



Global Englishes Orientation: A Content Analysis of China's Senior High School Textbooks

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Received 11/01/2026	ABSTRACT Since China is placing increasing emphasis on international engagement in education and English is functioning more widely as a lingua franca (ELF), this study examines the extent to which senior high school English textbooks reflect a Global Englishes (GE) orientation. Using qualitative content analysis, the textual, visual, and auditory elements of three textbooks officially approved by China's Ministry of Education (MoE) were analyzed through the lens of the 2018 GE framework. The analysis focused on six dimensions: target interlocutors, ownership, norms, cultures, needs, and assessment criteria. The results show that all three textbooks exhibit aspects that are in line with a GE orientation, including representation of diverse English users, acknowledgment of global ownership of English, inclusion of lexical variation, pluralistic cultural representations, communicative assessment forms, and attention to global communication needs. However, native-speakerism remains influential. Although cultural content appears diverse and fluid, it often lacks sufficient depth to
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	foster critical intercultural awareness. Overall, the results reveal both progress and continuing limitations in integrating GE principles into Chinese English language teaching (ELT). These findings highlight the need for more inclusive and pedagogically coherent resources to better prepare students for effective communication in global contexts. Keywords: Global Englishes, English textbooks, ELT in China, textbook analysis, Global Englishes language teaching framework
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Introduction

The spread of English across the globe has led to significant diversity in its forms, roles, functions, uses, users, and sociocultural contexts across the world (Selvi et al., 2023). This has led to the increased use of English as a non-native language of communication between non-native speakers compared to the use of English between native and non-native speakers (Galloway, 2025; Jenkins & Panero, 2024). This change has caused more and more challenges to the traditional concept of a standardized English and the ideology of native-speakerism (Marlina, 2025). In reaction, researchers have proposed a re-conceptualization of English language teaching (ELT) that better captures the dynamism and pluralism of English in the global context (Baker, 2022; Rose & Galloway, 2019). In line with this, the need to incorporate Global Englishes (GE) into language curricula is increasingly being called upon to foster respect towards linguistic and cultural diversity and to foster awareness of English as a global lingua franca (Marlina, 2021a).

GE is a wide, inclusive category that acknowledges the various and ever-changing forms of English in different sociolinguistic contexts. In ELT, GE Language Teaching (GELT) framework has been created to respond to this paradigm shift by promoting exposure to World Englishes (WE) and English as a Lingua franca (ELF), respecting multilingualism and diverse cultural identities, and reconsidering traditional pedagogical practices (Galloway, 2011; Rose & Galloway, 2019). Although the GELT framework is theoretically important, its practical application is still insufficient, in part because of the lack of teaching resources that sufficiently reflect GE principles (Galloway & Rose, 2015; Selvi et al., 2023). In order to fill this gap, scholars have emphasized the need to more systematically integrate GE principles into the main instructional materials, especially textbooks (Fang et al., 2022; Xie & Fang, 2025).

Other studies have explored discrete features of textbook content, such as character representation (Gonja & Musaev, 2024), cultural

representations (Akram & Arslan, 2024; Fang et al., 2022; Jia & Hu, 2022; Qi & Derakhshan, 2024), cultures and interlocutor roles (Jang et al., 2024), as well as linguistic norms and speaker representation (Lindqvist & Soler, 2024). Moreover, some studies have taken a more integrative approach, examining various elements in line with the GELT framework, including target interlocutors, language ownership, cultural representation, and normative models, among others (Chimmarak et al., 2023; Juntanee et al., 2021; Marlina, 2021b, 2025; Vo & Tran, 2025). Nevertheless, in research like Vo & Tran (2025), where they state that they cover all dimensions of GELT, the needs of learners and assessment practices are usually not explicitly addressed or developed. This restriction limits a more thorough comprehension of how GELT principles are implemented in situations where curricular goals and assessment systems are important.

In the Chinese context, the Ministry of Education (MoE) has clearly made English a means of international communication and collaboration (MoE, 2020). Since every ELT textbook must be approved by MoE, their content has a significant impact on classroom pedagogy. Despite the previous studies that have investigated cultural representation in textbooks (Fang et al., 2022; Jia & Hu, 2022; Qi & Derakhshan, 2024) and the GE orientation of the curriculum (Liu & Fang, 2022), there is still a significant gap. In particular, although the current literature has covered individual elements of English textbooks through a GE lens, there are few studies that have conducted thorough analyses that combine textual, visual, and auditory modalities. In this regard, the current research paper examines how well MoE-approved senior high school English textbooks are holistically oriented towards GELT in six major dimensions, namely, target interlocutors, ownership, norms, cultures, needs, and assessment criteria

Literature Review

GE Definition and Context

The spread of English around the world has produced multilingual and multifaceted patterns of use that far outstretch the traditional native-speaking situations. The three-circle model, which differentiates the Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circles, introduced by Kachru (1985) was a seminal model of interpreting variation in English and has been instrumental in the further development of the area, including WE and ELF (Seidlhofer, 2011). Based on these theoretical premises, GE has become a holistic and encompassing paradigm, which incorporates the knowledge of WE, ELF, English as an International Language (EIL), translanguaging, and multilingualism (Rose & Galloway, 2019). This view highlights the fluidity

and plurality of the English language, acknowledging the validity of non-native forms and their pivotal place in international communication. It also promotes pedagogical practices that better represent the linguistic diversity that is experienced in the real world (Galloway, 2025).

GELT Framework

To address the demand of a paradigm shift in ELT, a set of pedagogical priorities has been outlined. These are the exposure to WE and ELF, the promotion of multilingualism, the promotion of awareness of GE, the promotion of the use of ELF communication strategies, the promotion of respect towards diverse linguistic and cultural identities, and the promotion of reforms in teacher recruitment practices (Galloway, 2011; Galloway & Rose, 2015).

In response to these developments, Galloway (2011) first came up with the GELT framework as a practical research and curriculum innovation tool. The initial framework was to integrate the major themes of GE, including target interlocutors, language ownership, cultural content, teachers, norms, models, materials, and the roles of L1 and C1, into a consistent and accessible framework that could inform pedagogical change.

Later, Rose and Galloway further developed the GELT framework, and the latest version of it is introduced in Rose and Galloway (2019). These revisions are not limited to terminological changes, but include conceptual and pedagogical changes in substance. Specifically, the new framework does not rely on the native/non-native speaker dichotomy but uses more inclusive terms like all users and global ownership and focuses on the dynamic, diverse, and fluid nature of English use. In addition, the notion of ownership is redefined, and the emphasis is placed on the English-using situations in general rather than on individual speakers. These changes contribute to the increased pedagogical relevance of the framework and its correspondence to the modern views on GE.

The updated GELT framework, therefore, provides a more solid and analytically functioning framework to analyze the degree to which ELT practices and instructional resources are GE oriented. It allows systematic analysis in various dimensions, such as target interlocutors, ownership, norms, cultures, needs, and assessment criteria, etc.

GELT in China

With the reform and opening-up policy of China, the growth of English education has been closely linked to the economic globalization and the increasing international interaction. As a result, English has become the

main foreign language and a major language of work in diplomacy and international relations in China (Liao & Zhang, 2024). This more internationalized role suggests that the use of English in China is not limited to communication with native speakers but rather to communication in a variety of global settings. These circumstances are closely related to the central GELT issues, especially when it comes to the target interlocutors, ownership of language, and intercultural communication.

The English language has become a mandatory course across the entire education system in China, with a comparable position to Chinese and mathematics (Liu & Zhou, 2022). It is required in both basic and higher education. In senior high school (Grades 10–12), the teaching of English is informed by national curriculum standards published by the Ministry of Education (MoE, 2020). Moreover, the textbooks employed in state schools have to be approved by MoE, and their design and content should be in accordance with these national standards. This government-led system suggests that any shift towards a more pluralistic understanding of English, as promoted by the GELT framework, is most apt to be captured in officially approved instructional resources.

National policy in recent years has put more and more emphasis on the need to include global perspectives in English education. The General Senior High School Curriculum Standards English (2017 Edition) emphasizes the cultivation of intercultural awareness and makes English a means of international communication (MoE, 2020). Nevertheless, even with these policy orientations, it is not clear how these directives are put into practice especially in terms of the existing pedagogical practices and how they are consistent with GE views. Since textbooks are the key sources of language input and have a strong impact on how learners perceive language norms and usage (Rose & Galloway, 2019), a systematic analysis of senior high school English textbooks is necessary to determine how much the principles of GELT are reflected in the existing policy framework.

Challenges and Limitations of GELT Implementation in China

Despite the fact that the GELT framework has been recognized as having made a tremendous contribution in terms of theory, its application in educational settings is still faced with a lot of challenges. At the macro level, one of the most significant challenges is the continuation of a silo mentality in academia, which is aggravated by terminological ambiguity (Galloway, 2025). The conceptual overlap of GE, WE, and ELF has been noted by scholars, which adds to the long-standing gap between theory and practice (Rose & Galloway, 2019; Selvi et al., 2023). As a result, teachers might struggle to convert these abstract theoretical concepts into tangible and practical

pedagogical practices. Furthermore, the ideology of native-speakerism remains a potent force in most educational institutions, where native speakers are the main determiners of linguistic standards and the diversity of modern English usage is marginalized (Galloway, 2025).

On the practical level, the lack of the right instructional resources is a significant obstacle to the introduction of GELT (Marina, 2025). Western publishers still dominate the global textbook market and continue to favor native-speaker norms, thus restricting the access to materials that represent the global use of English, different accents, and intercultural communication practices (Selvi et al., 2023). In addition, prevailing assessment systems generate strong washback effects. Standardized tests like TOEFL and IELTS are more likely to focus on the accuracy of native speakers than on communicative competence, which prompts teachers and learners to revert to traditional and monocentric practices and thus strengthens the existing pressures in the system (Galloway, 2011; Galloway & Rose, 2015; Selvi et al., 2023).

The application of the GELT framework is further constrained in government-led and examination-based settings like China. One of the major issues is associated with assessment alignment. Examinations with high stakes, like the College Entrance English Examination (CEE), are mostly focused on grammatical correctness and compliance with standardized norms (Liu & Fang, 2022; MoE, 2020), which can be incompatible with the communicative orientation advocated by GELT. As a result, deviations from standardized models are often perceived as pedagogically risky (Galloway, 2011; Galloway & Rose, 2015; Rose & Galloway, 2019). The other significant problem is the preparedness of teachers. Numerous teachers note that they have little access to systematic professional development associated with GE and that they feel like they are sandwiched between textbook-based teaching and deep-rooted pedagogical traditions (Fang et al., 2022). The fear of losing professional credibility and possible drawbacks in the evaluation systems also contribute to the use of native-speaker norms (Fang et al., 2022). Lastly, there is an ongoing disconnect between policy talk and classroom action. Even though national curriculum standards are becoming more global-oriented, the instructions given are usually general and do not offer specific pedagogical guidance to be applied in the classroom (Fang et al., 2022; Liu & Fang, 2022; MoE, 2020).

Methods

Research Design

This research took a qualitative approach to assess the level of GE coverage in the three most popular senior high school English textbooks, and their audio and video resources, in Chinese public schools.

A tailored GELT-based checklist was created based on the framework suggested by Rose and Galloway (2019). This tool was applied to analyze the way the chosen textbooks represent and advance GE principles in six dimensions: target interlocutors, language ownership, normative models, cultural representation, learner needs, and assessment practices.

The checklist was used to guide the application of content analysis as the main method of analysis to analyze the textbooks in a systematic way through textual, visual and auditory modalities. This approach was chosen due to its systematic and replicable character, which allows identifying and interpreting patterns in educational materials in a systematic manner. In this regard, textual, visual, and auditory codes were coded and analyzed to establish the degree to which the textbooks are in line with GE principles. This method enabled a thorough, problem-based analysis of the materials and was thus quite appropriate to the research questions of the study.

Textbook Selection

Textbooks as the main teaching tool in the English education of senior high schools are instrumental in the development of linguistic awareness and conceptual knowledge of the language in the learner. In this respect, the choice of textbooks is especially important to assess the level of GE orientation, as they have a significant pedagogical impact. Three textbook series were chosen in this study among eight that are officially approved by the MoE (MoE, 2023). The selection of these series was based on the fact that they are commonly used in high-performing schools in provincial capitals in China, thus ensuring that the analysis is based on materials that have significant instructional influence.

The series are divided into seven volumes (Compulsory 1–3 and Elective Compulsory 1–4). To conduct the analysis, the Compulsory 1 volume (Grade 10, the first year of senior high school in China) of each series, as well as the audio and video materials, were analyzed. The three chosen series are called Textbook A, Textbook B and Textbook C. The three series are structurally organized differently. Textbook A has a pre-unit part and five main units, Textbook B has six units and Textbook C has a pre-unit and three main units.

Table 1*Number of Check Units and Analysis Units*

Check Units	Textbook A	Textbook B	Textbook C	Total Check Units
Illustrations	92	77	82	251
Themes	29	27	28	84
Learning Objectives	17	0	12	29
Audio	21	4	12	37
Reading Passages	15	20	31	66
Video	4	3	5	12
Glossaries	4	3	3	10
Tasks	119	86	174	379
Unit of Analysis	80	51	117	248

There were 248 units of analysis that were identified to be examined (see Table 1). An operationally defined unit of analysis was defined as a part or a group of interrelated parts that collectively represent a whole and contextually significant piece of information. To illustrate, one unit of analysis can be a task, the visual representation of the task, and the audio content. This methodical process made sure that every textual, visual and auditory component that could represent something about GE was incorporated in the analysis.

GELT Analytic Scheme and Checklist

The content analysis scheme (see Table 2) was based on and built on the GELT framework suggested by Rose and Galloway (2019), and other related research (Marlina, 2021b, 2025; Syrbe & Rose, 2018). It combines the main theoretical elements of these works and adapts them to the particular aims of the current research. The resulting framework includes six key dimensions of assessing the degree of GE orientation in the textbooks: target interlocutors, ownership, norms, cultures, needs, and assessment criteria.

Table 2*GELT Analytic Scheme*

What to observe?	Manifestations
1. Target interlocutors	The users of English presented in the textbooks (native English or all English users)

2. Ownership	Interactions and participants involved in the materials (interactions in inner circle or global context)
3. Cultures	Cultures depicted in the materials regarding people, practices, products, and perspectives (static NE or diverse and fluid cultures with evidence of intercultural awareness)
4. Norms	Linguistic norms used as a point of reference or benchmark regarding vocabulary, grammar, and phonology (standard English or diverse, flexible, and multiple forms,)
5. Needs	The needs of learners reflected in the unit themes and objectives of the materials (defined by inner circle or defined globally)
6. Assessment Criteria	The assessment focus and practices of assessment tasks for defining proficiency in English in the materials (based on accuracy or communicative competence)

A coding checklist was created to systematically record the nuances in the dataset, which is based on the refined GELT framework (Rose & Galloway, 2019). This checklist was used to record all the data, and each unit was coded to reflect its correspondence to traditional TELT or GELT, based on the presence or absence of GE principles. Moreover, the coding was accompanied by detailed qualitative notes, such as particular features and illustrative examples, to support the findings.

It is important to note that the TELT-GELT distinction was used as an analytical heuristic to compare and contrast and not as a strict binary categorization. This method allowed the analysis to measure different levels of correspondence to GE principles in the dataset.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

In this research, a qualitative content analysis method was used based on the six-step framework of Krippendorff (2018), which consists of unitizing, sampling, recording, reducing, inferring, and narrating.

1. Unitizing: All the items in the chosen textbooks that could have been used to represent GE were identified and defined as a particular unit of analysis.
2. Sampling: A systematic sample of core instructional units (Compulsory 1, Units 13, including the pre-unit sections) was chosen. This choice was informed by the concept of data

saturation in qualitative research, which guarantees sufficient coverage of recurrent patterns and thematic representations.

3. Recording: Each unit was observed and the observations were recorded in a systematic manner with categorized analytical notes to facilitate traceability and consistency.
4. Reducing: Repeat patterns of GELT and TELT orientation across the six dimensions of analysis were synthesized and clustered to enable data reduction and conceptual clarity.
5. Inferring: The reduced data were systematically compared to the GELT framework and applicable Chinese English language education policies to draw inferences about GELT or TELT orientation, which allowed explaining the patterns observed in the dataset.
6. Narrating: The results were reported in the form of systematic descriptive narratives with illustrative examples of the textbooks, emphasizing the main patterns and their educational consequences.

In order to increase the credibility of the analysis, an iterative coding procedure was embraced. After the first round of data reduction, the recording and reduction steps were re-examined and re-done to guarantee consistency in coding and to further hone the interpretation of emerging patterns.

Findings and Discussion

On the whole, the content analysis has shown that the three textbooks under analysis include various aspects related to GELT, and, at the same time, they also have the elements of TELT. All six dimensions of analysis, as shown in Table 3, had different levels of correspondence to GELT principles, with the traditional views remaining. This was especially noticeable in the assumptions that were made in the background about the dominance of Inner Circle and the way cultural learning purposes were framed.

Table 3

Overall Findings in the Three Textbooks

	Target Inter- locutors	Owner- ship	Cultures	Norms	Needs	Assessment Criteria
Textbook A						
Pre-Unit	all users	inner	fluid	standard	global	n/a

	Target Inter- locutors	Owner- ship	Cultures	Norms	Needs	Assessment Criteria
Unit 1	all users	global	native	diverse	global	communicative
Unit 2	all users	global	fluid	diverse	global	communicative
Unit 3	all users	global	fluid	standard	global	communicative
Textbook B						
Unit 1	all users	global	fluid	standard	inner	communicative
Unit 2	all users	inner	fluid	diverse	inner	communicative
Unit 3	native	inner	fluid	standard	global	communicative
Textbook C						
Pre-Unit	all users	global	fluid	diverse	n/a	n/a
Unit 1	all users	global	native	diverse	global	communicative
Unit 2	native	inner	fluid	diverse	global	communicative
Unit 3	all users	global	fluid	diverse	global	communicative

The inclusion of GELT-related aspects in the three textbooks seems to be the adoption of the national curriculum of China, which focuses on global interaction and intercultural communication (MoE, 2020). Simultaneously, the results indicate that this alignment is not complete but partial, which implies that the Chinese textbook design in English is still in the process of adaptation. In this respect, the textbooks show a progressive incorporation of GELT-informed views without abandoning the traditional pedagogical practices, thus, aligning with the prior studies on the development of GE awareness (e.g., Fang et al., 2022).

English Is Used by “All” but the Inner Circle Is Still Dominant

The results of the target interlocutors and language ownership show that there is a significant change towards GELT orientations. The three textbooks introduce a variety of English users and illustrate various patterns of interaction that are not limited to native-speaker (L1) communication situations.

Following the framework proposed by Rose and Galloway (2019), the target interlocutors were determined based on the type of English users in the materials. In general, interlocutors that are represented in illustrations, tasks, videos, audio recordings, and reading passages represent users of all three circles of Kachru (1985), Inner, Outer, and Expanding (see Table 4). This broad representation indicates that it is aimed at capturing the diversity

of English users, which is consistent with the principles of GELT (Rose & Galloway, 2019; Selvi et al., 2023). Nevertheless, a closer look will show that some groups are still relatively underrepresented. English is more commonly spoken in lingua franca in the Chinese context when the speakers are of the Outer and Expanding Circles, including Japan, South Korea, Thailand, and India, than when they are speaking with the Inner Circle speakers. This trend indicates the fast economic development of China and the growth of international collaboration in the last decades (Liao & Zhang, 2024).

The discussion also shows that there is a rather limited construction of native-speakerism. The model by Kachru (1985) suggests that all the 40 speakers of the Inner Circle identified belong to either the United Kingdom or the United States, which means that there is a narrow scope of represented interlocutors. This tendency can be observed in a reading activity that is organized in an online English-learning forum where the participants are asked to share their misfortunes in English. Though the contributors are mostly L2 users, their interlocutors and the contexts of interaction are mostly limited to Inner Circle environments like New York or England. Some of them contain British idiomatic phrases, such as have a frog in one's throat (temporary hoarseness or difficulty speaking) and wicked (informal British English meaning excellent or great), and some cases of pragmatic variation in the meaning of not bad, which can be construed as fairly good in English but as average in Chinese situations. In addition, non-British and non-American varieties of the Inner Circle, like Australian, New Zealand, and Canadian English, are seldom represented or not represented at all. All in all, these tendencies place British and American English speakers as the main normative interlocutors, thus, promoting the tendency of learners to relate the use of English to a limited range of sociocultural contexts instead of the diversity that is promoted in GE and the GELT paradigm.

Table 4

Findings on Target Interlocutors

Target Interlocutors	Numbers of Instances	Percentages
The inner circle	40	21.98
The outer circle	3	1.65
The expanding circle	17	9.34
Not applicable (N/A)	122	67.03
Total	182	100

The textbooks in a number of cases introduce different interactional configurations such as L1–L1, L1–L2, and L2–L2 interactions and

interactions between multilingual participants (see Table 5). This heterogeneity is indicative of the multifaceted nature of English usage in international settings and subjects learners to intercultural and interlingual communication. These results are in line with Selvi et al. (2023), who recommend teaching resources that incorporate both local and global successful language users. However, speakers of Inner Circle, especially those of the United Kingdom and the United States, are still overrepresented. In the majority of conversations, the ownership of language is implicitly assigned to the users of Inner Circle, thus making them the main legitimate owners of English. This asymmetry can promote a limited view of English use and support the belief that English is mostly used in communication with native speakers instead of lingua franca (Juntanee et al., 2021; Chimmarak et al., 2023; Syrbe & Rose, 2018).

This kind of enduring native-speakerism is not in line with the sociolinguistic realities of global English use and the tenets of GELT, which prioritize interaction with a wide range of users, contexts, and normative practices (Rose & Galloway, 2019). The small sample of English users with diverse linguistic backgrounds might limit the chances of building intercultural awareness and, possibly, the development of critical language awareness, which is one of the key goals of GE-informed pedagogy.

Table 5

Findings on Ownership

Interactions	Number of instances	Percentages
Between L1 and L1 speakers (L1-L1)	10	11.63
Between L1 and L2 speakers (L1-L2)	7	8.14
Between L2 and L2 speakers (L2-L2)	7	8.14
Between L1 and unidentifiable speakers (L1-LX)	3	3.49
Between L2 and unidentifiable speakers (L2-LX)	11	12.79
Not applicable (N/A)	48	55.81
Total	86	100.00

Diverse and Fluid Cultural Content with Limited Intercultural Awareness

The cultural content of the textbooks under analysis shows significant improvement in terms of including various cultural representations. Based on

the GELT framework by Rose and Galloway (2019) and the conceptualization of intercultural awareness by Baker (2022), cultural content in language education is not limited to particular national or ethnic categories but rather perceived as dynamic and multidimensional. Cultural representations were studied in this research to find out whether they were represented in various and flowing forms and whether they facilitated intercultural awareness. Cultural elements identified were divided into four dimensions, people, practices, products, and perspectives (Marlina, 2025), and further divided into three-circle model of Kachru or fluid or N/A categories (see Table 6). These aspects are spread throughout illustrations, tasks, video materials, and reading passages, which implies a deliberate attempt to promote cultural knowledge and intercultural awareness.

In line with this orientation, the textbooks embody the elements of Chinese local culture and at the same time, they embrace global and fluid cultural identities, thus transcending strictly defined national identities. The local cultural content is especially salient, which corresponds to the curricular goals that focus on cultural confidence and the skills to introduce Chinese traditions to the international arena (MoE, 2020). An example of a reading passage is a British student who recounts his initial experience of the Spring Festival in China, which includes house cleaning, the use of characters of Fu (blessing or happiness), and fireworks. These aspects are comparatively fixed cultural behaviors, whereas the involvement of the student depicts a process of intercultural interaction, which is a situation that is in line with GE-informed pedagogy. The other example is in a video where an American climber presents the karst topography of Guilin in English with the images of foreigners communicating with the natural world and local customs. This is another example of fluid cultural positioning and collective cultural ownership in a GE environment.

The tasks that facilitate intercultural communication and prompt the learners to consider various points of view are also presented in the textbooks. As an example, one of the videos shows the elements of school life in the United Kingdom and asks students to compare it with their experiences in Chinese schools. The other post-reading activity encourages the learners to reflect on the possibility of some Chinese expressions causing misunderstanding to other linguistic and cultural speakers. The students are also asked to find out the similarities and differences between the English tea culture and the tea culture in southern China. But as much as these activities encourage comparison and cultural awareness, they provide minimal scaffolding in the critical interpretation of cultural differences or negotiation of meaning beyond stereotypical representations.

Nevertheless, the Outer Circle is still very underrepresented. In the entire dataset, only one example of an Outer Circle figure was found, which

was a quotation by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. This limited representation brings out a significant deficiency in cultural diversity in the materials.

Table 6

Findings on Cultures

Cultural representations	Number of instances	Percentages
Inner circle	18	20.00
- UK	9	
- USA	9	
Outer circle	1	1.11
Expanding circle	35	38.89
- China (local)	26	
- other countries	9	
Fluid	13	14.44
N/A	23	25.56
Total	90	100.00

Moreover, unlike the past research, which has mostly concentrated on cultural diversity and the acquisition of intercultural communication skills (e.g., Chimmarak et al., 2023; Fang et al., 2022; Marlina, 2021b, 2025), the current study is more focused on cultural fluidity. Based on Rose and Galloway (2019) and Baker (2022), fluid cultures can be seen as dynamic, hybrid, and transcultural formations that are not limited by the borders of nation-states but rather formed in the process of intercultural contact and interaction. In the textbooks, examples of fluid cultural representation were found where cultural elements are mixed across traditions. Indicatively, a reading passage about a tour in Cusco in the Andes has both Spanish and Indigenous cultural influences, thus demonstrating cultural hybridity and exposing learners to cultural intersections instead of a single, fixed cultural framework. The other example is found in a reading passage about martial arts. Even though martial arts were developed in China, they have affected other practices like Japanese karate and Korean military training, which shows how cultural practices can be transnational and adapted in various contexts. These illustrations underscore transcultural dynamics in line with (Baker, 2022; Rose & Galloway, 2019).

Nevertheless, there are some cases that are unclear. Certain cultural references are not contextualized adequately, and it is hard to determine whether they are culturally hybrid or fluid. To illustrate, one of the passages about Christmas memories involves activities like Christmas tree decoration, singing Frosty the Snowman, and baking sugar biscuits with a grandmother. Although these elements are obviously alluding to Western traditions, the

context around them does not make it clear whether they are located in a local, global, or hybrid cultural environment. The story is based on personal experience, but it does not clearly state whether the cultural aspects are rooted in a particular sociocultural setting or are combined in several settings. It is therefore not clear whether the example is a manifestation of cultural fluidity or it is just an introduction of Western cultural practices in isolation. This ambiguity diminishes pedagogical clarity. Even though the text is supported by a task that requires students to describe their own experiences with festivals, the lack of clear scaffolding can restrict the opportunities of learners to identify cultural fluidity, which can result in shallow interpretations.

Moreover, intercultural awareness in the textbooks is not developed in depth. Past studies have also found a propensity to use nation-based comparisons of Chinese and Western cultures in ELT resources and curricula (e.g., Fang et al., 2022; Liu & Fang, 2022). Intercultural awareness, as Baker (2022) and Marlina (2021a) contend, is not only the exposure to cultural information but also the ability to interpret, negotiate, and mediate between different cultural views. The intercultural material in the textbooks under analysis is mostly descriptive or comparative, e.g., the comparison of festivals or education systems, without further discussion of the underlying cultural values or meanings. This observation confirms the fact that ELT materials still focus on the creation of static representations of culture, rather than the building of intercultural competence as noted by Marlina (2025). It also aligns with Jang et al. (2024), who indicate that there are few chances of meaningful intercultural interaction in textbook content.

Standard English Dependency in Norms and Assessment Tasks

The discussion of linguistic norms in the textbooks indicates a mixed orientation, which is a partial acceptance of variation and the persistence of Inner Circle or standard English models. Audio and video pronunciation, reading passages and glossaries grammar and vocabulary were analyzed at the phonological, lexical, and lexico-grammatical levels (see Table 7).

In terms of phonological norms, the textbooks are somewhat open in the sense that they provide non-Inner Circle accents in audiovisual materials. As an example, in the video *Learning Across Generations*, a speaker, Tandi, speaks with a South African accent of English, talking about learning and the future of her daughter in terms of education. The other video is a presentation by a skilled English speaker in Peru about Machu Picchu, where intelligible English is used without following the British or American pronunciation rules. These instances indicate a growing awareness of the various global pronunciations of English, which aligns with the principles of GELT that emphasize intelligibility over native-speaker norms (Rose & Galloway, 2019;

Selvi et al., 2023). To this extent, the materials partially capture what Selvi et al. (2023) describe as the growing normalization of linguistic diversity and ELF practices.

Table 7

Findings on Norms

Norms-related analysis units	Numbers of instances	Instances of standard English	Instances of diverse forms
Audio clips	37	36	1
Video	12	9	3
Reading passages	66	61	5
Glossaries	10	6	4
Total	125	112	13
Percentage	100.00	89.60	10.40

This transparency, however, does not manifest itself in the pronunciation advice given in vocabulary lists and glossaries, where phonetic transcriptions are always given in either British or American English. As a result, the audiovisual material includes a variety of accents, whereas the written form of the pronunciation is strictly standardized. This discrepancy is indicative of the continuing discussions in GE scholarship about the practical issues of fostering the diversity of pronunciation in educational settings where standardized models are still needed to guarantee clarity, reliability of assessment, and the scale of instructional viability, especially in the English education of Chinese senior high schools.

The textbooks are partially diversified in terms of lexical norms, as they include localized loanwords in reading passages. The concepts of Kung Fu (Chinese martial arts), Dim Sum (Cantonese-style dishes served in tea houses or restaurants), and Nian (a mythical creature related to the Spring Festival) are introduced, which means that the localized lexical resources are recognized. Nevertheless, these examples are narrow in nature and are mostly restricted to loanwords and not embedded in larger communicative or discourse-rich contexts. More to the point, the resources offer little exposure to lexical variation related to WE and ELF (Galloway, 2011; Rose & Galloway, 2019), including locally coined expressions, semantic changes, or context-specific meanings that arise in intercultural communication. Consequently, lexical diversity is recognized on a superficial level but not yet developed as an active communicative tool.

In comparison, lexico-grammatical norms are mostly consistent with British and American English norms. Prescriptive native-speaker conventions are always evident in grammatical explanations and reading passages, and

there is little sign of variation or alternative forms. These results align with the prior studies that have found a lack of grammatical variety in teaching resources (Lindqvist & Soler, 2024) and a continued focus on linguistic correctness (Rose & Galloway, 2019). From a GELT perspective, this reliance on standardized norms contrasts with calls to reconceptualize language norms in terms of intelligibility, comprehensibility, and interpretability, as well as to incorporate learners' multilingual repertoires (Selvi et al., 2023).

There is a significant tension in the assessment tasks in the textbooks (see Table 8). At face value, they involve communicative tasks like role-plays, opinion sharing, and brief reflective writing tasks, which seem to be in line with GE-informed principles as they facilitate interactive language use. Nevertheless, the evaluation criteria that accompany it are usually implicit or under-specified. Such activities are more inclined to grammatical correctness rather than pragmatic or intercultural suitability. This finding is reminiscent of Vo and Tran's (2025) observation that even open-ended activities are often placed in prescriptive assessment systems.

This focus on standard English norms might be influenced by the examination-based education system of China, where prescriptive accuracy is favored because it is appropriate to large-scale standardized testing. In a broader sense, this trend underscores a key problem in GE scholarship related to the possibility of applying GELT-consistent assessment practices in high-stakes settings that demand standardization, comparability, and reliability.

Table 8

Findings on Assessment Criteria

Types	Numbers of Instances	Percentages
Grammar and vocabulary-related Task	15	50.00
Self-reflection	9	30.00
Unit diary	3	10.00
Peer editing sheet	3	10.00
SUM	30	100.00

This research is unique in that it concentrates on assessment activities that are incorporated in textbooks as opposed to formal standardized tests. It was difficult to find explicit assessment criteria, which were mostly implicit and were often included in task instructions without a rubric. Such non-transparency brings up questions of the correspondence between the communicative needs of learners and the methods of assessment used. The noted conflict between normative expectations and implicit assessment

design indicates that textbook-based assessment still indicates examination-oriented ideologies, despite other aspects of the materials indicating more progressive orientations.

To continue the development of GELT, the development of textbooks in China in the future should re-conceptualize assessment practices to include flexible language use and intercultural awareness (Rose & Galloway, 2019). This involves the formulation of more context-sensitive criteria that appreciate intelligibility, exposure to different varieties of English, communicative effectiveness, and intercultural responsiveness. As an example, the inclusion of explanatory notes on language variation (Chimmarak et al., 2023) can increase the confidence of learners in the use of English as a universal communicative tool. But these reforms should also be sensitive to strike a balance between communicative goals and the structural limitations of standardized assessment systems.

Globally Defined Needs: Present but Limited in Depth

The three textbooks show a growing focus on the needs of globally oriented learners, which is expressed in the thematic content and the learning objectives (see Table 9). The units that cover issues like international travel, international festivals, and peer experiences in various countries show that the future communicative needs of learners in various situations are taken into consideration. This orientation is consistent with the appeal by Rose and Galloway (2019) to shift the focus on Inner Circle-focused needs to more globally applicable communicative competencies.

Table 9

Findings on Needs

Needs	Inner circle defined	Globally Defined	N/A	Number of instances
Themes/Topics	17 (20.24%)	36 (42.86%)	31 (36.90%)	84 (100.00%)
Learning Objectives	3 (10.34%)	8 (27.59%)	18 (62.07%)	29 (100.00%)

Nevertheless, a lot of learning outcomes are either general or mostly skill-based (e.g., write a true story), without explicitly defined communicative partners, contexts, or purposes. This restricts their ability to equip learners with real-life use of English. Instructional materials must be structured to

predict future communicative practices of learners, as Selvi et al. (2023) stresses. The design of textbooks could thus be enhanced by adding context-based objectives that replicate real communicative situations, e.g., workplace communication, academic discussions, or online communication with a variety of international users. These improvements would better serve the emerging communicative demands of Chinese students and help to develop textbooks further in accordance with the principles of GELT.

Conclusion

Finally, this paper has explored how well senior high school English textbooks in China are based on GELT principles across six dimensions: target interlocutors, ownership, cultures, norms, learner needs, and assessment criteria. The analysis shows a clear movement toward a GELT-informed orientation, reflected in: (1) the inclusion of a variety of English users and a more generalized concept of English ownership across Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circles, though still dominated by UK and US speakers; (2) fluid cultural representations, including hybrid cultural scenarios and national-level comparisons; (3) lexical diversity through selective use of loanwords and representation of proficient L2 speakers from Outer and Expanding Circles; (4) globally relevant thematic content; and (5) communicative-oriented tasks in assessment activities and global needs. These findings demonstrate that, while traditional ELT ideologies remain influential, the textbooks exhibit clear progressive alignment with Global Englishes and GELT principles.

This research contributes to GELT-oriented textbook studies in two main ways. First, it expands the analytical frame by making learner needs and assessment criteria explicit dimensions. Although many tasks are communicative, performance standards remain largely implicit and prescriptive, with continued emphasis on grammatical correctness and standard norms. Second, it provides a more detailed and critical analysis of cultural fluidity, moving beyond general claims of diversity to examine how cultural hybridity and intercultural representations are produced in textbook discourse. These contributions challenge monolithic assumptions about ELT in China and suggest that nationally approved textbooks may be more local, inclusive, and progressive than commonly assumed. Nevertheless, this change is incomplete. Native-speaker norms and standardized models still prevail, intercultural awareness is often superficial, and voices from Outer Circle and other non-dominant groups remain underrepresented. These patterns suggest that traditional ELT ideologies continue to shape textbook design and pedagogical orientation.

Although the GE framework has progressive potential, its implementation in China is influenced by systemic constraints. High-stakes examinations such as the CEEE continue to prioritize standardized norms and grammatical accuracy, producing strong washback effects that reinforce exam-oriented instruction. Furthermore, although national curriculum standards emphasize intercultural communication, they remain relatively general and provide limited operational guidance, creating gaps between policy intentions, textbook design, and classroom practice. GE-oriented pedagogy in China can therefore be understood as an ongoing negotiation between reform principles and institutional structures.

Overall, the findings have important implications for ELT materials development. Textbook designers are encouraged to: (1) contextualize hybrid cultural materials more carefully to promote deeper reflection and reduce essentialist interpretations; (2) expand representation of Outer Circle users and underrepresented Inner Circle varieties; (3) align assessment with communicative effectiveness, intelligibility, and intercultural competence alongside linguistic accuracy; and (4) incorporate context-rich, authentic scenarios and objectives to better prepare learners for real-world English use. Together, these steps can help narrow the gap between curriculum goals and classroom practice, promoting a more inclusive and flexible GE-oriented approach. More importantly, these recommendations are not intended to replace established and traditional ELT practices but to complement them, supporting a more balanced and context-sensitive pedagogical approach.

This study is limited to content analysis. Future research should adopt mixed-method or multi-perspective designs, including classroom observations, teacher interviews, and learner surveys, to better capture how GELT principles are interpreted and enacted in practice. Such approaches would provide deeper insight into how instructional materials not only reflect policy agendas but also shape learners' communicative competence and sociolinguistic awareness in an evolving global English landscape.

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