



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Exploring Big C and Small c Cultural Content across Proficiency Levels of a Popular EFL Textbook: Toward a Sustainable Vocabulary Teaching Method

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: Jun 21, 2024</p> <p>Accepted: Sep 16, 2024</p>	<p>This study employs content analysis to explore the representation of Big C (formal, institutional culture) and Small c (informal, everyday culture) cultural elements across different proficiency levels in the "Headway" EFL textbook series. Utilizing the Cultural Content Integration Framework, the study systematically examines how these cultural elements are incorporated to foster intercultural communicative competence (ICC) among learners. The findings reveal a progressive introduction of complex Big C cultural concepts as learners advance, while consistently emphasizing Small c cultural practices, which are crucial for practical communication. Specifically, the second research question reveals that Big C elements, such as Art and Education, gradually increase in frequency at higher proficiency levels, reflecting a pedagogical strategy to expose learners to more abstract cultural concepts as their linguistic capabilities develop. Conversely, Small c elements, including Everyday Living and Interpersonal Relations, dominate across all levels, emphasizing practical cultural knowledge essential for real-world interactions. This balanced approach aligns with the need for sustainable vocabulary teaching methods that integrate both types of cultural content to enhance linguistic proficiency and cultural understanding. The study proposes a sustainable cyclic vocabulary teaching model, which adapts to learners' evolving needs by reinforcing both Big C and Small c cultural elements through experiential learning activities and continuous assessment. The results underscore the importance of a comprehensive approach to cultural education in EFL, contributing to the development of more culturally responsive teaching practices that prepare learners for real-world intercultural interactions.</p>
<p>Keywords</p> <p>Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)</p> <p>Big C Culture</p> <p>Small c Culture</p> <p>EFL Textbooks</p> <p>Cultural Content Integration</p>	
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INTRODUCTION

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, the concepts of "Big C" and "Small c" culture are critical in understanding the role of cultural elements in language learning. "Big C" culture refers to the formal, institutional aspects such as literature, art, history, and institutions, which are typically emphasized in traditional education (Rodríguez, 2018). This encompasses the major achievements and intellectual heritage of a society, like Shakespearean literature or the political systems of English-speaking countries. Conversely, "Small c" culture involves the informal, everyday aspects of life,

including communication styles, daily routines, and social norms that shape individuals' lived experiences within a culture (Sobkowiak, 2016; othman et al., 2024). Although often overlooked, these informal cultural elements are essential for achieving true communicative competence and cultural understanding in a foreign language. Incorporating both Big C and Small c culture into EFL curricula offers learners a comprehensive understanding of the target language, enhancing their intercultural competence by preparing them to engage with both the formal and informal aspects of English-speaking societies (Amerian & Tajabadi, 2020; Nasir et al., 2024). This integrated approach ensures that learners are not only proficient in the language but also culturally sensitive and aware, fostering a deeper, more holistic grasp of the language and its cultural context.

The inclusion of cultural content in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks is pivotal in fostering learners' intercultural communication competence. Cultural content in these textbooks goes beyond language instruction, offering insights into the social norms, values, and worldviews of English-speaking communities, which are essential for effective communication across cultures. This integration of culture into language learning helps students develop not only linguistic proficiency but also an understanding of the cultural contexts in which the language is used (Bahri & Agustina, n.d.). Intercultural communication competence, which includes the ability to interpret and negotiate cultural differences, is increasingly recognized as a key component of language education in a globalized world. Textbooks that incorporate cultural elements provide learners with scenarios that reflect real-life communication, allowing them to practice navigating cultural nuances and enhancing their ability to communicate appropriately in diverse settings (Faiza & Sakina, 2022). Moreover, such cultural exposure helps learners to challenge stereotypes, broaden their perspectives, and become more empathetic towards other cultures, thereby promoting a more inclusive and globally minded outlook (Syarif & Mulyono, 2023). Thus, the cultural content in EFL textbooks plays a crucial role in preparing learners for intercultural interactions, making them not just competent users of the English language but also effective communicators in a multicultural world.

Numerous studies have explored the presence and representation of "Big C" and "Small c" culture in various English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks, emphasizing their role in fostering intercultural communicative competence among learners (Bahri & Agustina, n.d.). However, despite the extensive research on this topic, little attention has been given to the "Headway" textbook series, particularly the latest 5th edition. Given the global popularity and widespread use of the "Headway" series in EFL classrooms, an analysis of how "Big C" (formal, institutional culture) and "Small c" (informal, everyday culture) elements are represented in this textbook is both timely and necessary. The 5th edition of "Headway" has garnered significant attention worldwide, and analyzing its cultural content will provide valuable insights for educators and learners, enhancing their intercultural communicative competence and offering critical feedback to the publishers. Such feedback could be instrumental in shaping future editions of the textbook, ensuring it continues to meet the evolving needs of learners in a globalized world (Rodríguez, 2018). This study aims to fill the existing gap in research by conducting a comprehensive analysis of the "Headway" 5th edition, focusing on the representation of cultural content and its implications for intercultural competence development.

This study is guided by three primary research objectives. First, it seeks to determine the degree to which "Big C" (formal, institutional culture) and "Small c" (informal, everyday culture) are represented across different proficiency levels in the popular "Headway" EFL textbook series, assessing how effectively the textbook incorporates cultural content to support the development of intercultural communicative competence. Second, the research aims to identify the dominant topics within both "Big C" and "Small c" culture as presented in the textbook, providing insights into which cultural elements are most emphasized and how this aligns with the goals of fostering intercultural understanding. Finally, the third objective is to propose a sustainable vocabulary teaching framework that integrates both "Big C" and "Small c" cultural elements into classroom instruction, enhancing vocabulary learning by embedding cultural context to ensure students develop both language

proficiency and a deeper understanding of the cultural dimensions that influence language use. By achieving these objectives, the study will offer valuable recommendations for educators and contribute to the development of more culturally responsive teaching practices in EFL education.

Theoretical-conceptual framework

The Cultural Content Integration Framework, developed by (Cortazzi, 1999), provides a comprehensive approach to analyzing and integrating cultural content within language teaching materials by categorizing cultural content into Source Culture (learners' own culture), Target Culture (culture of the language being learned), and International Culture (cultures from other countries). This framework is particularly relevant in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, where it ensures that learners are not only developing linguistic skills but also gaining insights into the diverse cultural landscapes associated with the language they are learning. In applying this framework to the "Headway" EFL textbook series, this study examines how "Big C" (formal, institutional culture) and "Small c" (informal, everyday culture) elements are represented across different proficiency levels, assessing the balance of Source, Target, and International Cultures. This balanced approach is crucial for fostering intercultural communicative competence, as it equips learners with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate cross-cultural communication effectively. Furthermore, the study proposes to extend this framework to develop a sustainable vocabulary teaching method that integrates these cultural elements, ensuring that vocabulary instruction is deeply connected to the cultural contexts in which the language is used. Recent studies support this approach, highlighting the importance of integrating cultural content to enhance learners' intercultural competence and prepare them for real-life intercultural interactions (Bahri & Agustina, n.d.). This framework and the proposed teaching method offer a structured, culturally responsive approach to language learning in a globalized world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of culture in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, particularly the distinctions between Big C culture (formal, institutional culture) and Small c culture (informal, everyday culture), is crucial for developing learners' intercultural communicative competence. According to (Saedi Talab & Salehabadi, 2019), Big C culture represents a nation's intellectual and artistic achievements, while Small c culture encompasses everyday practices and behaviors that shape real-life interactions. Research indicates that integrating both cultural types into EFL education enhances learners' communicative skills and intercultural understanding, yet textbooks often disproportionately emphasize Big C culture. For instance, (Rodríguez, 2018) found that Spanish B2-level textbooks predominantly featured Big C cultural elements, neglecting Small c culture. Similarly, studies in Thailand by (Labtici & Teo, 2019) observed that cultural content in EFL textbooks was presented more in receptive skills like listening and reading, rather than in productive skills crucial for active engagement. However, (Chutong & Thongrin, 2020) noted that while English for tourism textbooks in Thailand included both Big C and Small c cultural themes, the representation still favored Big C culture. This imbalance suggests a need for more equitable inclusion of both cultural types in teaching materials to ensure that learners develop a well-rounded intercultural competence, which is increasingly vital in our globalized world.

Cultural content in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks plays a critical role in developing intercultural communication competence (ICC) among learners, which is essential for effective communication in a globalized world (Alhaj & Alwadai, 2023). Studies have shown that while textbooks provide opportunities for cultural learning, their representation of cultural elements can be unbalanced, often focusing predominantly on target cultures and surface-level cultural aspects, which may hinder the development of a deeper intercultural understanding (Mekheimer & Amin, 2019). The inclusion of diverse and authentic cultural materials is crucial for enhancing students' cultural awareness and motivating them to engage more deeply with the language learning process

(Oanh, 2019). However, some textbooks fail to provide sufficient depth in cultural content, leading to superficial cultural understanding rather than fostering critical cultural awareness (Safari & Pourhashemi, 2022). Therefore, it is essential for textbooks to offer a comprehensive and balanced representation of cultural elements to equip students with the skills and knowledge necessary for meaningful intercultural communication (Jumpakate & Hieu, 2019). Future research and textbook development should focus on enhancing the depth and breadth of cultural content to better support the development of ICC in EFL learners.

The Cultural Content Integration Framework, developed by (Cortazzi, 1999), is a valuable tool in EFL education for analyzing and improving the representation of culture in textbooks, categorizing cultural content into Source Culture, Target Culture, and International Culture (Watan, 2021). This framework is crucial in fostering intercultural communicative competence (ICC) among learners, as it emphasizes the need for a balanced representation of these cultural elements to prevent cultural bias and ensure a comprehensive understanding of the target language and its associated cultures (Akmal et al., 2023). A recent study have applied this framework to analyze EFL textbooks, revealing imbalances in cultural representation, with some textbooks prioritizing Source Culture while others emphasize Target Culture, often neglecting broader international perspectives (Mustapidaturrohmah et al., 2022). A balanced approach is essential for preparing learners to navigate intercultural interactions effectively, as textbooks that equally represent Source, Target, and International cultures enable learners to develop both linguistic competence and a nuanced understanding of cultural diversity (Bahri & Agustina, n.d.). As EFL education continues to evolve, it is imperative that textbooks reflect a diverse and balanced cultural perspective to enhance ICC, as highlighted by recent research findings (Gheisari & Akbari, 2022).

The "Headway" series, published by Oxford University Press, is globally recognized and widely used in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms due to its structured approach to language teaching, integrating grammar, vocabulary, and skills development, making it suitable for learners of varying proficiencies (Keles & Yazan, 2023). However, studies like those by (Amerian & Tajabadi, 2020) have highlighted gaps in the cultural content of the series, particularly its biases and inadequacies in promoting a balanced intercultural understanding, with a predominant focus on Western cultures, which may narrow learners' perspectives. Similarly, (Keles & Yazan, 2023) found that the "Headway" series, across various editions, continues to emphasize Inner Circle English-speaking countries, with minimal representation of non-Western cultures, limiting its engagement with a multicultural view of English. Given these concerns, analyzing the 5th edition of "Headway" in the context of Big C (formal, institutional culture) and Small c (informal, everyday culture) culture is crucial, as it may reflect recent educational shifts towards integrating global cultural themes and fostering sustainability awareness, making it essential for understanding how well it prepares learners for real-world communication and intercultural competence (Lasekan et al., 2023).

Vocabulary acquisition in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education is deeply intertwined with the cultural context, making it essential for vocabulary instruction to incorporate cultural elements to enhance both language proficiency and cultural understanding. Language reflects cultural values, norms, and practices, and vocabulary learning without cultural context can result in superficial knowledge that lacks practical applicability (Marhamah et al., 2017). Research has shown that integrating both Big C culture (formal, institutional culture) and Small c culture (informal, everyday culture) into vocabulary teaching fosters greater cultural awareness and communicative competence (Canga Alonso, 2020). Despite the recognized importance of cultural integration, studies have highlighted that cultural vocabulary is often underrepresented in EFL materials, leading to missed opportunities for deepening learners' linguistic and cultural competence (Siyanova-Chanturia & Webb, 2016a). To address these gaps, a sustainable vocabulary teaching framework is proposed, emphasizing a balanced approach that includes explicit instruction of culturally significant vocabulary alongside implicit learning of everyday language use (Tsubaki, 2018). This framework

encourages the use of textbooks that reflect the cultural diversity of English-speaking communities, thereby preparing learners for effective communication in diverse cultural settings and contributing to the long-term development of intercultural communicative competence (Luk, 2012).

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with people from different cultures using a foreign language, extending beyond linguistic proficiency to include cultural awareness and sensitivity, which is crucial in the globalized world of language learning (Portugal, 2021). The development of ICC has shifted the focus in language education from mere communicative competence to a more integrated approach that emphasizes both language and cultural understanding (Gu, 2016). Cultural content plays a pivotal role in this process by exposing learners to the norms, values, and practices of the target language, thereby making communication more authentic and culturally appropriate (Chaouche, 2017). However, the effectiveness of EFL textbooks in developing ICC varies; while some textbooks provide a range of cultural perspectives that foster critical reflection and intercultural engagement, others are limited in scope, often focusing predominantly on the cultures of English-speaking countries and neglecting the broader cultural contexts in which English is used globally (Rosyidi & Purwati, 2017). To effectively develop ICC, it is essential for EFL textbooks to incorporate diverse and meaningful cultural content that supports learners in becoming competent intercultural communicators.

Despite significant research on cultural content in EFL textbooks, there remains a gap in understanding how both "Big C" (formal, institutional culture) and "Small c" (informal, everyday culture) are represented across different proficiency levels in widely used textbook series, such as "Headway." Existing studies have predominantly focused on either the cultural bias in these textbooks or their emphasis on Western cultures, but limited attention has been given to the balance and representation of Big C and Small c cultural elements across the entire proficiency spectrum in the "Headway" series, particularly in the latest 5th edition. This gap is critical as it directly impacts how learners develop intercultural communicative competence (ICC), which is increasingly necessary in our globalized world. Furthermore, while the importance of integrating cultural context into vocabulary teaching is well recognized, there is a lack of a systematic approach or framework that sustainably embeds both Big C and Small c cultural elements into vocabulary instruction. Addressing these gaps is essential for creating more culturally responsive teaching materials that prepare learners for real-world intercultural interactions.

To bridge this gap, the following research questions are proposed:

- To what degree are "Big C" (formal, institutional culture) and "Small c" (informal, everyday culture) represented across different proficiency levels in the popular "Headway" EFL textbook series?
- What are the dominant topics within both "Big C" and "Small c" culture as presented across proficiency levels in the "Headway" textbook series?
- How can a sustainable vocabulary teaching framework that integrates both "Big C" and "Small c" cultural elements into classroom instruction be proposed?

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The research design for this study is anchored in the constructivist research philosophy, which emphasizes that both reality and knowledge are socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 2016). This perspective provides a robust framework for analyzing how educational materials, specifically English textbooks, portray vocabularies associated with cultural elements, particularly Big C (formal, institutional culture) and Small c (informal, everyday culture) (Holliday, 1999). The study utilizes content analysis as its primary method to systematically uncover and analyze themes related to Big C and Small c that may contribute to enhancing intercultural competence in learners (Krippendorff, 2018). By employing an inductive approach to coding, this research derives cultural vocabularies

directly from the textbooks, rather than applying a pre-established framework, thereby embracing the emergent nature of the research process (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

Source of Data for the Identification of big c and small c cultural elements

In this study, data were systematically collected from the *Headway* Vocabulary Wordlist, meticulously designed to align with the units and themes of the corresponding textbook. The vocabulary words, carefully curated to match the proficiency levels of learners, are organized by unit and theme, covering topics such as travel, work, and relationships. Each wordlist is associated with the main textbook, which is part of the widely acknowledged and esteemed *Headway* English as a Foreign Language (EFL) series, spanning six proficiency levels: beginner, elementary, pre-intermediate, intermediate, upper-intermediate, and advanced. The series is globally recognized for its effectiveness in enhancing language acquisition and boosting learners' confidence. The wordlist includes various word types—nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs—accompanied by definitions and, in some cases, phonetic transcriptions to facilitate accurate pronunciation. Additionally, it provides contextual examples of word usage in sentences, aiding learners in understanding their meaning and application. Common collocations and useful phrases are also included, enabling learners to employ vocabulary more naturally and fluently in both spoken and written communication. This wordlist is a valuable resource for reinforcing vocabulary acquisition, supporting both retention and practical application, and is frequently utilized in conjunction with various exercises and activities within the *Headway* series.

Instrumentation for Big C and Small c Cultural Elements Identification

The identification and categorization of Big C and Small c cultural elements within educational materials, particularly English language textbooks, are critical for assessing the extent to which these resources contribute to the development of intercultural communicative competence. This study utilizes an adapted framework based on the works of (Chastain, 1988), (Tomalin & Stempleski, 2013), and the (Division, 2001) to systematically identify and analyze these cultural elements.

Big C Cultural Elements

The Big C cultural topics, as outlined by (Chastain, 1988) and (Tomalin & Stempleski, 2013), include significant cultural artifacts and institutions that are often seen as the pillars of a society's formal culture. These elements encompass:

Art: This includes paintings, sculpture, and architecture, which represent the aesthetic achievements of a culture.

Economy: Refers to the economic systems and structures that define how resources are managed and distributed within a society.

Education: Includes schools, universities, and curricula, highlighting the formal transmission of knowledge.

Geography: National geography, which (Byram, 1993) describes as the geographical facts considered significant by the members of a society.

History: National history, including historical and contemporary events that serve as markers of national identity (Byram, 1993).

Institutions: This covers government, politics, and state institutions, reflecting the organizational structures that govern a society.

Literature: Encompasses novels, plays, poems, and proverbs, representing the literary heritage of a culture.

Small c Cultural Elements

The Small c cultural topics, derived from (Chastain, 1988) and the (Division, 2001), pertain to the everyday practices, norms, and values that shape the daily lives of individuals within a society. These include:

Everyday Living: This covers aspects like food and drink, meal times, table manners, public holidays, working hours and practices, and leisure activities such as hobbies, sports, and media consumption.

Living Conditions: Includes living standards (with variations across regions, classes, and ethnic groups), housing conditions, and welfare arrangements.

Interpersonal Relations: This involves the dynamics of relationships within different contexts, such as class structure, gender relations, family structures, intergenerational relations, workplace relations, and community relations.

Values, Beliefs, and Attitudes: These are associated with social class, occupational groups, wealth, regional cultures, security, tradition, social change, minorities, national identity, religion, and humor.

Body Language: Nonverbal communication, which plays a significant role in interpersonal interactions.

Social Conventions: These include norms around giving and receiving hospitality, such as punctuality, gift-giving, dress codes, and conversational conventions.

Ritual Behavior: This encompasses religious observances, rites of passage (birth, marriage, death), and behaviors at public performances and ceremonies.

The justification for this instrumentation lies in the need to evaluate the comprehensiveness of cultural content in textbooks and its effectiveness in preparing learners for intercultural communication, which requires both formal cultural knowledge (Big C) and understanding of everyday social practices (Small c). By using an inductive approach to content analysis, this study ensures that the identification of cultural elements is grounded in the actual textbook content, allowing for a more nuanced and contextually relevant analysis that aligns with the principles of intercultural communicative competence.

Content analysis

In this study, a content analysis was conducted to examine the representation of cultural elements in the *Headway* series of vocabulary wordlists, focusing on Big C and Small c culture. Content analysis, a systematic method for coding and categorizing data, was utilized to identify patterns and themes using Atlas.ti software for coding and quantifying the frequency of cultural elements (Krippendorff, 2018). Big C culture, encompassing elements of high culture such as **literature, education, institutions, geography, history, art, and economy** (Tomalin & Stempleski, 2013), was coded using synonymous terms like "classics" for literature and "governmental bodies" for institutions. Small c culture, which includes everyday practices and social norms, was categorized into **values, beliefs, attitudes, everyday living, interpersonal relations, body language, living conditions, social conventions, and ritual behavior** (Byram, 1993), with synonymous terms such as "norms" for values and "nonverbal cues" for body language. The materials selected for analysis were the vocabulary wordlists from the *Headway* series, known for its comprehensive approach to language learning. The coding categories were developed from established literature, and the wordlists were systematically reviewed to identify occurrences of both direct and synonymous references to cultural elements. Quantitative analysis, facilitated by Atlas.ti, was employed to assess the frequency of these elements (Matić, 2015). To ensure reliability, a portion of the materials was independently coded by a second researcher, with discrepancies resolved through discussion. This approach provided a

comprehensive examination of cultural content, revealing the extent to which the *Headway* series supports the cultural dimensions necessary for effective language learning.

RESULTS

In a study aimed at determining the degree to which "Big C" and "Small c" cultural elements are represented across different proficiency levels in the popular *Headway* EFL textbook series, the findings reveal distinct trends in cultural content distribution (Figure 1).

Small c culture consistently dominates across all proficiency levels, indicating a strong emphasis on everyday cultural practices, social norms, and interpersonal relations that are critical for practical communication. The frequency of Small c elements increases steadily from 11 occurrences at the Beginner level to 42 at the Advanced level, reflecting the series' focus on enhancing learners' understanding of daily life in English-speaking cultures as they advance in proficiency.

Big C culture, which encompasses high culture elements such as literature, history, and institutions, shows a gradual increase in representation as proficiency levels rise, starting with 5 occurrences at the Beginner level and reaching 34 at the Advanced level. This growth suggests that the *Headway* series introduces and progressively builds upon complex cultural concepts, particularly at higher levels where learners are more linguistically equipped to engage with these topics.

Overall, the *Headway* series appears to balance the introduction of both practical, everyday cultural knowledge and more sophisticated cultural content, with Small c culture receiving greater emphasis across all levels. The findings indicate that while learners are progressively exposed to more Big C cultural elements as they advance, the series maintains a consistent focus on equipping them with the cultural tools necessary for effective communication in real-world contexts.

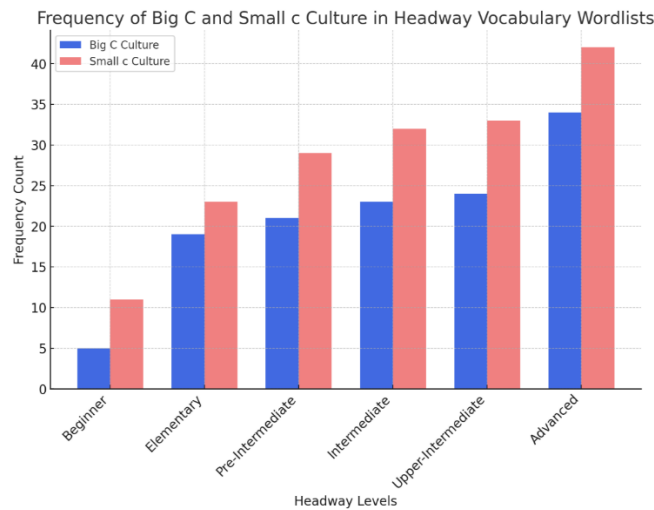


Figure 1: Frequency of Big C and Small c Culture in Headway Vocabulary Wordlist Series

Table 1: Frequency of Dominant Topics within Big C and Small c Culture

Cultural Topics	Beginner	Elementary	Pre-Intermediate	Intermediate	Upper-Intermediate	Advanced	Total
Art (Big C)	1	4	7	5	5	5	27
Economy (Big C)	1	2	2	3	3	5	16
Education (Big C)	2	3	4	3	3	5	20

Geography (Big C)	1	3	3	3	3	3	16
History (Big C)	1	2	2	3	3	3	14
Institutions (Big C)	0	2	3	3	3	3	14
Literature (Big C)	1	2	2	2	2	5	14
Everyday Living (Small c)	3	4	5	5	5	5	27
Living Conditions (Small c)	1	2	3	3	3	5	17
Interpersonal Relations (Small c)	5	3	4	4	4	5	25
Values, Beliefs, Attitudes (Small c)	1	3	3	3	3	3	16
Body Language (Small c)	0	2	2	2	2	3	11
Social Conventions (Small c)	0	2	2	2	2	3	11
Ritual Behavior (Small c)	1	2	2	2	2	5	14

In analyzing the frequency of dominant topics within both "Big C" and "Small c" culture across the various levels of the *Headway* vocabulary wordlist, several key trends were observed in Table 1.

Big C Culture:

"Big C" culture, which includes topics such as Art, Economy, Education, Geography, History, Institutions, and Literature, showed a gradual increase in frequency as proficiency levels advanced. The data revealed that topics such as Education and Art were particularly well-represented across all levels, with frequencies reaching their highest at the Advanced level. For instance, the frequency of Art-related terms increased from 1 at the Beginner level to 5 at the Advanced level, indicating a steady progression in the introduction of high culture elements as learners' proficiency improves.

However, certain "Big C" topics, such as Institutions and Literature, were less consistently represented at the lower levels, with frequencies starting at 0 or 1 at the Beginner level and gradually increasing to higher numbers at the Intermediate and Advanced levels. This suggests that more complex and abstract cultural concepts are introduced progressively, corresponding with learners' growing linguistic capabilities.

Small c Culture:

"Small c" culture, encompassing Everyday Living, Living Conditions, Interpersonal Relations, Values, Beliefs, Attitudes, Body Language, Social Conventions, and Ritual Behavior, demonstrated a consistent dominance across all proficiency levels. Topics like Everyday Living and Interpersonal Relations were particularly prominent, with frequencies starting higher even at the Beginner level

and maintaining a strong presence through to the Advanced level. For example, Everyday Living had a frequency of 3 at the Beginner level and remained consistently high at 5 in the Advanced level.

Moreover, "Small c" topics such as Body Language and Social Conventions, though less frequent than Everyday Living, were still more consistently represented across all levels compared to their "Big C" counterparts. This reflects the emphasis on practical, everyday cultural practices that are crucial for basic communication and interaction in real-world contexts.

Comparative Analysis:

Overall, the results indicate that "Small c" cultural elements are more heavily emphasized across all levels of the *Headway* series, likely due to their relevance in practical communication and everyday interactions. On the other hand, "Big C" cultural elements, while still present, are more selectively introduced, with a noticeable increase in frequency at higher proficiency levels where learners are more equipped to engage with complex cultural content. This balanced approach suggests that the *Headway* series is designed to build a comprehensive cultural understanding, progressively introducing more abstract and high-culture topics as learners advance, while consistently reinforcing practical cultural knowledge throughout the learning process.

Proposed sustainable cyclic vocabulary teaching model

The proposed sustainable cyclic vocabulary teaching model integrates both Big C and Small c cultural topics within the *Headway* textbook series to foster intercultural competencies among EFL students. Designed for sustainability, this model as shown in figure 2 provides a continuous learning cycle that adapts to students' evolving linguistic and cultural needs, with each process contributing to long-term educational outcomes. The cycle begins with the careful selection of vocabulary that embodies both Big C elements, such as art, history, and institutions, and Small c elements, like food, social conventions, and interpersonal relations, as drawn from the *Headway* textbook series (Canga Alonso, 2020). This selection builds a foundation for both linguistic proficiency and cultural awareness, which can be expanded as students progress. Following vocabulary introduction, students engage in experiential learning activities, such as role-playing and simulations, ensuring they experience the practical application of vocabulary, a key to deeper cultural understanding (Youzhen, 2006). This approach, rooted in Kolb's experiential learning cycle, is sustainable as it continuously adapts to students' experiences. After these activities, reflective discussions help students analyze their experiences and the cultural vocabulary used, promoting critical thinking about cultural differences and aiding in internalizing vocabulary within a broader cultural context (Dai, 2011). This process is sustainable because it fosters ongoing critical thinking, essential for intercultural competence. The model reinforces learned vocabulary through multimodal resources, such as films and music, catering to different learning styles, thus keeping students engaged and motivated, making learning inclusive, effective, and sustainable (Yeh, 2014). The cycle concludes with assessments of students' understanding and application of cultural vocabulary, using both formative and summative methods, along with constructive feedback to guide further learning (Siyanova-Chanturia & Webb, 2016b). This process is sustainable as it informs ongoing instruction, allowing for adjustments based on students' progress. The cycle then repeats with the introduction of new vocabulary, ensuring learning remains dynamic and evolving (Abney & Krulatz, 2015). This iterative approach offers a structured yet flexible framework, making the model a valuable tool for fostering intercultural competencies in EFL education.

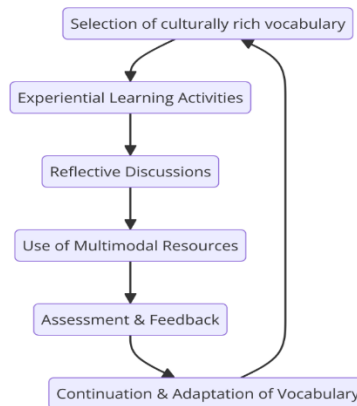


Figure 2: Proposed sustainable cyclic vocabulary teaching model

DISCUSSION

The analysis of the "Headway" series reveals a clear emphasis on Small c cultural elements across all proficiency levels, with a gradual introduction of Big C cultural elements as learners advance, indicating a pedagogical strategy designed to ensure that learners first master everyday social interactions and cultural nuances, which are essential for effective communication in real-world contexts (Faiza & Sakina, 2022). As learners progress, the increasing presence of Big C cultural elements, such as literature, history, and institutions, reflects a shift towards engaging with more complex and abstract cultural concepts, crucial for developing a well-rounded intercultural communicative competence (ICC) (Amerian & Tajabadi, 2020). This balanced introduction of both Big C and Small c cultural elements supports the development of ICC by scaffolding cultural learning, ensuring that learners are equipped not only to navigate everyday interactions but also to appreciate the broader intellectual and artistic achievements of English-speaking societies (Cortazzi, 1999). The gradual integration of Big C culture as proficiency increases suggests that the "Headway" series is designed to deepen learners' cultural understanding in tandem with their linguistic development, ultimately preparing them for sophisticated intercultural communication (Chutong & Thongrin, 2020). This approach highlights the interrelation between cultural competence and linguistic proficiency, reinforcing the importance of a comprehensive cultural education that prepares learners for diverse intercultural interactions.

In our analysis of the "Headway" series, we uncovered significant insights into the dominant Big C and Small c cultural topics across proficiency levels, directly addressing the second research question.

The data indicates that "Big C" cultural elements, such as Art, Economy, Education, Geography, History, Institutions, and Literature, gradually increase in frequency as learners advance in proficiency, reflecting a pedagogical strategy to progressively expose learners to more complex and abstract cultural concepts as their linguistic capabilities develop (Rodríguez, 2018). Topics like Education and Art are consistently represented across all levels, peaking at the Advanced level, while more complex Big C topics, such as Institutions and Literature, are introduced more selectively, increasing in frequency at higher proficiency levels (Bahri & Agustina, n.d.). Conversely, "Small c" cultural elements, including Everyday Living, Interpersonal Relations, and Social Conventions, demonstrate a consistent dominance across all levels, emphasizing practical, everyday cultural practices crucial for basic communication and real-world interactions (Syarif & Mulyono, 2023). This balanced approach in the "Headway" series, where Big C concepts are introduced progressively while Small c elements are consistently emphasized, supports the development of a comprehensive cultural understanding. By maintaining this balance, the series effectively prepares learners for both

sophisticated cultural topics and practical communication, fostering a holistic development of intercultural communicative competence

"Headway" series reveals critical implications for the development of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), particularly in balancing Big C (formal, institutional) and Small c (informal, everyday) cultural content to effectively prepare learners for real-world communication. The study reveals that Small c cultural elements, such as everyday living, interpersonal relations, and social conventions, are consistently emphasized across all proficiency levels, which is crucial for equipping learners with the practical cultural knowledge necessary for everyday interactions (Holliday, 1999). This focus on Small c culture helps develop the basic communicative skills that enable learners to navigate daily life in English-speaking contexts, making them more effective in real-world communication settings (Alhaj & Alwadai, 2023). As learners advance in proficiency, there is a gradual increase in the representation of Big C cultural elements, including literature, history, and institutions, reflecting a strategy aimed at deepening learners' cultural understanding alongside their linguistic abilities (Mustofa & Martina, 2019). By progressively introducing more complex and abstract cultural concepts, the "Headway" series ensures that students can engage in everyday conversations and appreciate the broader intellectual and artistic achievements of English-speaking societies (Labtich & Teo, 2019). This balanced approach, integrating both Big C and Small c cultural elements, supports the development of a well-rounded ICC, preparing learners for diverse intercultural interactions by providing them with the cultural tools needed for both practical communication and sophisticated discussions on cultural topics (Gómez Rodríguez, 2015). Moreover, the consistent emphasis on Small c culture across all levels, combined with the gradual introduction of Big C culture, enhances learners' ability to navigate both informal and formal cultural contexts, leading to a more holistic development of ICC and ensuring they are well-prepared for the complexities of intercultural communication in a globalized world (Tananuraksakul & Soontornwipat, 2021).

The findings of this study corroborate and extend existing research on the representation of Big C and Small c cultural content in EFL textbooks. Previous studies have consistently highlighted that EFL textbooks often emphasize Big C culture, focusing on formal, institutional aspects such as history, literature, and art (Rodríguez, 2018). However, this study reveals a more balanced approach within the "Headway" series, where Small c cultural elements, including everyday living, interpersonal relations, and social conventions, are consistently emphasized across all proficiency levels. This finding supports the assertion that integrating both types of cultural content is essential for developing Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), as learners need to navigate both formal and informal cultural contexts (Sobkowiak, 2016). While other research has pointed out the dominance of Big C culture in many textbooks, often neglecting the practical aspects of culture necessary for real-world communication (Labtich & Teo, 2019), this study shows that the "Headway" series incorporates a significant amount of Small c culture. This approach aligns with the recommendations by (Gómez Rodríguez, 2015) and (Amerian & Tajabadi, 2020), who argue that effective EFL textbooks should present a balanced view of culture to enhance learners' communicative competence in diverse cultural settings. Moreover, this study's findings contrast with those of (Chutong & Thongrin, 2020), who found that while both Big C and Small c cultural themes are present, there is often a bias towards Big C culture in textbooks, particularly in the context of English for specific purposes, such as tourism. The "Headway" series, by progressively introducing more complex Big C cultural elements as learners advance, while maintaining a strong emphasis on Small c cultural content, provides a more comprehensive approach to cultural education. This balance is crucial for developing a well-rounded ICC, equipping learners to engage effectively in both everyday interactions and more formal cultural exchanges. In conclusion, this study contributes to the ongoing discussion about cultural representation in EFL textbooks by demonstrating that the "Headway" series achieves a more balanced integration of Big C and Small c cultural elements, which

is essential for fostering ICC in learners. The findings suggest that the "Headway" series could serve as a model for other EFL textbooks aiming to prepare students for real-world intercultural communication.

The proposed sustainable cyclic vocabulary teaching model is highly relevant for integrating both Big C (formal, institutional culture) and Small c (informal, everyday culture) cultural elements into EFL instruction, which is essential for developing Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC). This model's cyclic approach—beginning with the selection of culturally significant vocabulary, followed by experiential learning activities, reflective discussions, reinforcement through multimodal resources, and ongoing assessment—ensures a balanced integration of cultural content throughout the language learning process. By embedding both Big C elements, such as art, history, and literature, alongside Small c elements, like social norms and interpersonal relations, the model addresses the critical gap in EFL instruction where Small c cultural elements are often underrepresented despite their importance for real-world communication (Sobkowiak, 2016). The model's adaptability across different proficiency levels allows for a gradual increase in the complexity of Big C cultural elements while consistently emphasizing Small c elements, ensuring learners develop a well-rounded understanding of the target language and culture (Amerian & Tajabadi, 2020). Experiential learning activities provide practical applications, helping learners internalize vocabulary and cultural norms in context (Youzhen, 2006), while reflective discussions foster deeper intercultural understanding by connecting vocabulary with broader cultural concepts (Dai, 2011). The use of multimodal resources makes learning more engaging and effective (Yeh, 2014), and the model's iterative nature, with continuous assessment and feedback, ensures that learning remains dynamic and responsive to students' evolving needs (Canga Alonso, 2020). By effectively integrating both Big C and Small c cultural elements, this sustainable cyclic vocabulary teaching model offers a structured yet flexible framework that is crucial for fostering intercultural competence in EFL education.

The results of the analysis of the "Headway" series present substantial pedagogical implications for EFL educators, especially in terms of advancing the cultural responsiveness of their instructional methodologies. The study highlights the importance of balancing the representation of Big C (formal, institutional culture) and Small c (informal, everyday culture) cultural elements in instructional materials. While the "Headway" series effectively integrates both types of cultural content, there is a dominant emphasis on Small c culture across all proficiency levels, which aligns with the practical communication needs of learners (Holliday, 1999). This focus equips learners with the cultural knowledge necessary for everyday interactions, essential for effective real-world communication (Alhaj & Alwadai, 2023). Educators can leverage these insights by ensuring that their teaching materials provide a balanced approach, incorporating more Big C cultural elements, especially at advanced levels, to engage students with complex cultural concepts such as literature, history, and institutions, thereby deepening their intercultural communicative competence (Mustofa & Martina, 2019). Furthermore, adopting a sustainable cyclic vocabulary teaching model that integrates both Big C and Small c cultural elements, as proposed in the study, can help educators maintain a dynamic and responsive learning environment (Canga Alonso, 2020). This approach not only enhances vocabulary acquisition but also ensures that students understand the cultural contexts that give meaning to these words, thereby equipping them with the intercultural skills necessary for effective communication in a globalized world (Siyanova-Chanturia & Webb, 2016b). In summary, the study underscores the importance of balancing cultural content and adopting sustainable teaching practices in EFL instruction to better prepare students for the complexities of intercultural communication.

The theoretical-conceptual framework of the Cultural Content Integration Framework, developed by (Cortazzi, 1999), plays a crucial role in guiding this study, particularly in analyzing the representation of Big C (formal institutional culture) and Small c (informal everyday culture) cultural elements across different proficiency levels in the "Headway" EFL textbook series. This framework categorizes

cultural content into Source Culture, Target Culture, and International Culture, ensuring a comprehensive approach to cultural education. Its relevance lies in providing a structured methodology to assess the balance of these cultural elements, which is essential for fostering intercultural communicative competence (ICC) among learners. By applying this framework, the study evaluates how well the "Headway" series prepares learners for cross-cultural communication, ensuring they gain not only linguistic skills but also cultural insights that are vital in a globalized world (Cortazzi, 1999). Furthermore, the framework supports the development of a sustainable vocabulary teaching method that integrates these cultural elements, thereby enhancing both language proficiency and cultural understanding, which are key to effective intercultural communication (Amerian & Tajabadi, 2020). The use of this framework in the study underscores its importance in developing culturally responsive teaching practices that align with the evolving needs of learners in a diverse and interconnected world.

CONCLUSION

The study provided a comprehensive analysis of the representation of Big C (formal institutional culture) and Small c (informal everyday culture) cultural elements across different proficiency levels in the "Headway" EFL textbook series. The paper also highlighted those topics like art and education dominated the Big C cultural content, while everyday living and interpersonal relations were prominent in Small c cultural content. To enhance the effectiveness of this cultural integration, the study proposed a sustainable cyclic vocabulary teaching model that integrates both Big C and Small c cultural topics. This cyclic process ensures that the learning experience is dynamic and continuously adapts to students' evolving linguistic and cultural needs. By combining the balanced introduction of Big C and Small c cultural elements with this sustainable teaching model, the "Headway" series effectively supports the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), preparing learners for both everyday interactions and more complex cultural engagements.

However, the study is not without its limitations. The analysis focused solely on the *Headway* series, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other EFL textbooks or educational contexts. Additionally, the study relied on content analysis, which, while systematic, may not fully capture the nuanced ways in which cultural elements are experienced and internalized by learners. Future research could expand on this work by exploring cultural content in a broader range of textbooks or by employing mixed methods to gain deeper insights into how students engage with these cultural elements in practice.

In conclusion, the integration of both Big C and Small c cultural elements within EFL textbooks is crucial for fostering intercultural communicative competence (ICC). This study underscores the importance of a balanced approach to cultural content, one that prepares learners not only for practical communication but also for understanding and appreciating the broader cultural contexts in which language is used. As the global landscape of language learning continues to evolve, educators and textbook developers must remain adaptable, ensuring that teaching materials are culturally responsive and meet the diverse needs of learners in an interconnected world.

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