

CULTURAL ARTEFACTS AND NATIONALISM: A COMPARATIVE MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS OF INDONESIAN AND VIETNAMESE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS

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ABSTRACT

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This study explores how the concept of nationalism is represented through cultural artefacts, which can permeate through different media. The study focuses specifically on English textbooks, which can represent the Source, Target, and International Target cultures (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999) and can take the form of Aesthetic, Sociological, Semantic, and Pragmatic/Sociolinguistic senses (Adaskou et al., 1990), both visually and verbally. Regarding its verbal representation, cultural artefacts can also be manifested within the reading texts with the help of authors' linguistic choices, which contain an experience of the real world, such as nationalism. This understanding is grounded in Halliday and Matthiessen's description of the phenomenon as the Ideational metafunction of language. In light of this, the present study investigates, using those three theoretical frameworks, how the concept of nationalism is represented in the English textbooks as seen in the reading texts, and which cultural artefacts are the most salient in representing this concept, both through illustrations and captions. The study is descriptive qualitative in nature, and it employs inductive and deductive content analysis. Elements of quantitative analysis have also been used to record the frequency of occurrences of the selected data in numbers, percentages, and totals. The data for this study were collected from one elementary English textbook used in Indonesia and one used in Vietnam, as per their latest educational curriculum. The study finds that the construction of the reading texts between the Indonesian and Vietnamese textbooks represents different concepts of nationalism, particularly in perceiving education and values that represent the concept of nationalism. The most salient cultural artefacts are predominantly presented through the Source cultures in the Sociological sense, followed by the Semantic sense, and the Aesthetic sense.

Keywords: Nationalism; cultural artefacts; elementary English textbooks; SFL; cultural artefacts analytical checklists

1. INTRODUCTION

The global status of English as a lingua franca has rendered English Language Teaching (ELT) a significant site for the negotiation of cultural and social values. Central to this process are English textbooks, which function not merely as pedagogical tools for language acquisition, but as powerful sociolinguistic artefacts. These textbooks are primary media through which learners are exposed to different cultural norms, social structures, and ideological perspectives. From a sociolinguistic standpoint, they are not neutral conveyors of information; rather, they are active participants in the construction of social reality and identity. This study is grounded in the understanding that language is a “social semiotic” (Halliday, 1978), a resource used to make meaning within a social context. Therefore, the analysis of textbook content provides a crucial window into how language is employed to shape learners’ perceptions of the world, particularly concerning the potent concept of national identity.

The concept of ‘nationalism’ has historically presented a complex definitional challenge, with scholarly interpretations varying based on different theoretical underpinnings. Plamenatz (1973), for instance, proposed that nationalism often emerges as a defensive ideology when a nation’s cultural identity is perceived as being threatened, inadequate, or disadvantaged (pp. 23–27). This sentiment typically arises from groups of individuals who coalesce to establish and preserve their own state and cultural principles, thereby developing a collective consciousness and affinity for their homeland (Haas, 1986; Kusumawardani & Faturachman, 2004; Kohn, 2005). Nationalism functions as a unifying force, drawing its strength from shared values, symbols, language, culture, and a common history, which includes both national glories and sufferings (Faber, 1915, as cited in Lawrence, 2005; Kecmanovic, 1996; Segal & Handler, 2006). This process is especially critical in post-colonial nations like Indonesia and Vietnam, where the construction of a cohesive national identity from diverse ethnic and cultural groups is a continuous state-led project.

Numerous studies have investigated the various modes through which nationalism is represented. For example, Jones (2014) discovered that the content of political campaign posters can effectively promote and represent nationalist ideals. Similarly, Ichijo (2020) found that traditional foods and their packaging, as tangible cultural artefacts, can serve as concrete representations of the nation. Other scholars (Hoyo, 2010; Dumitrica, 2019; Kyriazi & vom Hau, 2020) have also demonstrated that nationalism is frequently manifested through national symbols such as flags, postage stamps, and postcards. This aligns with Billig’s (1995) influential theory of “banal nationalism,” which posits that national identity is reproduced not only through overt, zealous expressions but also through subtle, everyday representations. These “unwaved flags” are powerful precisely because they are mundane; their constant, unnoticed presence in daily life makes the nation seem like a natural and inevitable part of reality (Billig, 1995). These studies underscore that a wide array of objects and signs are believed to preserve and represent nationalism. In this context, such signs need not carry profound intellectual meaning; rather, they are woven into the fabric of everyday life (Chandler, 2022). Consequently, cultural artefacts, as presented in textbooks, can be understood as part of this collection of ordinary items that powerfully, yet subtly, represent the concept of nationalism.

Moreover, cultural artefacts frequently pervade through texts, which are utilized to communicate both literal and connotational meanings. A prime example of texts that incorporate cultural artefacts is the English textbooks used in educational institutions. Adaskou et al. (1990) provide a framework for analyzing the use of cultural artefacts within language teaching materials, distinguishing among four senses: Aesthetic, Sociological, Semantic, and Pragmatic/Sociolinguistic. These senses can be conveyed through various visual and verbal media within a textbook, which may also reflect three cultural representations as defined by Cortazzi and Jin (1999): Source/C1 (the learners’ local culture), Target/C2 (the culture where the target language is a mother tongue), and International Target/C3 (the diverse cultures of other countries where English is used). These frameworks are essential because they allow nuanced analysis that moves beyond a simplistic dichotomy of “local” versus “foreign” culture, enabling a deeper understanding of the complex cultural tapestry presented to learners.

In addition to being employed visually, cultural artefacts are also deployed verbally. A common strategy used by textbook authors is to describe a particular cultural artefact with factual information, occasionally supplemented by personal narration to support chapter themes. While constructed to aid student comprehension and broaden their general knowledge, the authors’ content selections—including the specific linguistic choices in reading texts—inevitably carry worldviews, values, ideologies, and agendas, whether intentional or not (van Dijk, 2004; Setyono & Widodo, 2019; Aoumeur & Ziani, 2022). One of the preeminent analytical tools for analyzing such texts is the theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) by Halliday (1994). SFL provides a lexicogrammatical framework for examining how values are encoded through linguistic choices in a discourse, making it highly suitable for the analysis of textbooks (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Widodo, 2018). Specifically, by using tools from SFL such as transitivity analysis, which examines how

processes, participants, and circumstances are constructed in clauses, researchers can systematically reveal the ideological stances embedded in a text. This approach allows for an empirical analysis of how language choices position characters, events, and ideas, thereby exposing the subtle ways in which nationalist narratives are woven into seemingly neutral educational content.

Following a thorough review of previous studies, it was determined that research on nationalism representation through cultural artefacts within Indonesian elementary English textbooks remains scarce, presenting a significant gap for the present study. Furthermore, both Kohn (1944, as cited in Lawrence, 2005) and Billig (1995) have emphasized that the study of nationalism should employ a comparative method, analyzing different nations to observe and understand both commonalities and unique characteristics. A comparative approach is crucial as it prevents the universalization of a single national experience and instead highlights the specific socio-historical factors that shape each nation's ideological landscape. Thus, the present study expands its variables by comparing Indonesia with Vietnam. Both countries share a similar post-colonial history and a national imperative to unify diverse populations. As Gungwu (1973) noted, "Nationalism in India, Indonesia, Burma, and Vietnam became increasingly radical even before the independence" (p. 85). This shared historical context makes them a compelling pair for comparative analysis. Therefore, using the integrated theoretical frameworks of Halliday and Matthiessen's (2004) transitivity analysis, Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) cultural representations, and Adaskou et al.'s (1990) four senses of culture, this study seeks to address the following questions:

1. How do the textbooks represent and reflect the concept of nationalism in both countries?
2. What cultural artefacts are foremost presented in the textbooks to represent nationalism?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Cultural artefacts as representations of nationalism

Culture is a multi-layered concept that extends far beyond its surface-level traits. As it is multi-layered, scholars, for example, Tomalin and Stempleski (1993), then divide culture into culture with small 'c' and culture with big 'C'. For them, culture with big 'C' consists of, among others, history, institutions, and literature, while culture with small 'c' includes beliefs and perceptions expressed through language. In relation to languages used as the targets for language learning, Paige et al. (1999, 2003, as cited in Lee, 2009) specify the domains of big 'C' culture as representing a set of facts and statistics that relate to among others, history, education, and customs of a society whose language becomes the target language, and domain of small 'c' culture to comprise mainstream socio-cultural values, norms and beliefs.

In its broadest anthropological sense, culture is understood to consist of "patterns of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols that constitute the distinctive achievements of members of society, including their embodiment in artefacts of particular kinds which contain traditional ideas and values" (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952, as cited in Forster, 1994). This perspective highlights the dual role of cultural artefacts: they are both products of and producers of cultural patterns. Building upon this, the influential work of Geertz (1973) posits that culture is not a hidden, internal force but is embodied in public symbols and institutions. Through media such as gestures, drawings, mechanical devices, or even natural objects, societal actors can attempt to conduct a form of "social engineering." This process is aimed at creating, construing, and strengthening a collective national consciousness and a shared vision, communicating ideologies both explicitly and implicitly to the wider community (Forster, 1994; Woods, 2016). These ordinary, everyday public symbols and institutions are the very essence of what Billig (1995) and Özkırımlı (2017) have theorized as "banal nationalism".

The central argument of banal nationalism is that a sense of nationhood is perpetually sustained through continual, subtle 'flagging'. This concept does not primarily refer to a flag being consciously waved with fervent passion during a moment of crisis or celebration—what might be termed "hot" nationalism. Instead, it refers to the unnoticed flags that hang on public buildings, the national symbols printed on currency, or the routine mapping of the nation in weather forecasts (Billig, 1995). Billig argued that the academic study of nationalism had been overly restricted to its exotic and passionate examples (projected nationalism), thereby overlooking the more pervasive and arguably more powerful mechanisms through which national identity is naturalized in the daily lives of citizens. Ordinary items, such as coins, banknotes, and postage stamps, effectively transform the background spaces of daily life into distinctly 'national' spaces, constantly reinforcing a sense of belonging without overt coercion (Özkırımlı, 2017). These ubiquitous, simple signs function as a constant, subconscious reminder that answers the implicit question of why citizens rarely forget their national affiliation. They seamlessly connect the collective "we" of the nation with the territorial "our" of the homeland, making the nation appear as a natural and inevitable part of the social world.

Building on this understanding of cultural artefacts, Anderson's (2006) seminal work posits that nationality, nation-ness, and nationalism are themselves cultural artefacts of a particular kind. As previously mentioned, groups of individuals have historically utilized ordinary signs as representations of their nationalism, often relying on local cultural artefacts encountered since childhood or taught in school. Anderson theorized that the nation itself emerges from an "imagined community". This community is "imagined" because it is impossible for all members to know, meet, or even hear of their fellow members. Yet, within the minds of each lives the powerful image of their communion and comradeship—an image so potent that it can obscure internal inequalities, exploitation, and imperfections (Kecmanovic, 1996). According to Anderson, the rise of "print capitalism" was a key driver in creating these imagined communities, as newspapers and novels allowed people across vast distances to share common narratives and imagine themselves as part of a single, unified entity. In the contemporary era, national education systems and state-endorsed textbooks can be seen as the modern inheritors of this function. This profound sociological drive compels members of society to use their cultural artefacts across all aspects of life to strengthen national sovereignty, preserve traditions, and maintain collective welfare and security (Haas, 1986; Kecmanovic, 1996).

Two significant studies exemplify the power of cultural artefacts in representing nationalism. A study by Sigley (2015) found that tea, as a cultural artefact, played a crucial role in preserving China's national identity and served as a symbolic bulwark against the perceived "contamination" of Western influence. Another compelling example is found in India, where the Bollywood film industry is leveraged not only as a cultural artefact to represent and preserve nationalism for domestic audiences (in-group) but also to project a distinct national "vision" to foreign communities (out-group). This can be interpreted as a strategic means to counteract the cultural hegemony and one-sided dissemination of narratives from other dominant film industries like Hollywood (Woods, 2016). These examples provide deep insight into the myriad ways nationalism can be represented, including through the carefully selected cultural artefacts that reside within the pages of English textbooks.

2.2 English textbooks as a medium to explore nationalism

The use of textbooks, in the educational field, as a tool for groups of individuals to represent nationalism has become more prominent in the modern era. Hein and Selden (1998) and Engelmann (2023) suggest that education has now become an integral element of constructing citizens and shaping national consciousness in the nation; moreover, textbooks have become the major instructional medium/artefacts for educational content and the learning process over time since they contain both verbal and visual forms of communication (multimodal) which connotes meaning associated with nationhood (Barthes, 1977; Lerch et al., 2017; Carrier, 2018). This is similar to Apple and Beyer's (1983, as cited in Canale, 2016), who state that textbooks play a central role in legitimating and transmitting some social practices and ideologies promoted by and through the schooling process. The schooling process, in this sense, is correlated with a concept called the "hidden curriculum" (Littlejohn & Windeatt, 1989) that refers to the learning outcomes apart from those intended in the 'manifest curriculum', containing certain values and ideology of the real world (Hermawan & Noerkhasanah, 2012).

In relation to English textbooks, they have also been imbued to represent the nationalism of a nation since way back. For instance, an early study by Hino (1988) examined five progressive shifts of nationalism representation in English textbooks used in Japan from 1868 until the present time. Japan, from the second until the fourth periods, established a term called '*nihonjinron*' (discussions/discourse of the Japanese), which was aimed at using the West, including the English language, as an example of opposition or contrast to negotiate and represent "fixed Japanese identity" in the English textbooks, utilizing Japanese culture, society, and national character (Yoshino, 2003; Schneer, 2007). In the last period, Hino stresses how the content of English textbooks must also deal with various cultures, including those of non-native English-speaking countries, by utilizing cultural artefacts. It is encouraged so that students have an opportunity to engage in intercultural negotiation with a text that portrays another culture, exploring the similarities and differences (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999), in search of their own identity as part of a nation.

In the context of cultural artefacts in English textbooks, incorporation has also appeared in three recent notable studies by Prastiwi (2013), Aoumeur and Ziani (2022), and Kim and Lee (2023). First, Prastiwi found that Indonesian folktales in translation offer significant benefits when used as part of the EFL curriculum in elementary school, not only in general terms of language learning activities but also in developing a sense of belonging and fostering the spirit of the Indonesian national motto, '*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*' (Unity in Diversity), among the students. Second, Aoumeur and Ziani (2022) found a recurrent use of the Algerian flag, historical figures, celebrities, animals, maps, landmarks, and specific linguistic features within their middle school English textbooks to exemplify symbols of unity, nationhood, and belonging/identity among the students. Finally, Kim and Lee (2023) showed how the Korean Ministry of Education incorporated traditional Korean

family names in their English textbooks to develop and represent the Koreanness of the learners whilst also empowering them to be “Korean learners of English”.

2.3 Theoretical framework: The transitivity system of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

This study is built using Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as a foregrounding theory. It is used as the analytical tool to dissect the data. SFL is not merely a descriptive tool but a social theory of language developed by Halliday (1994) and Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), which was specifically adapted for educational contexts by scholars like Gerot and Wignell (1994) and Butt et al. (2000) to show how language functions as a resource for making meaning. SFL posits that every instance of language use performs three simultaneous metafunctions: Ideational, Interpersonal, and Textual. While all three are integral to communication, this study focuses on the Ideational metafunction of the textbooks, which serves as the primary vehicle for representing human experience and logical relations.

The transitivity system is the analytical ‘engine’ of the Ideational metafunction. It allows researchers to categorize the “goings-on” into distinct process types, revealing who the actors are and what kind of reality is being constructed. In texts, “goings-on” are constructed in clauses as the basic unit for analysis. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) categorized the process into Material, Relational, Mental, Behavioral, Verbal, Existential, and Meteorological.

Material processes are verbs of “doing” and “happening” that represent physical actions in the outer world. In a textbook context, these processes often depict experiments or natural phenomena, such as “the chef chopped the vegetables”. By identifying the “Actor” and the “Goal”, we can see which entities are portrayed as active agents of change. Relational Processes focus on “being” and “having”, establishing essential relationships between different entities. These are divided into attributive types, which assign qualities (e.g., “the student is brilliant”), and identifying types, which define one entity in terms of another (e.g., “Paris is the capital”). In educational materials, these are crucial for establishing definitions and taxonomies of knowledge.

Mental Processes capture internal experiences or “sensing”. They involve cognitive, affective, or perceptive states, such as “Sarah noticed the change”. Analyzing these helps reveal how textbooks position learners or characters as conscious beings capable of thought and feeling. Behavioral Processes represent the bridge between the physical and the mental, describing physiological acts like breathing, coughing, or “the audience laughed”. They reflect the human side of experience that is neither purely action nor purely thought.

Verbal Processes are about “saying” (e.g., “the manager told the team the news”). Existential processes simply denote that something exists, often using “there is” or “there are” (e.g., “there is a storm”). Last but not least, Meteorological Processes are the system that accounts for environmental conditions using a non-referential “it,” such as “it is raining,” rounding out the spectrum of how language maps reality.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design. A qualitative approach is fundamentally concerned with understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem and is particularly well-suited for analyzing complex text and image data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This design is appropriate for the present study as it facilitates a deep, interpretive analysis of the visual and verbal content within the selected elementary English textbooks from Indonesia and Vietnam. The primary objective is to understand how the concept of nationalism is represented through the strategic use of cultural artefacts.

The core analytical method is a comprehensive content analysis, which is an objective research tool used to determine the presence and meaning of specific words, concepts, themes, and patterns within texts (Dörnyei, 2007, as cited in Toledo-Sandoval, 2020). The analysis proceeds through both inductive and deductive processes, allowing for the identification of emergent themes while also applying pre-established theoretical categories. The data are systematically broken down, categorized, and interpreted according to the criteria established by the study’s theoretical framework (Shahmohammadi, 2013, as cited in Mayangsari et al., 2018). To supplement the qualitative interpretation and provide robust evidence, the study also incorporates a simple quantitative component. This involves recording the frequency of occurrences of selected data in numbers, percentages, and totals. This quantitative data is not intended for statistical inference but serves to add vivid evidence, highlight patterns of emphasis, and support the qualitative findings (Miles et al., 2014).

3.2 Data sources

The dataset for this comparative study consists of two government-endorsed elementary English textbooks, one from Indonesia and one from Vietnam. The selected Indonesian textbook is titled “*My Next Words Grade 6 – Student’s Book for Elementary School*”. The selected Vietnamese textbook is “*Tiếng Anh lớp 5*”:

Family and Friends (National Edition)". Both textbooks were downloaded from their respective official government or publishing websites, namely, the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology and the Viet Nam Education Publishing House, to ensure their authenticity and confirm their use in the latest national curricula.

It is important to note a slight difference in the educational structures. The Indonesian elementary system spans six years, while the Vietnamese system spans five. Therefore, the final grade level for each country's elementary system was selected for analysis. A key distinction in their production also exists. The Indonesian textbook was developed exclusively by local authors and published by a national publishing house under the Ministry of Education. In contrast, the Vietnamese textbook was developed through a collaboration between a local project team and foreign authors from Oxford University Press, indicating a potential difference in the ideological and pedagogical influences shaping the content.

3.3 Data selection and corpus

The dataset for this study consists of two forms: visual data (e.g., illustrations) and verbal data (e.g., captions, sentences, and complete reading passages). The selection of data was purposive to align with the research questions. For the transitivity analysis, the data were limited to descriptive and recount texts that explicitly contained references to local cultural artefacts and values. This purposive selection was made because these texts serve as primary sites for the linguistic encoding of ideologies and values related to nationalism.

For the broader cultural artefacts analysis, the corpus was drawn from the first six chapters of each textbook. This decision was based on a preliminary analysis that indicated the data in these initial chapters were sufficiently representative of the textbook as a whole and had already established the dominant patterns of cultural representation throughout the book. Any new artefacts appearing in later chapters were found to be infrequent and thematically similar to those already identified. Audio recordings, realia, and pseudo-realial were excluded from the analysis.

3.4 Procedures for data analysis

The data analysis was conducted in three sequential stages. Stage one was content identification. A comprehensive content analysis of both textbooks was performed to identify, collect, and filter all relevant reading texts and cultural artefacts. This stage involved creating an initial inventory of all potential data points for further analysis. In stage two, the analysis of Ideational metafunction, the selected reading texts were systematically analyzed using the transitivity system from Halliday and Matthiessen's (2004). The analysis focused on identifying the types of processes (e.g., Material, Mental, Relational), participants (e.g., actor, goal), and their configurations. The findings were coded and organized into tables to facilitate comparison and description, revealing how each textbook linguistically constructs the notion of nationalism. The analysis primarily focused on the processes, as they are key indicators of how actions and states of being are represented. Stage three is the cultural representation analysis. The visual and verbal data related to cultural artefacts were categorized and analyzed using the frameworks of Cortazzi and Jin (1999) and Adaskou et al. (1990). The data were organized into separate tables for each textbook to systematically classify each artefact. The frequency of each category was recorded, and the data were then qualitatively interpreted and compared. This final stage provides a clear insight into which cultural artefacts are most prominently featured to represent nationalism in each country. The integrated analytical frameworks are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Analytical frameworks

Theoretical framework	Key concept(s)	Application in study
Cortazzi and Jin (1999)	Source, Target, and International Target cultures	To categorize the cultural content presented in the Indonesian and Vietnamese textbooks and identify the primary cultural orientation.
Adaskou et al. (1990)	Aesthetic, Sociological, Semantic, and Pragmatic/Sociolinguistic Senses of Culture	To analyze the specific ways cultural artefacts are represented, whether as artistic expressions, social norms, symbolic meanings, or communicative practices.
Halliday and Matthiessen (2004)	Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), specifically the Ideational metafunction	To deconstruct the verbal texts and analyze how linguistic choices (e.g., clauses, participants, processes) construct representations of nationalism and national identity.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 The verbal representation of nationalism: A transitivity analysis

The transitivity analysis of the selected reading texts reveals how the concept of nationalism is verbally constructed through the authors' linguistic choices. As detailed in Table 2, both textbooks predominantly employ Material, Relational, and Mental processes, yet their distribution and emphasis differ significantly, suggesting divergent pedagogical and ideological approaches to representing the nation.

Table 2: The variety of processes in selected reading texts

Textbooks	Six types of processes							Total
	Material	Relational	Mental	Behavioral	Verbal	Existential	Meteorological	
<i>My Next Words Grade 6 – Student's Book for Elementary School</i>	29 (57%)	16 (31%)	4 (8%)	0	2 (4%)	0	0	51 (100%)
<i>Tiếng Anh lớp 5: Family and Friends (National Edition)</i>	36 (36%)	35 (35%)	15 (15%)	6 (6%)	0	6 (6%)	1 (1%)	99 (100%)

The data indicate that the Indonesian textbook constructs its narratives with a heavy reliance on Material processes, which account for a substantial 57% of all clauses. This is followed by Relational processes at 31% and Mental processes at 8%. In contrast, the Vietnamese textbook presents a more balanced distribution. While Material processes (36%) and Relational processes (35%) are still prominent, the frequency of Mental processes is nearly double at 15%. Furthermore, the Vietnamese textbook incorporates a wider array of process types, including Behavioral (6%), Existential (6%), and even a Meteorological (1%) process, which are absent in the selected Indonesian texts. This divergence in process variety and material intensity suggests a fundamental difference in how each nation is textually represented.

4.1.1 Complexity and national aspiration in the Vietnamese textbook

The Vietnamese textbook's varied use of processes and more complex clause structures may reflect a pedagogical approach aimed at accelerating English language acquisition to meet global standards. The intricate combination of different processes within single sentences, as illustrated below, exposes learners to more sophisticated linguistic constructions:

It **was** easy [Relational] **to go around** on foot or by bike [Material]
... because **there weren't** any cars or motorcycles [Existential]. (p. 35)

This deliberate linguistic complexity can be interpreted as a manifestation of a nationalist spirit within the educational domain, where mastering a global language is framed as a national imperative. The authors construct a world that is not only described but also felt, perceived, and experienced, thereby developing students' capacity to comprehend and produce more nuanced language.

Furthermore, the textbook repeatedly uses Relational and Mental processes to assert a strong sense of national belonging and pride. This is achieved through clauses that establish a direct connection between individuals, places, and positive emotions:

- **I love** Ha Noi [Mental]. (p. 35)
- **We didn't want** Tet to end [Mental]! (p. 46)
- **It is** a beautiful park with long rivers, jungles, and very big caves [Relational]. (p. 59)

The use of "judgmental statements", as termed by Dahmardeh and Kim (2021), is a key strategy. These are authorial assertions presented as objective truth to shape the reader's perspective. For instance, the clause "I love Ha Noi" is presented as a universal feeling, which could help students, particularly those in the Hanoi area, develop an emotional connection to their homeland. This aligns with the findings of Knapp and Watkins (2005) and Setyono and Widodo (2019), who note that Mental processes can effectively evoke readers' emotions. The Relational process in "It is a beautiful park" functions similarly, establishing an

attributive link between a national landmark and the quality of “beautiful”, implicitly positioning it as a site of national pride comparable to foreign attractions.

Beyond fostering pride, the textbook also emphasizes key Vietnamese cultural values, such as familial duty, as part of its construction of national character. This is evident in clauses depicting mutual support within the family:

Next, [I (Actor) **walk** home (Material)] and [**help** (Material) my parents (Client) on the farm (Goal)]. (p. 12)

Dad (Actor) sometimes **helps** (Material) Mom (Client) to cook dinner (Goal). (p. 26)

The first clause explicitly teaches children about responsibility and respect from a young age. The second reinforces this by demonstrating that such duties are reciprocal and foundational to the family unit. In the Vietnamese context, strong family cohesion is often portrayed as the bedrock of national strength, making this lesson an integral part of building a nationalist spirit through the textbook's theme of family and friends.

4.1.2 Simplicity and action in the Indonesian textbook

In contrast, the Indonesian textbook's heavy reliance on Material processes (57%) and the deliberate absence of more complex process types suggest a pedagogical focus on simplicity and clarity. The authors appear to prioritize creating easily digestible learning material that aligns with the cognitive level of elementary students, using simple vocabulary to describe a world of doing and happening:

Made [**borrowed**] a comic and a story book. (p. 26)

After she [**got up**] and [**prayed**] shubuh, she [**washed**] her bike in the garage. (p. 59)

Joshua and his father [**will go to**] Taman Safari next Sunday. (p. 94)

Two primary inferences can be drawn from this linguistic strategy. First, the Indonesian concept of nationalism in this educational context appears to be about establishing an accessible and non-intimidating learning process. The focus is on tailoring the material to the students' abilities to prevent cognitive overload and foster a positive attitude towards learning English. Second, the overwhelming focus on visible, concrete actions implies an emphasis on guiding students through tangible examples. This manifests an early “Actions speak louder than words” mentality, a conclusion supported by the significant quantitative discrepancy between Material (57%) and Verbal (4%) processes.

Despite this focus on action, the rare appearance of Verbal processes is highly significant. These instances are used to teach important Indonesian cultural values related to interpersonal relationships and social harmony:

[They (Sayer) **said** (Verbal) sorry (Verbiage) to Bu Nina (Receiver).] [and **promised** (Verbal) not to be late again (Verbiage).] (p. 26)

This clause models crucial social values such as politeness, respect for elders (the teacher, “Bu Nina”), and discipline. The act of apologizing and promising demonstrates a commitment to social order and responsible behavior. This aligns with Sakrikar's (2019) argument that the Verbal process represents a symbolic exchange of meaning that constructs social relationships. Through this simple clause, the textbook provides a model for proper communication and social conduct, which are framed as foundational elements of good citizenship and, by extension, national character.

4.2 Cultural artefacts in textbooks to represent nationalism

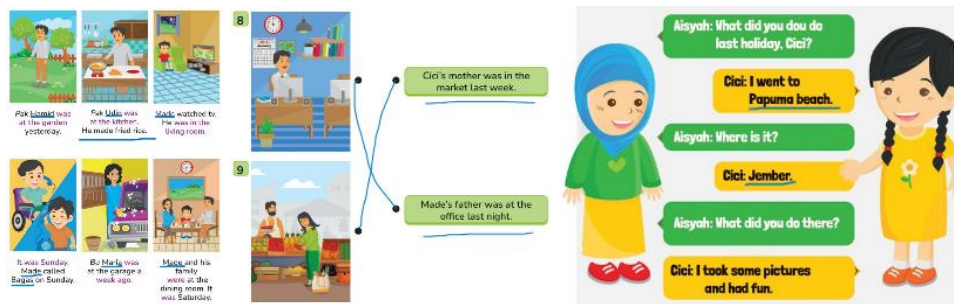
Table 3: The frequency of cultural artefacts appeared in
“My Next Words Grade 6 – Student's Book for Elementary School”

Representation of cultures	Senses of cultural artefacts				Total
	Aesthetic	Sociological	Semantic	Pragmatic/Sociolinguistic	
Source	8	60	32	0	100 (80%)
Target	0	0	5	13	18 (15%)
International target	0	5	1	0	6 (5%)
Total	8 (7%)	65 (52%)	38 (31%)	13 (10%)	124 (100%)

Table 4: The frequency of cultural artefacts appearing in “*Tiếng Anh lớp 5: Family and Friends (National Edition)*”

Representation of cultures	Senses of cultural artefacts				Total
	Aesthetic	Sociological	Semantic	Pragmatic/Sociolinguistic	
Source	10	47	46	0	103 (56%)
Target	4	14	5	22	45 (24%)
International target	11	16	10	1	38 (20%)
Total	25 (13%)	77 (42%)	61 (33%)	23 (12%)	186 (100%)

As shown in Tables 3 and 4, nationalism is primarily represented through artefacts of the Source culture, comprising 80% of such content in the Indonesian textbook and 56% in the Vietnamese textbook. An examination of the four senses of cultural artefacts further indicates that the Sociological sense is predominant in both publications, appearing 60 times in the Indonesian textbook and 47 times in the Vietnamese textbook, followed by the Semantic sense (32 and 46 appearances, respectively) and the Aesthetic sense (8 and 10 appearances, respectively). Within the Indonesian textbook specifically, these Sociological artefacts manifest in several forms, including a diverse range of Indonesian personal names (e.g., Made, Aisyah, Udin, Maria); specific geographical locations such as regions (e.g., Bali, Jakarta) and landmarks (e.g., Pura Besakih, Museum Mpu Tantarar); and depictions of local interpersonal relationships (e.g., “They said sorry to Bu Nina, and promised not to be late again”). Moreover, traditional family values and roles are conveyed through illustrations of domestic life (e.g., “Pak Udin was in the kitchen. He made fried rice”), and social inclusivity is promoted through visual representations, such as an illustration of a male student named Bagas who uses a wheelchair. Figure 1 provides visual examples of these Sociological artefacts.

**Figure 1:** Source cultural artefacts in the Sociological sense in order of: persons' names, family roles and values, and landmarks and regions (pp. 29, 33, 56)

The Sociological artefacts illustrated in Figure 1 exemplify “culture with a small c,” as they represent the everyday socio-cultural values and societal norms characteristic of Indonesia. Beyond these traditional representations, the Indonesian textbook introduces two particularly significant Sociological themes that articulate a modern conception of national identity: the promotion of equal gender roles and social inclusivity, as depicted in Figures 2 and 3, respectively. Arguably, this highlights the textbook's role in disseminating a more progressive and inclusive vision of nationalism, a dimension that appears less developed in the comparatively homogeneous representation within the Vietnamese textbook.

**Figure 2:** Two pictures with captions showcasing equal gender roles (p. 29)



Figure 3: Two pictures of a disabled male character in a wheelchair who is casually interacting with two characters (pp. 29, 40)

First, the theme of equal gender roles is presented on page 29 (Figure 2) through an illustration that subverts traditional domestic expectations: a male character, Pak Udin, is depicted cooking, while a female character, Bu Maria, is shown washing a car. The pedagogical intention of displaying these non-traditional roles appears to be the cultivation of awareness and the prevention of negative gender stereotyping and discrimination from a young age. Although the textbook provides no explicit elaboration on this theme, the authors attempt to introduce students to a component of national identity rooted in gender equality and tolerance, which can serve as a foundation for countering persistent societal stereotypes. This approach aligns with the arguments of Emilia et al. (2017), who note the gradual emergence of awareness of gender equality within society. Such early exposure may indirectly foster in students the open-mindedness required to realize their full potential and human rights, and to understand their responsibilities in contributing to national development irrespective of gender (Emilia et al., 2017). In this context, the representation supports Dugis's (1999) assertion that, "When a nation can achieve a high degree of unity, integration, and equality within its community, the nation can represent its peculiar and explicit character" (p. 56). It must be noted, however, that this depiction is an isolated occurrence on a single page, while the remainder of the textbook tends to implement more traditional gender roles. As Emilia et al. (2017) suggest, a crucial implication of this finding relates to the role of pedagogical mediation—specifically, how teachers address these gender issues in the classroom to engender a deeper understanding of nationalism among elementary students.

Second, the principle of inclusivity is introduced on pages 29 and 40 (Figure 3) through the portrayal of Bagas, a male character who uses a wheelchair, interacting with two non-disabled peers. By incorporating this interaction within an educational setting, the authors seem to intend for students to develop empathy and kindness toward others, particularly those within disabled and marginalized communities. This portrayal is consistent with the arguments of Hodkinson et al. (2016), who assert that inclusive practices are beneficial for students with disabilities and promote greater social acceptance of difference. Such representations work to reject negative assumptions that disabled persons are incapable of full participation in social activities. The underlying message, as the authors project, is that all individuals belong to the national community because they share the same essential human value; this forms a concept of nationalism rooted in educational inclusivity. However, similar to the portrayal of gender equality, the representation of the disabled community is limited in frequency and is not accompanied by explicit instruction to help students grasp the meaning beyond the visible image. Without effective pedagogical strategies and supplementary lessons that elaborate on the experiences of people within the disabled community, there is a risk that such limited exposure could inadvertently increase discrimination rather than mitigate it (see Hodkinson et al., 2016).

The potential for engendering negative exposure toward marginalized groups carries broader implications for national cohesion. An increase in discrimination could jeopardize the nation's welfare and erode the spirit of nationalism, as it threatens the value of unity that Haas (1986) and Kusumawardani and Faturochman (2004) identify as foundational to the concept of a nation. Consequently, while educators have a critical role, the responsibility extends to policymakers, government bodies, and textbook authors and publishers. These stakeholders must collaborate to take effective actions within the curriculum and textbook materials to ensure the disabled community is presented adequately, accurately, and in a positive light (Hodkinson et al., 2016).

Beyond these complex Sociological themes, the concept of nationalism is also represented through more direct Semantic and Aesthetic cultural artefacts. The Semantic sense is conveyed through Indonesian national symbols (portraits of the president and vice president, the Garuda symbol, and the motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*), national flags, school uniforms (white-red and Pramuka scout attributes), Indonesian honorifics (Pak, Bu), and national cuisine (fried rice). Lastly, the Aesthetic sense is employed through depictions of Indonesian traditional dances (Saman, Jaipong), traditional clothing (Kerawang Gayo, Sunting Kepies, Kebaya), and the traditional Keris weapon. Several of these artefacts are shown in Figure 4.



Figure 4: Source cultural artefacts in the Semantic and Aesthetic senses in order of: national symbols, traditional dance, traditional clothing, and traditional weapon (pp. 5, 19)

The Semantic artefacts previously described function as direct conceptual symbols, explicitly representing the Indonesian state and its national values. In contrast, the Aesthetic artefacts, such as traditional dances and clothing, serve as examples of “Culture with a capital C.” These elements showcase Indonesia’s artistic heritage, framing it as an inseparable part of the nation’s identity that must be preserved, particularly in the context of cultural globalization. A parallel approach is observed in the Vietnamese textbook, where the representation of nationalism is also grounded in cultural artefacts, specifically the Sociological elements that constitute “culture with a small c.” These include a wide range of Vietnamese personal names (e.g., *Huy, Phuong, Linh*), specific geographical locations (e.g., *Ha Noi, Sa Pa, Ho Chi Minh City*), and depictions of national life, such as schools (*Nguyen Trai Primary School*), famous landmarks (*Ha Long Bay*), and cultural traditions associated with the Tết holiday. Furthermore, the textbook portrays societal structures through illustrations of professions like rice farming, traditional modes of transportation, and deeply ingrained family roles and values. For instance, statements such as “Next, I walk home and help my parents on the farm” and “Dad sometimes helps Mom to cook dinner” reinforce familial duties and cooperation. These Sociological elements, several of which are shown in Figure 5, reflect the everyday socio-cultural fabric and characteristics of Vietnam, drawing a direct parallel to the types of representations found in the Indonesian textbook.

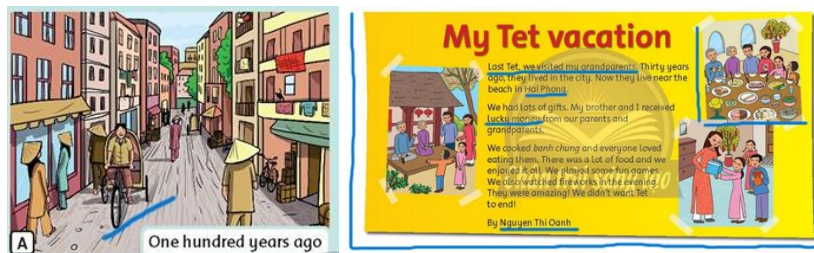


Figure 5: Source cultural artefacts in the Sociological sense in order of: traditional mode of transportation, traditions and holidays, and persons’ names (pp. 32, 46)

Complementing these Sociological representations, the Vietnamese textbook also utilizes Semantic and Aesthetic artefacts to convey national identity. The Semantic artefacts include national symbols, such as the distinct elementary school uniforms with a red scarf, and national flags. This category also emphasizes national cuisine, including staple ingredients (e.g., rice, fish sauce), condiments (nước chấm), and a variety of traditional dishes (e.g., spring rolls and bánh chưng). The Aesthetic representation of Vietnamese culture, by contrast, is more limited in scope, focusing exclusively on traditional clothing. This includes iconic national attire such as the *Nón lá* (conical hat) and the *Ao dài*, as well as the traditional clothes of ethnic groups like the Hmong. Figure 6 provides visual examples of these Semantic and Aesthetic cultural artefacts.



Figure 6: Source cultural artefacts in the Semantic and Aesthetic senses in order of: food ingredients and staple foods, dishes, national symbols, and traditional clothing (pp. 24, 47)

Similar to the Indonesian textbook, the Semantic sense is conveyed through their national symbols of elementary school uniforms (right picture). Although there is an appearance of national foods in both textbooks, the Vietnamese textbook scrutinizes its existence more than the Indonesian one, such as by displaying more illustrations and captions as well as associating them with the reading texts (shown in Figure 6, right picture). In the same vein, the Semantic sense not only serves as a conceptual symbol that directly represents the Vietnamese nationalism spirit but also as a cooperative effort by local and foreign authors to highlight the often-invisible details that actually have great importance for the nation's identity.

Meanwhile, the Aesthetic sense example is shown by a female character wearing a red Ao dài or a traditional Vietnamese dress made from silk (right picture). Contrary to the Semantic sense, nationalism is represented through Vietnamese cultural artefacts in the Aesthetic sense only as traditional clothing, unlike the Indonesian ones, which also present traditional dances and weapons. Nevertheless, it subsequently proves how traditional cultural artefacts, even for Vietnam, are inseparable parts that constantly shape the nation's identity and heritage.

Reverting to the notion of nationalism representation, there seems to be a tendency among language textbooks to represent cultural artefacts differently from one another, yet each of them is homogeneous (see Canale, 2016). Still, those cultural artefacts from both countries may contribute to the standardization, naturalization, and eternalization of ways of being, thinking, and behaving, resulting in a subtle construction of "us vs them" (Aoumeur & Ziani, 2022), which is potentially the subtle intention of the governments and authors in writing and publishing the textbooks to be used in school as per the latest curriculum. Notwithstanding, most of their occurrences are only served at a denotational or surface level without much visible explanation of the connotational level or beyond, and are used only to support the material in the textbooks, or in this case, as a representation of nationalism. This is in line with one of Wenginger and Kiss's (2013) arguments regarding their study that, "... the connection between textual and visual information in a language teaching textbook is generally overwhelmingly denotational; that is, image and text serve the purpose of reinforcing referential or lexical meaning ..." (p. 696).

4.3 Silver lining and evaluation of the textbooks

Despite prior phenomena, both in the reading texts and cultural artefacts to reflect and represent nationalism, Canale (2016) stated that the incorporation of all the dynamic complexities underlying the notion of culture and representing all these complexities in textbook discourse is not feasible. Overall, in perhaps a brighter view, both textbooks are able to show how the reading texts and the use of cultural artefacts have proven to be successful in teaching their students about nationalist values that their countries uphold, namely tolerance and equality, patriotism and a sense of belonging, benevolence and kindness, politeness and respect, sincerity and determination, and responsibility and self-discipline. These values eminently prepare these young students to be agents of change in society and a part of the brighter next generation, to develop, prosper, and sustain the country's progress (Muhtarom, 2020).

Still, for evaluation purposes, it is also crucial for the authors and teams not to abandon other representations of cultures to achieve one of their desired goals, such as nationalism. The disparities of three representations of cultural artefacts in the Indonesian textbook, where Source cultural artefacts are abundant, yet significantly lacking the Target and International Target cultural artefacts, confirm that case. Faris (2014) argues that the main purpose of teaching a foreign language, including its cultures, is not to shift the mindset or even threaten language students' identity. It is to aid the learning process of the foreign language and to create awareness of intercultural understanding, as well as awareness (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999) and communicative competence (Dahmardeh & Kim, 2021), where students can behave accordingly in various socio-cultural settings. However, controlling the amount of exposure the students get when learning the foreign cultures, especially at the elementary level, is also prevalent, so it will not threaten the students' nationalist spirit. The issue was brought up by Cortazzi and Jin (1999), stating that it is acceptable for younger students to learn EFL but not for them to learn (so much) about English-speaking (or any foreign) cultures.

Additionally, due to the complexities of the processes in the reading texts within the Vietnamese textbook, the material may appear to be challenging for elementary students. This is particularly true given their currently limited cognitive ability to comprehend such detailed information in the provided reading texts. However, we should not negate the fact that this book is partially published by Oxford University Press and authorized in collaboration with foreign authors. The use of international publishers like Oxford University Press functions as a claim to authority through symbolic branding rather than a self-evident marker of quality. Yet, one cannot ignore the material impact of this partnership. It facilitates the implementation of foreign educational standards within the Vietnamese curriculum, a pedagogical integration currently absent in the Indonesian textbook counterparts.

Regarding the Indonesian textbook, due to its stable structure and highly guided material, the roles and skills of teachers must also be adequate to engage more with students, whether to expand on the topic of

the learning material or teach them additional relevant supplementary lessons. If adequate teachers are insufficient and the proper and continuous training and capacity-building programs are meager, the teaching-learning process will presumably be in imbalance. Suppose there will be no immediate actions for these small cons in the foreseeable future, it is feared that they will further create a disparity in education, tarnishing and wasting the incorporation of all those self-centered cultural artefacts to seemingly fortify and represent the concept of nationalism to the students.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has provided a nuanced understanding of how nationalism is represented in English language textbooks in Indonesia and Vietnam. The analysis, which utilized Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), specifically the transitivity system, revealed distinct approaches in each textbook. In the Indonesian context, nationalism is overwhelmingly constructed through the Material process, emphasizing actions and tangible activities. Conversely, the Vietnamese textbook demonstrates a more balanced linguistic strategy, employing a near-equal distribution of both Material and Relational processes, reflecting a richer variety of social interactions and states of being. This linguistic variation underscores not only different pedagogical approaches but also the deliberate choices authors make to subtly embed nationalistic values. The successful application of SFL in this study demonstrates its utility as a powerful tool for deconstructing how ideology is constructed through language.

The study's second key finding is related to the prominent role of cultural artefacts in this representation. Through the cultural artefacts analytical checklists, the study revealed that Source cultural artefacts of a Sociological sense are the most salient, appearing in forms such as local names, regions, landmarks, and family values. These are followed by the Semantic sense (e.g., national symbols and foods) and the Aesthetic sense (e.g., traditional clothing). While these artefacts may seem to operate at a denotational level, their collective presence symbolically reinforces a "fixed national identity". The consistent inclusion of traditional cultural artefacts, in particular, highlights their enduring significance in preserving cultural heritage amid the forces of global mass culture. The effectiveness of the cultural artefact analytical checklists in categorizing these elements confirms their value for future research.

Overall, while the study's scope is limited, its findings offer valuable insights for critical scholars and educators. This research not only provides a methodological framework for similar studies but also serves as a crucial point of evaluation for both nations' educational systems. The findings can be used to inform the development of English language curricula that are simultaneously nationalistic and interculturally friendly. Such a balanced approach is essential for preparing students to be globally competent while remaining rooted in their national values. Ultimately, issues such as the appropriate measurement of foreign culture exposure, material complexity, and the underrepresentation of gender and inclusivity must be further addressed. By exploring these concerns, future scholars can help mitigate educational disparities and develop more equitable and effective learning materials.

DECLARATION

1. Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest in the process of writing and submission of this research.

2. Generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

AI tool, Gemini from Google, has been used only to refine and revise the language of the article. Apart from this, the article is the authors' original work.

3. Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

4. Ethics statement

The research involved no human participants. The textbooks that serve as the data sources for the study were downloaded from the official websites that are open to the public.

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Dimas Satyapratama Putra: Data curation, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft.

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