 37% of the characters were classified as 'unspecified' due to the lack of explicit reference to their linguistic identity. Most of these characters are addressed to with English-language names, such as Paul and Jeremy. Drawing on Rose and Galloway's (2019) discussion of names as cues to linguistic background, readers may be likely to infer that these characters are Anglophone English users, even where nationalities are unstated. However, as these inferences do not determine clear L1/L2 status, their identities remain unspecified in the analysis. Among the identified categories, Chinese L2 users account for 32% of all characters, L1 users make up 21%, and non-Chinese L2 users only account for 10%. While Chinese L2 users have a substantial presence, the representation of other L2 users is limited. Only seven characters were coded as non-Chinese L2 users, three of whom appear in the Video Time section of Book 3, Unit 3, with brief participation. The visibility of Chinese users therefore does not extend to similarly broad representation of English users from other linguistic backgrounds.

Beyond speaker representation, English conversations across textbooks are also coded to clarify real-world conversations, as presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Proportion of Types of English Conversation

Type of English Conversation	Number	Percentage
L1-L1	15	37%
L1-L2|C	22	54%
L1-L2|NC	2	5%
L2|C-L2|C	1	2%
L2|NC-L2|NC	1	2%

As illustrated in Table 5, the conversations in the textbooks are mainly participated in by L1 speakers. Nearly 40% of the conversations take place entirely between L1 speakers, and more than half (54%) are interactions between L1 speakers and Chinese L2 users. This type often describes Chinese English learners discussing unit-related topics with L1 peers. In contrast, far fewer conversations occurred between L1 speakers and non-Chinese L2 users. This account for only two instances: one between a South African student and her classmates and another featuring an Indian couple interviewed by an L1 English user.

There are even fewer interactions among L2 users. Only one conversation occurs between two Chinese L2 speakers, and one takes place between two non-Chinese L2 speakers. It is worth noting that no conversations happen between Chinese and non-Chinese L2 users. This pattern contrasts with the realities of global English use, where interactions among L2 speakers are far more common, given that the number of L2 users of English far exceeds that of L1 users worldwide.

To address the target interlocutor, tasks positioning students to use English in real-world situations were identified, as they represent the potential recipients of the perceived future use of English (Syrbe & Rose, 2018). Altogether, 12 tasks were counted across the three textbooks, with 15 future explicit target interlocutors identified, as illustrated in Table 6.

Table 6

Proportion of Target Interlocutors

Target Interlocutors	Number	Percentage
L1	8	53%
L2|C	4	27%
L2|NC	3	20%

As presented in Table 6, over half of the tasks depict Chinese students communicating with L1 English speakers, most of whom are exchange students or travellers in China. L2 users also constitute a large proportion. In particular, there are two tasks that include non-Chinese L2 users that positions students to communicate with a wider international audience. In *Teenage Life* (Book 1, Unit 1), the writing task asks students to write a letter of advice to a teenager from Chicago, Hangzhou or Seoul, while the final project in *Travelling Around* (Book 1, Unit 2) requires students to design a travel brochure for potential visitors from the UK, France or Russia.

In this final project, students are introduced to three international visitors with different travel purposes and asked to design a week-long travel plan according to their interests. Instead of assuming the international interlocutors as a homogeneous group, the project explicitly encourages students to consider the different expectations of readers from different countries, which better reflects authentic English use in today's global context.

However, the reasons why English is used in some scenarios remain less clear. For example, one interlocutor in the writing task in *Teenage Life* is a 14-year-old from Hangzhou who feels lonely because her parents work in another city. While the task provides a meaningful purpose for communication, it does not establish a contextual reason for choosing English. This may raise concerns about whether these tasks clearly indicate the use of English outside the classroom.

To sum up, several units in the three textbooks have already shown emerging GE-related features, portraying English as a lingua franca among diverse international users in specific contexts. However, when related to communications, L1 speakers continue to occupy a larger position. Non-Chinese L2 users remain less visible, and some scenarios involving communication between Chinese L2 users would benefit from more proper reasons for using English. Also, it is worth paying attention that increasing diverse English users alone does not necessarily challenge native-speaker-oriented assumptions. The legitimacy of different speakers also depends on the communicative roles that the textbook assigns to them and to what extent their English is regarded as a valid model for interaction.

Native-speaker pronunciation models

Evaluation of audio materials establishes Received Pronunciation (RP) as the dominant variety in the pronunciation section, where phonetic symbols and spoken English skills are taught as the pronunciation model presented in the textbooks. For instance, in the Welcome Unit, students are expected to pronounce and distinguish the vowels/ei/, /æ/, /i:/, and/e/, which are clearly presented in RP. Pronunciation using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) is predominantly representative of RP English, with American pronunciation presented as legitimate, albeit marked. In addition, words and expressions are pronounced in RP in audios, although American pronunciation is also provided for those with obvious differences between the two dialects.

While RP and American English dominate the audio, students have insufficient access to Outer Circle varieties. Only three OC varieties are mentioned, all appearing only in the Video Time section: South African English spoken by two elephant keepers from Johannesburg, Kenya and Indian English spoken by people from Madras, located in the southern part of India. Among all the EC varieties, only Chinese English appears in two videos (Book 2, Unit 1 and Book 3, Unit 2).

In terms of written models, the static variety of British English is presented unmarked to indicate that it is used as the standard. American English is also an acceptable and legitimate variety, with its written forms marked (NAmE) as exemplified by 'organise [NAmE -ize]'. All three textbooks follow these prescribed standards.

Apart from the predominant role of IC varieties in both spoken and written norms, in Book 1 Unit 5, native-speaker English is clearly positioned as the normative model for English learning in its *Reading for Writing* passage, as seen in Excerpt 1.

(1) *Liu Wen: … now I'm having a lot of trouble with my listening. When I listen to native English speakers talking in a video, I can catch only a few words. I can never quite get the main idea. Any advice?*

Jia Xin: Listening to English radio programmes helps me get used to how fast native speakers talk. I also repeat what I hear to help myself to experience the feeling of the language. Sometimes I even record my voice so I can listen to myself and compare my pronunciation with the radio host's! …

(Reading for Writing in Book 1, Unit 5)

In the passage, one Chinese student describes his difficulty in understanding 'native English speakers' in videos. Another student provides some suggestions, including listening to English radio programmes to get accustomed to the speed of native speakers, repeating after the radio and recording his own voice to make comparisons. These suggestions explicitly put native-speaker pronunciation as the ultimate goal for English learning, implicitly downgrading the validity of other English varieties.

Consequently, the textbooks present limited evidence of linguistic diversity beyond IC English. Although a small number of OC and EC varieties are introduced, British and American English remain the principal linguistic models, while native-speaker pronunciation is positioned as a learning model. This suggests that it can be relatively easy to incorporate diverse characters and contexts in ELT materials. However, it remains more challenging to transform the assumptions about legitimate English norms.

Diversified representation of cultures

Cultural content is abundantly present across the three textbooks, particularly in units closely related to cultures (e.g., Book 2 Unit 4 *History and Traditions*; Book 3 Unit 3 *Diverse Cultures*). Table 7 presents the proportions of cultural content across the three circles.

Table 7

Proportion of Cultural Contents

Cultural Contents	Number	Percentage
IC	81	40%
OC	5	3%
EC|C	73	36%
EC|NC	43	21%

As Table 7 shows, the textbooks demonstrate a relatively broad cultural scope. EC cultures account for the largest proportion (57% in total), slightly exceeding IC cultures (40%). In particular, Chinese cultural content alone accounts for 36% of all cultural references. This reflects the curriculum's emphasis on strengthening learners' understanding of their own cultural heritage while cultivating the ability to 'perceive and analyze the familiar from an outsider's perspective' (Matsuda, 2012b, p. 177). Beyond China, the textbooks also introduce a range of cultures from other Expanding Circle countries, such as France, Russia, Germany, Egypt, Italy, Brazil, Korea and Japan. This indicates an effort to move beyond the traditional dominance of Inner Circle cultural content.

It is commendable that textbooks also present cultures as diverse and inclusive. For instance, when introducing Chinese festivals, they not only cover well-known traditional festivals such as the Spring

Festival and the Lantern Festival, but also ethnic minority celebrations like the Nadaam Festival in Inner Mongolia and the Folk Song Festival of the Zhuang people. Likewise, discussions of the United States extend beyond mainstream American culture to include the traditions of different ethnic communities, showcasing the cultural diversity of various societies.

Nevertheless, some limitations remain. OC cultures account for only 3% of all cultural content, with South Africa and India being the only countries represented. Given the important role of many OC societies in the global use of English, their limited representation reduces learners' exposure to multilingual and multicultural contexts in which English functions as a shared means of communication. Moreover, although the textbooks broaden cultural representation beyond Inner Circle contexts, most cultural content continues to be organised around nation-based descriptions rather than dynamic intercultural encounters in which English is used across cultural and linguistic boundaries.

Emerging awareness of Global Englishes-Related Concepts

The analysis identified three major GE-related concepts across the textbooks: English varieties, communication strategies and multiculturalism. These concepts mainly appear in units explicitly discussing language and intercultural communication, most notably in Book 1, Unit 5 *Languages Around the World*, although the depth of their treatment vary to certain extent.

Among these concepts, English varieties receive the most systematic attention. In Book 1, Unit 5, the *Listening and Talking* section is explicitly designed to help students 'explore different kinds of English' by introducing differences in vocabulary, pronunciation and spelling. This represents a positive step towards raising learners' awareness that English is not a monolithic language. However, the discussion is largely confined to British English, American English, and Australian English, whereas other widely spoken varieties are simply generalised as 'many others' without further explanation. Moreover, the examples focus almost exclusively on lexical and orthographic differences between British and American English (e.g., petrol/gas, honour/honor), suggesting a relatively narrow understanding of English varieties. Although the unit presents an intercultural misunderstanding arising from the word 'pants' in communication between a Chinese student and a British speaker, interactions involving speakers from other linguistic backgrounds are absent. Consequently, despite its clear GE orientation, the introduction of English varieties remains centred on IC Englishes.

The introduction of communication strategies in the textbooks is more consistent with GE principles. Recognising that successful international communication often depends on negotiation and co-construction of meaning (Vettorel, 2018), the textbooks introduce a range of clarification strategies, including expressions such as 'Do you mean...?', 'Would you mind repeating...?', and 'So am I right in saying...?' (Book 1, Unit 5), together with conversation-opening expressions such as 'I beg your pardon, but...' and 'Excuse me. Could you please tell me about...?' (Book 2, Unit 1). Through resolving misunderstandings, these activities facilitate effective communication among learners across linguacultural backgrounds.

Finally, the textbooks introduce the concepts of multiculturalism, although to a much more limited extent. In Book 3, Unit 3, students are introduced to Queens as a multilingual and multicultural community where more than 150 languages are spoken. While this example exposes learners to the linguistic diversity characteristic of contemporary global cities, the discussion remains brief and serves primarily as an introduction to the concepts rather than providing opportunities for deeper exploration.

Taken together, the inclusion of English varieties, communication strategies and multiculturalism reflects an awareness of the diversity and complexity of global English use. Yet this awareness remains largely at the level of topic coverage rather than consistently shaping the textbooks' pedagogical orientation. This imbalance is particularly evident in Book 1, Unit 5: while learners are introduced to English variation and strategies for negotiating meaning, the varieties presented remain predominantly drawn from IC varieties and native-speaker English is subsequently positioned as the model for listening and pronunciation, as mentioned in the analysis above. Thus, the recognition of linguistic diversity at the conceptual level does not necessarily lead to a corresponding shift in whose English is treated as pedagogically legitimate.

Discussion

The findings suggest that the integration of GE into the NSEFC 2019 is best characterised as selective rather than systematic. Most GE-related content is concentrated in a small number of language- and intercultural communication-themed units, most notably *Languages Around the World* (Book 1, Unit 5) and *Diverse Cultures* (Book 3, Unit 3). Crucially, even within these target units, GE representations are frequently relegated to peripheral, supplementary sections such as in the *Video Time*, which is marked with an asterisk as an optional section and placed at the end of each unit. Outside these units, representations of English communication, language models and cultures largely remain aligned with more traditional ELT norms. This uneven distribution indicates that GE is primarily treated as a specific topic to be introduced, instead of a pedagogical orientation consistently embedded throughout the textbooks.

This pattern echoes broader trends in global ELT materials. On one hand, GE principles are beginning to gain greater visibility in textbook development, particularly following curriculum reforms promoting intercultural competence and multilingual awareness (Marlina, 2025; Vettorel, 2024; Vo & Tran, 2025). Similarly, the revised Chinese curriculum standards (MoE, 2017) increasingly frame English as a tool for international communication rather than solely for interaction with native speakers. On the other hand, as Rose and Galloway (2019) argue, incorporating isolated GE-related topics does not necessarily represent a paradigm shift in ELT. Thus, although the introduction of GE-related concepts in NSEFC 2019 is consistent with these broader curricular goals, their integration remains partial and fragmented, falling short of reorienting the textbook series as a whole.

Additionally, the analysis demonstrates an uneven development of different dimensions of GE. Among the dimensions examined, cultural representation appears to have progressed furthest towards a GE orientation. This finding closely aligns with recent textbook research (Vettorel, 2024; Vo & Tran, 2025), which suggested that cultural diversity is often the first aspect of ELT materials to move beyond traditional IC perspectives. In the present study, the textbooks present a relatively broad range of cultural content, with EC cultures even exceeding IC cultures overall. Furthermore, cultures are portrayed with internal diversity, suggesting that the textbooks have made meaningful progress in moving beyond the traditional equation of English with Anglophone cultures.

The comparatively broad cultural coverage may help explain how GE perspectives gain curricular traction in China. The national curriculum standards identify cultural awareness as a core competency and integrate Chinese and international cultural knowledge into thematic learning (MoE, 2017). Cultural diversification therefore has a clear curricular basis and can be incorporated through texts and activities on festivals, history and cultural heritage. Also, expanding the cultural settings of these materials can coexist with established linguistic models. Changing those models, however, involves reconsidering whose English is accepted as a learning benchmark, a central concern of GELT (Rose & Galloway, 2019). In a curriculum context closely guided by national

standards, this suggests that GE localisation may proceed selectively. Cultural diversity provides a curriculum-compatible entry point, while its implications for linguistic legitimacy and communicative norms remain less fully realised.

However, this broad coverage of cultures does not fully reflect the diversity and fluidity of the cultural contexts in which English is used. Alongside the limited presense of non-Chinese L2 users, OC societies also receive little attention, despite their important role in global English use. Moreover, most cultural content continues to be organised around descriptions of individual nations, with fewer opportunities to explore intercultural encounters in which English functions as a shared communicative resource. As Baker (2012) argues, intercultural communication involves fluid, hybrid, and emergent cultural practices. From a GE perspective, therefore, expanding cultural coverage alone is insufficient if learners are not simultaneously encouraged to view culture as dynamic and negotiated through interaction.

Another finding concerns the tension between representational diversity and linguistic normativity. As Rose and Galloway (2019) argue, a genuinely GE-oriented curriculum requires more than exposing learners to diversity; it also involves rethinking whose English is presented as legitimate and whose communicative practices are valued. However, while the NSEFC 2019 acknowledges English as a global language used by diverse speakers, it continues to position native-speaker English as the primary linguistic norm. This contradiction is particularly evident in Book 1, Unit 5. Within the same unit, students are introduced to the idea that English exists in multiple varieties and serves as a global language; yet the subsequent writing tasks encourage them to improve their pronunciation by imitating native English speakers and comparing their pronunciation with native-speaker models. This disconnect resonates with recent research showing that GE diversity is often recognised at the level of representation, but unreflected at the level of pedagogy (e.g., Lindqvist & Soler, 2024; Boonsuk, 2026).

The findings on English users and communication reveal a related imbalance. While Chinese English users are relatively visible, other L2 users receive limited attention, with identifiable interactions among L2 users being scarce. The inclusion of Chinese users may support learners' sense of ownership of English (Matsuda, 2012a), yet it provides only a partial representation of the language's global use. Also, although tasks addressing audiences in several countries offer broader communicative possibilities, their concentration in only two units limits their reach across the series. These findings suggest that a GE-oriented approach requires attention not only to the inclusion of local English users but also to the range of users and communicative relationships represented.

The analysis indicates selective alignment between NSEFC 2019 and GELT principles within the context of Chinese curriculum. The textbooks demonstrate clear efforts to expand cultural representation, introduce GE-related concepts, and position Chinese learners as legitimate English users. However, identifiable interactions among L2 users, especially non-Chinese L2 users, receive limited attention. Besides, native-speaker pronunciation still remains a learning benchmark. Thus, emerging GE perspectives coexist with long-established pedagogical conventions within the series. This internal tension illustrates both the progress that has been made and the challenges that remain in transforming curriculum visions into a coherent textbook design.

Implications and Limitations

This study yields several important implications for curriculum developers, textbook publishers and educators. At the curriculum level, the coexistence of broader cultural representation and native-speaker linguistic benchmarks suggests a need for guidance connecting cultural awareness with the diversity of English use. Building on existing curricular goals, future revisions could clarify how

learning objectives focus on developing learners' ability to negotiate meaning across linguacultural backgrounds. Such guidance could support greater coherence between the users and cultures represented in textbooks and the communicative abilities learners are expected to develop.

For textbook developers, a central need is to move from merely presenting diversity to normalising it. Crucially, when exposing learners to diverse Englishes, it is also necessary to emphasize mutual intelligibility and learners' ability to negotiate meaning across linguacultural backgrounds (Galloway, 2017a; Marlina, 2021). In addition, further integration could build on dimensions that have already shown greater diversity. Cultural content could attach more attention to OC societies and their multilingual practices, extending the cultural contexts and thereby developing the curriculum's cultural awareness goals. GE-related concepts and activities currently concentrated in certain units could also be integrated into a wider range of thematic contexts, such as travel, environment and technology. At the same time, the coherence between diverse representations and learning norms should be maintained.

For ELT educators, the NSEFC 2019 should be critically mediated, as teachers play an important role in bridging the gap between textbook representations and the diversity of English use in the world (Crawford, 2002; Galloway & Rose, 2014). In classroom practice, teachers could utilise explicit GE units as entry points to encourage learners to critically interrogate linguistic authority, fostering their GE awareness. Besides, supplementary material like *Video Time* sections can be used more purposefully to foreground less frequently represented varieties and speakers, equipping students with readiness for future ELF interactions. Also, while textbooks may not always reflect the full diversity of English speakers and varieties, teachers can bridge this gap by introducing authentic resources that better reflect real-world language use (Galloway & Rose, 2014).

This study entails several limitations and points out directions for future research. First, although the NSEFC 2019 represents the most widely used high school textbook series in China, the findings cannot be generalised to all ELT materials. Second, the study examines textbook content rather than its actual implementation in the classroom. Given that GE content often appears in supplementary tasks or video sections, teacher agency and learner reaction are crucial. Future research could adopt classroom observations and interview methods to examine how teachers mediate these contents in real classroom practice and how such mediation shapes learners' language attitudes and communicative confidence in GE contexts.

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