

Research Article:

Scrutiny of Global Citizenship in Chinese Elementary School English Textbooks and Teachers' Practices During COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Problems associated with globalisation have been exacerbated with the COVID-19 pandemic, which made us more aware of the interconnected nature of the world. Global pandemic requires global solutions, and the educational system should look beyond the confines of national borders to advocate for Global Citizenship Education (GCE) to provide such solutions. However, it is still underexplored that to what extent Chinese elementary school English textbooks reflect the notion of GCE and how they guide teachers' practices particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. To address the gap, a mixed-method study was conducted to scrutinize two versions of Chinese elementary school English textbooks and explore teachers' practices, so as to contribute to China's context-specific GCE endeavours through English language teaching (ELT). The findings demonstrate that the themes of GCE are embedded in two versions of textbooks to varying degrees and with unbalanced distribution. Some elements that do not comply with the proposition of GCE and the excluded themes may impede the full realisation of global citizenship values. Interview results show that teacher training is urgently needed to integrate GCE into interdisciplinary subjects and raise teachers' critical awareness to challenge the prevailing routines in ELT. The findings could also provide some pedagogical enlightenment for teachers' practices during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: global citizenship, English textbooks analysis, Chinese elementary school, teachers' practices

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INTRODUCTION

The world economy has shown a trend of globalisation since late 1980s, and the development of all countries in the world increasingly became a whole closely linked together. While rejoicing for global exchange and development, people should be more cautious about the problems arising under globalisation, such as inequality, racial discrimination, human rights violation, poverty, environmental pollution, etc. Those sorts of problems have been exacerbated with the COVID-19 pandemic which made people more aware of the interconnected nature of the world. To overcome the pandemic, both intra-national and inter-national collaboration and cooperation are urgently needed. Global pandemic requires global solutions, and the educational system should look beyond the confines of national borders to advocate for GCE to provide such solutions by empowering students as critical beings to see the relevance of global issues in their own lives, understand their 'glocal' responsibilities (Starkey, 2012), communicate respectfully across cultural distance, commit to social justice and equity, as well as act towards more inclusive and sustainable communities.

To meet the challenges of globalisation, UNESCO tried to build people's global sense via GCE, and advocated respecting the global diversity and differences, eliminating racial and national discrimination, as well as making efforts to establish a diversified but equal world (UNESCO, 2014). Besides, education changes the world, and GCE can be regarded as an initiative pedagogical framework for the realisation of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Nevertheless, the global discourse of global citizenship may not be globally representative, and researchers tend to its hidden underpinnings of Western paradigms and assumptions (Byram & Parmenter, 2015), as well as capitalist hegemony on peripheralisation that deepens the gap between the poor and the rich (Akkari & Maleq, 2020).

While 'language' and 'citizenship' are always linked with each other, foreign language teaching has both instrumental purposes and educational goals for moral and civic dimensions (Williams, 2017). Shouldering the mission of educational and political responsibilities, foreign language educators are encouraged to connect language classrooms with social communities by inspiring students to participate in civic or social actions at local, regional and global levels to address their intercultural citizenship (Byram et al., 2017). Accordingly, the cross-cultural nature of foreign language education makes it an ideal place to foster GCE, and to create opportunities to strengthen local identity and develop understanding, tolerance, and acceptance of diversity at different levels (Calle Díaz, 2017).

Moreover, in an English as a foreign language context like China, English textbooks are often considered to be an important starting point for educators to promote learners' worldviews since they greatly influence the impression of foreign cultures by learners who are not exposed to English in their daily life (Rashidi & Ghaedsharafi, 2015). Textbooks are also regarded as a mirror of national curriculum standards, reflecting the official knowledge of the society (Apple, 2014), representing the worldviews of dominant

groups via intentionally content selection and editing (Nasser & Nasser, 2008). Textbook content analysis, therefore, is considered a valuable practice that provides insights into how official knowledge about the society and the world is constructed and how they facilitate or hinder GCE while maintaining a national focus.

CRITICAL GCE APPROACH

GCE, being regarded as a response to the political and social realities of globalization, has always been a site of debate and controversy (Choi & Kim, 2018). Postcolonial perspective on GCE provides a critical approach to deconstruct the power relations and knowledge constructions in this area, as well as interrogate global ethnocentric hegemonies (Andreotti & Souza, 2012), which addresses both economic injustice and cultural roots of the inequalities in power and wealth and labor distribution in a global complex and uncertain system (Andreotti, 2006). Critical GCE, as the core of postcolonial perspective, takes the potential problems as inequality and injustice instead of viewing globalisation as the path to a single global market economy, and tends to eliminate differences.

Moreover, critical GCE calls for an adaptation to local, regional and global dimensions of citizenship (Akkari & Maleq, 2020). Ho (2018) also argued that the framework of GCE varies significantly in different national contexts as it is closely related to how nation-states experience and respond to the forces of globalization. This results in the coexistence of a wide range of conceptions and objectives as well as models for GCE (Gaudelli, 2016). It is, therefore, important for frameworks of GCE to go beyond basic concepts like “bring the world into the classroom” or “send students into the world” that reinforce the distinction between “us and them” and “here and there” (Andreotti, 2006). All this requires putting critical GCE for power relations analysis at the heart and responding to the challenges of exploring citizenship from the perspectives of those marginalized groups (Davies et al., 2018), so as to meet the local needs and realities.

More significantly, there is an increasing call for more critical approaches to GCE (Reynolds et al., 2019), and the further research is required to fill the gap by translating GCE's international model into local classroom practice. This can be done by rooting GCE in the national historical legacies and citizenship building to provide pedagogical implications as tailor-made models (Damiani, 2018), as well as explore how teachers conceptualize and make sense of global citizenship. This study adopted Akkari and Maleq's framework for GCE (2020) through soft versus critical GCE lens (Andreotti, 2006) to scrutinize the potential inequalities and injustice while adapting to local, regional and global dimensions of citizenship. This framework suggests operationalising GCE within three categories, and each category could be subdivided into a further subset of approaches. The three categories are:

1. Education for sustainable development: Education for development, Environmental education.

2. Inter/multicultural education: Inclusive education, Social justice and equality, Respect for diversity.
3. Citizenship education: Human rights education, Education for gender equality, Civic and moral education.

GCE IN CHINA AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

Since the *Reform and Opening Up* in 1978, China is positioning itself to become more involved in international affairs and to prepare the next generation for a more interconnected world. This was followed by education opening up, and a slogan has been highlighted that “Education should face the modernization, the world and the future” (教育要面向现代化, 面向世界, 面向未来). More significantly, Chinese President Xi Jinping has put forward “Human Community with a Shared Future” (人类命运共同体) since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, and he mentioned this concept for six times in the report to the 19th CPC National Congress in 2017, transcending the global view of nation-state and ideologies, underlining global responsibilities and expressing the desire for peaceful development in the whole world. Therewith this concept was enshrined in the UN resolutions in 2017, signifying that this concept has become an important part of the global discourse system. The concept of ‘*Human Community with a Shared Future*’, constantly being stressed and promoted, is closely related to UNESCO’s GCE (Song, 2018a; 2018b).

The term ‘citizen’ (公民) first appeared in the 1954 Constitution of the People’s Republic of China, in which it defines the relationship between citizens as the PRC nationals and the state, society and economy, and represents their duties and rights within the socialist framework. Since China has opened up to the world in late 1970s, the framework of socialist citizenship in China has gradually shifted from exclusive to inclusive in order to adapt to specific problems at different stages of development (Law, 2006). Citizenship education, as a new term, has gained traction in Chinese educational system, and endowed it with Chinese characteristics, which takes core socialist values as norms. Global elements have been gradually incorporated into curriculum standards and textbooks, such as global knowledge, diverse cultures, peaceful coexistence among different races, etc. On the other hand, China is a multi-ethnic country, and 91.11% of the population are Han Chinese, while 8.89% are from 55 ethnic minorities. Hence the GCE in China is multileveled or multidimensional, including both global views and socialist citizenship identities, and reflecting the regional characteristics of Chinese multi-ethnic nationalities.

However, notwithstanding the concept of global citizenship has been incorporated into Chinese government policy, there is still no specific definition of GCE from the relevant policy on the national curriculum (Li, 2021), nor any explanation of what GCE should look like and how it should be implemented in China. Moreover, since Han Chinese make up the vast majority of Chinese population, students may lack the opportunity to engage in consideration of complexities and realities of living in a multi-ethnic

society (Mansilla & Wilson, 2020). Thus confronting the “glocalisation”, it is a major issue that how China’s GCE should respond to its influence on both global and local communities.

GCE AND ENGLISH TEACHING AND LEARNING

ELT plays an irreplaceable part to foster GCE due to its instrumental and educational roles (Jakubiak, 2020). Basarir (2017) explored the attitudes of ELT instructors in Turkey, the findings of which showed that ELT instructors under the study had insufficient levels of knowledge, skills, attitudes and action regarding GCE. Roux (2019) argued that ELT educators in Mexican should go beyond a technical approach of teaching grammar, phonetics and vocabulary in order to integrate GCE into ELT, and one effective way to implement GCE was to address global issues in ELT courses by employing content-based or theme-based instruction (Hosack, 2011). A similar proposition addressed by Pramata and Yuliaty (2016) was to have ELT instructors take on the responsibility to develop students’ awareness and understanding of global issues and train them to actively participate in solutions of global problems.

Being regarded as a central tenet of effective language pedagogy during the era of globalisation (Davidson & Liu, 2018), researchers who studied GCE from English as a lingua franca (ELF) perspective argued that the belief of insisting on promoting “native” English as the ideal English was still a stumbling block for internationalisation and GCE (Cavanagh, 2017). Consequently, educational and social inequalities may be brought by such linguistic capital afforded to English within the domestic employment landscape (Park, 2016) as well as the social economic prestige (Hu & McKay, 2012), which could have adverse effects on GCE for students. Moreover, discussions were concerned with the notion of intercultural citizenship as a goal and content in language education (Fang & Baker, 2017), which combined the intercultural and critical foreign language teaching approach as well as the intercultural communicative competence (Byram et al., 2017). ELF, therefore, offers a way to address the inequality dilemma caused by native-speakerism and GCE equality, and to enable students to become more critical about their roles in the world and build compassionate as well as positive relationships with others.

GCE AND TEXTBOOK ANALYSIS

Ait-Bouزيد (2020) examined three Moroccan ELT textbooks to investigate the extent to which these textbooks represented activities that developed learners’ sense of belonging to global and local communities and provided them with skills, knowledge and behaviors that raised their global citizenship awareness. Findings were shown in the context of Iran, ELT textbooks cannot really raise learners’ global awareness for lacking of enough content for global issues (Basarir, 2017). Even though human rights, conflict resolutions, democracy, responsibility and diversity were regarded as popular global themes in Spanish primary school textbooks (De La Caba & Atxurra, 2006), there still existed bias

concerning the number and the diversity of contexts as well as perspectives they illustrated (Ait-Bouزيد, 2020). Due to neoliberal ideology dominating the educational field, Choi and Kim (2018) used soft versus critical GCE and critical discourse analysis to deconstruct the neoliberalism in global citizenship discourses in social study textbooks in South Korea, which showed the prevalence of a neoliberal agenda and nationalist rhetoric. Moreover, Davidson and Liu (2018) argued that the cultural representations in Japanese textbooks were too simplistic to facilitate GCE of cultural awareness, open-mindedness, and social responsibility for students.

FOCUSING ON CHINESE CONTEXT DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Zhu (2013) carried out a comparative study between China and America to deconstruct the concept of good citizenship embedded in foreign language curricula, which revealed that civic values in textbooks always tended to promote more of a national level than a local or global level. Another comparative study was conducted between Japanese and Chinese national curricula to explore how to advance the GCE agenda in the dominant national citizenship education (Chen, 2020). Since China's citizenship education is state-led, Chinese culture has always been an important part of China's citizenship education as well as a significant element of Chinese identity (Law, 2013). Moreover, Li (2021) carried out a case study to compare the implementation of GCE between Chinese rural and urban schools from teachers' perspectives, and the findings showed that teachers had a broad notion of GCE and disparities were identified between rural and urban schools. Woods and Kong (2020) explored the GCE in Chinese international schools and pointed out that GCE was more like an imagined ideal than a realistic template. Baker and Fang (2019) studied Chinese student sojourners' development of intercultural/global citizenship, and they argued that the absence of GCE was a missed opportunity in English teaching and scholarship.

Previous studies show that GCE is a relatively new research field especially in Chinese context and ELT textbook analysis has received scanty attention despite its important role to foster GCE, and even fewer studies have dabbled in GCE from an elementary school level. More significantly, the discussions of integrating GCE into English education are mostly at the theoretical level (Baker & Fang, 2019). It is still underexplored that to what extent Chinese elementary school English textbooks reflect the notion of GCE and how they guide teachers to conduct GCE in English classrooms particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To address the research gap, a mixed-study was conducted to scrutinise two versions of Chinese elementary school English textbooks from a critical lens so as to contribute to China's context-specific GCE endeavors through ELT and empower students to better understand their 'glocal' responsibilities.

This study addresses two main research questions:

1. To what extent do Chinese elementary school English textbooks reflect the notion of GCE?
2. What are teachers' practices in GCE, the challenges they face, and the teaching strategies or methods they use while implementing GCE during the COVID-19 pandemic?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A mixed-method design was employed to synthesise two strands of qualitative data and quantitative data. Qualitative data were gathered from the thematic descriptions of content analysis in Chinese elementary school English textbooks as well as interviews with primary school English teachers, and quantitative data were collected by coding the content of textbooks and counting the occurrence number of GCE items according to representations of GCE values in them. Quantitative data were also collected from corpus analysis of texts in textbooks as another triangulate method. Then these two strands of data were merged and compared to abstract the holistic interpretation of GCE values embedded in textbooks as well as perceptions of stakeholders.

Data Collection

Textbooks

Two versions of Chinese elementary school English textbooks published by People's Education Press (PEP) and Yilin Press were selected. There are two reasons for choosing these two sets of textbooks. First, the two publishers are listed at the top popularity for the quality of elementary school English textbooks that are widely used in China. Second, the geographical span of the two publishing houses may make this study more objective to examine the distribution of GCE, since PEP is located in the northern city of Beijing, while Yilin Press is in the southern city of Nanjing. Each set consists of two volumes for Grade six, containing 26 units and 298 pages of texts altogether.

Interviews and participants

The researchers interviewed five English teachers who have 3–12 years of teaching experience for either PEP textbooks or Yilin textbooks for Grade six in elementary schools from different parts of China through convenient sampling, since convenient sampling could facilitate the speed and practicality of the study which is one of the purposeful sampling methods in research. Besides, the selection of participants should not only take the convenient access into consideration, but also choose those “knowledgeable people”

who are in the best position to offer in-depth information regarding their experience with ELT education and the textbooks at hand (Cohen et al., 2007). Based on those factors, five suitable participants have been found within the limited time.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant lasting approximately 30 minutes and containing 15 main interview questions. For example, how participants perceive and practice GCE; what challenges they encountered when practicing GCE during the COVID-19 pandemic; whether there are some effective strategies or methods to implement GCE, etc. The interviews were conducted in Chinese and the whole recordings lasted about 2.5 hours. The researchers transcribed the recordings into English.

Data Analysis

The analysis of textbooks was based on a content analysis (Schreier, 2012) combined with Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA) (2001) to abstract holistic themes of GCE through open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Meaningful content regarding GCE were highlighted during open coding; then the original codes were grouped into overarching themes for axial coding; selective coding involved interpreting the connections among salient themes and eliciting an overarching descriptive and narrative of GCE values. Moreover, interview transcripts were examined by using thematic analysis to extract the themes of their practices, challenges, and teaching strategies.

Corpus technique, being regarded as another triangulate tool, was employed to study the texts in textbooks, including reading texts, conversations, exercises, etc. excluding listening tracks which were typed and saved in a plain text format (.txt) with 19,600 words altogether, and the researchers ran it in the AntConc 3.5.8 to study the word frequency in the word list.

Two coders were made separately to code the data. If these two researchers cannot reach an agreement, a third coder came to discuss and took a consensus. Besides intra-coding and inter-coding, diversified data collection and analysis methods also contributed to the trustworthiness of the study.

RESULTS

GCE Embedded in Textbooks

Table 1 displays a statistical representation of GCE themes within each version of textbooks, which shows that the four textbooks contain 11 themes and 14 sub-themes occurring 308 times altogether. The most salient category is inter/multicultural education, followed by emerging themes for GCE, citizenship education, and education for sustainable development. The following results will be represented based on their salient extent sequence.

Table 1. Display of GCE themes in PEP and Yilin textbooks

Categories	Themes	Sub-themes	Theme description	Occurrence number in PEP textbooks	Occurrence number in Yilin textbooks	Total
Education for sustainable development	Social development and progress		Showing the development and progress of society	3	3	6
			Environmental disruption and protection measures	2	6	8
	Environmental responsibility and sustainable development					
	Harmonious coexistence of human-nature relations		Harmonious coexistence among humans, nature, animals, etc.	14	3	17
Total				19	12	31
Inter/multi-cultural education	Harmonious coexistence of human-human relations	Interracial interactions	People of different races communicate and do activities together	47	24	71
		Kinship	Showing love and care toward family members; family-oriented activities	14	21	35
	Friendship	Empathy	Sharing and caring among friends	6	6	12
		Empathy	Empathise with things beyond oneself	6	2	8
		Tolerance	Being tolerant with unhappiness	2	0	2
	Cultural diversity	Anglocentric and Eurocentric cultures	Anglocentric and Eurocentric cultural customs, festivals, diet cultures, etc.	4	19	23
		Chinese universal cultures	Chinese cultures that are popular all over the country, taking Chinese Han culture as an example	7	16	23
		Chinese ethnic minority cultures	The distinctive cultures of Chinese 55 ethnic minorities	3	0	3
				89	88	177
		Total				

(Continued on next page)

Table 1. (Continued)

Categories	Themes	Sub-themes	Theme description	Occurrence number in PEP textbooks	Occurrence number in Yilin textbooks	Total
Citizenship education	Gender stereotypes and inequality		Stereotypical and unequal status and positions for males and females	11	17	28
	Education of ideals and beliefs	Career planning	Dreams and plans for future jobs	1	2	3
		Moral education	Universal values such as honesty, industriousness, braveness, etc.	1	2	3
		Philosophical education	Wisdom in daily life	1	1	2
		Holistic educational principles	Educational principles of developing morally, intellectually, physically, aesthetically and work in an all-round way	2	0	2
Total				16	22	38
Emerging themes for GCE	World geography	Inner circle geography	Landmarks, places, regional characteristics and symbolic animals that belong to inner circle countries.	5	17	22
		Expanding circle geography	Landmarks, places, regional characteristics and symbolic animals that belong to expanding circle countries.	8	13	21
	Cooperation and solidarity		Team spirit to overcome difficulties	2	0	2
	Civilised manners		Being polite and civilized in public places	2	11	13
	Healthy lifestyle		The healthy lifestyle to keep physical fitness	0	4	4
Total				17	45	62
Excluded themes for GCE	Social justice and equality			0	0	0
	Human rights education			0	0	0
Total				141	167	308

Inter/multicultural education

Interracial interactions occur most frequently in four textbooks followed by kinship, friendship, empathy, and tolerance, together showing the harmonious coexistence of human-human relations. Notwithstanding people of different races communicate and do activities together, Caucasians and Chinese are the dominance. Table 2 provides the occurrence number of different races in images, which only two black people appear 51 times in PEP textbooks.

Table 2. Occurrence number of races in images

Race	PEP	Yilin	Total
Chinese	178	324	502
Caucasians	226	127	353
Black people	51	0	51
Racial ambiguities	11	12	23
Total	466	463	929

Anglocentric and Eurocentric cultures as well as Chinese universal cultures have been overemphasised in four textbooks. Anglocentric and Eurocentric cultures are shown in images with details like American cowboy, Scottish kilt, Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving Day and Italian pizza, etc. Chinese universal cultures appear frequently in all textbooks as the monolithic culture in expanding circle countries, such as Chinese New Year, National Day in China, Mid-Autumn Festival, Chinese traditional food, Chinese kungfu, etc. Nevertheless, Chinese ethnic minority cultures represent only some Turpan local characters in images without much detailed information (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** An excerpt from English 6 (PEP) (Vol. 2) (Ma et al., 2014, p. 23)

Emerging themes for GCE

World geography is a salient theme under this category in both versions of textbooks. According to Kachru's three concentric circles model (Kachru, 1985), world geography illustrates inner circle geographies of the US, the UK, Australia, and Canada with high frequencies, such as Yellowstone National Park, Big Ben, London Eye, Thames, Sydney, Niagara Falls, etc. Chinese geography is almost the only one in expanding circle that appears regularly in textbooks such as Beijing, Hainan, the Great Wall, Summer Palace, Tian'anmen Square, etc., while no outer circle geographies appear in both versions of textbooks. Table 3 shows corpus analysis for the frequency of top ten countries and places. Another salient theme of civilised manners educates students to be polite and civilised in public places like obeying traffic rules, civilised traveling, no smoking in public places, etc. Though cooperation and solidarity and healthy lifestyle appear not that much, they embody collectivist values and self-discipline that are advocated in China.

Table 3. Frequency of countries and places in corpus (Top 10)

Countries and places	Frequency
Australia	34
Beijing	12
London	11
UK	12
Hong Kong	9
China	9
Shanghai	6
US	5
Taipei	5
Palace Museum	4

Citizenship education

The theme of gender stereotypes and inequality provides insights that males and females have been portrayed unequally in both versions of textbooks. Males are dominant, being strong and successful, while females tend to be portrayed as being timid and weak, and assuming only roles of mother and wife (see Figure 2), even anthropomorphic animals are not spared from gender stereotyping (see Figure 3). Table 4 provides further insights of unequal numbers for males and females in images, and Table 5 shows the corpus analysis that male pronouns are more preferred than female pronouns in texts. Albeit education of ideals and beliefs does not prevail most, it implies universal Chinese spirit that needs to be inherited.

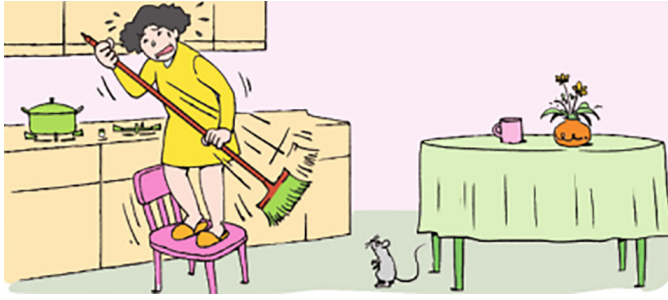


Figure 2. An excerpt from English 6 (Yilin) (Vol. 2) (He et al., 2014, p. 31)



Figure 3. An excerpt from English 6 (Yilin) (Vol. 2) (He et al., 2014, p. 33)

Table 4. Occurrence number of male and female in images

Gender	PEP	Yilin	Total
Male	323	365	688
Female	158	235	393
Total	481	600	1081

Table 5. Frequency of pronouns in corpus

Pronoun	Frequency	Total
He	266	362
His	75	
Him	21	
She	91	126
Her	35	

Education for sustainable development

This category appears least in four textbooks, containing three themes of social development and progress, environmental responsibility and sustainable development, harmonious coexistence of human-nature relations. Almost all characters are digitally literate, being keen on facilitating daily life via technology. Robin, a main character in PEP textbooks, is an omnipotent robot and very helpful for humans (see Figure 4). Besides, all textbooks try to arouse people's environmental awareness like green travelling, planting trees, etc. (see Figure 5).



Figure 4. An excerpt from English 6 (PEP) (Vol. 1) (Zhou et al., 2013, p. 18)



Figure 5. An excerpt from English 6 (Yilin) (Vol. 1) (He et al., 2013, p. 59)

Excluded themes for GCE

According to the GCE framework of this study, two themes of education for social justice and equality and education for human rights are missing from both versions of textbooks.

In short, each category is embedded in both versions of textbooks to varying degrees and with unbalanced distribution, and there is no big difference between the two versions of textbooks in terms of total occurrence number of each GCE category except emerging themes.

Teachers' Interviews

Teachers' practices of GCE

A lofty concept of GCE

When asked about GCE, teachers were mostly unfamiliar with it, regarding it as a distant and lofty concept. As Teacher 2 and Teacher 5 expressed:

I feel that GCE is very far away from us. It is a lofty concept. We haven't been trained in this aspect.

It is a new concept to me that I've never heard of it before.

Teacher 4 believed that GCE should be taught in ideology and moral education course, rather than in English class, whose task is to help students master linguistic skills.

I think those issues should be put in the ideology and moral education course; the main task of English class is to help students learn English well.

Practicing GCE values in textbooks

Albeit some teachers took GCE as a lofty concept, almost all teachers were actually practicing GCE values embedded in textbooks. All teachers said that they would raise students' awareness of environmental protection, introduce some western cultures, educate students to have team spirit, as well as develop polite and courteous behaviours in daily lives, since those topics have been embedded in textbooks and teachers should extend them appropriately to students. As Teacher 3 contended:

Usually, I'd like to take the textbook as the carrier and guide students to realise the importance of protecting the environment. Additionally, I will design some activities in class so that students can feel the power of the team through participating in activities, and guide students to get along with others harmoniously.

Lacking critical awareness for GCE

Besides, interviews showed that teachers generally lacked critical awareness when implementing GCE. They seldom realised the stereotypes hidden in textbooks, and they even took it for granted that Anglocentric cultures and geography prevailed in textbooks. One teacher recognised that there indeed exist some stereotypes in textbooks, but she thought that students themselves would have their own understandings as they get older without much explanation from the teacher.

Textbooks do introduce more about English-speaking countries, but English textbook itself is to help students learn English, so it is also acceptable. (Teacher 1)

These phenomena you mentioned do exist, which may cause certain deviation to students' cognition, but they will have their own understandings as they grow older, so we teachers don't need to explain much about this. (Teacher 5)

Both Teacher 1 and Teacher 5 have tacitly accepted the ideologies hidden in textbooks, and they did not try to correct those prejudiced concepts.

Cultivating patriotism

All teachers agreed on the educational role of ELT, and they believed that students' patriotism should be cultivated to train socialist successors for the country while teaching English well.

It advocates quality-oriented education in China. Teachers should not only teach knowledge, but also improve students' overall qualities, which requires teachers not be limited to textbooks, but broaden students' horizons and ideas, cultivate their patriotism, and make them grow up to be qualified successors to the socialist cause. (Teacher 3)

In sum, teachers regard GCE as an unfamiliar concept, but they're still practicing universal GCE values embedded in textbooks unconsciously while cultivating learners' patriotism. However, due to the stereotypes and inequalities that are hidden in textbooks, teachers may pass on biased ideas in textbooks to students for lacking critical awareness.

Challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic

Unskilled in media technology

Lack of media technological skills was a major challenge for most teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic when distance teaching and learning took the place of classroom

teaching. Other teachers also highlighted that online teaching lacked emotional communication and teacher-students' interactions.

Online teaching puts forward higher requirements on teachers' abilities to use computers and new media, which is different from ordinary teaching. It is also challenging. (Teacher 2)

Online teaching lacks emotional communication between teachers and students. (Teacher 1)

Weak self-discipline of students

Teachers underlined that distance teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic had poor teaching effect due to the lack of effective classroom supervision and weak self-discipline of primary school students.

Some students perform not serious for lack of supervision at home, and they even play mobile phones during classes. Although I have taken some measures, the improvement is not satisfied. (Teacher 4)

Doubts about teaching abilities toward GCE

Some teachers expressed that they did not know much about GCE nor had received any relevant training, and the students were too young to undertake GCE-related tasks, so it is not suitable for young students to get too much involved in GCE.

I don't have much knowledge about GCE, and the students are still young, so it is too early for them to get too much involved in this field. (Teacher 5)

Thus, it is observed that those external environmental factors, and students as well as teachers themselves all constitute GCE challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Teaching Strategies or Methods of GCE

The COVID-19 pandemic caused teachers to pay more attention to new media teaching and students' independent learning through online platforms than ever before. Two methods that teachers mentioned the most were content-based approach and online project-based approach.

Content-based approach

When it came to teaching a related topic, the teacher would ask students to search for relevant materials via the internet before class through the group cooperation and share them with other students in the next lecture. In addition, a lot of touching stories emerged

during the period when the whole country united as one to fight against the COVID-19 disease, and these stories provided teachers with relevant materials to enhance students' sense of social responsibility and strengthen their consciousness of the overall situation.

For example, I'd like to ask my students to work in groups to prepare some materials related to the topic through internet before class and share them with others in class. The great spirit of fighting against COVID-19 provides good teaching materials for us. (Teacher 1)

Online project-based approach

GCE could be implemented through online project-based approach during the pandemic. For example, online volunteer activities prompt students to provide information and share happiness with other people through the internet. Another example is that online pair support activities enable some students from less privileged families to get care and academic guidance from their peers, which has become a new model of online co-learning as well. Online project-based cooperative learning facilitates promoting students' sense of public morality and responsibility as well as team spirit.

Since our school has a pair assistance program with another rural school, those children whose families are relatively poor need our help more during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, I encourage students to help them one-to-one, which could cultivate their empathy and caring as well. (Teacher 3)

In sum, the common ground of those two methods is that they are student-centered, and they both employ the network and connect with the reality during the COVID-19 pandemic.

DISCUSSION

The research findings reveal that universal GCE like technology, environmental issues, coexistence, etc., and popular Chinese values like solidarity, morality, philosophy, etc., have been represented in all textbooks to a great extent while neglecting those marginalised voices, and utopian images make it easily to overlook the hidden ideologies and conflicts in the world, calling into questions about the real inclusiveness of GCE. The prevailing dominance of Caucasian and Chinese universal cultures, unequal gender status, and the excluded GCE themes may narrow students' horizons and foster parochialism. What's more of a concern is that teachers took it for granted and failed to recognise the importance as well as urgency of critical literacy toward GCE even in the midst of COVID-19 pandemic, let alone taking effective measures. In sum, soft GCE plays the dominant role in both textbooks and teaching practices, so critical GCE is urgently needed.

Indeed, learners could develop their knowledge, skills, values and behaviours of global citizenship through universal GCE themes. However, those themes are unevenly distributed, which is consistent with the previous study of the biased existence for GCE themes in textbooks (Ait-Bouزيد, 2020). Textbooks always portray a utopia of peaceful and loving society for students, but issues regarding social justice and equality as well as human rights haven't been addressed, which is contrary to the popular GCE themes mentioned by some researchers (De La Caba & Atxurra, 2006). Results, therefore, indicate that soft GCE approach is dominant in both versions of textbooks, which confirms with Ait-Bouزيد's study (2020) that those textbooks don't offer enough opportunities for raising learners' critical thinking, as well as that it is more like an imagined ideal of GCE (Woods & Kong, 2020).

Still, these two versions of textbooks set the norms of ideal English speakers and communities, in which Caucasians and male groups are dominant representations, as well as Anglocentrism and Eurocentrism are the prevalent. In this regard, even though there is an emphasis on intercultural communicative competence in the curriculum, the concept of interculturalism embedded in textbooks is not challenged, but rather replicating and legitimising unequal social and cultural relations through an influential public educational system. Cultural diversity and world geography represented in textbooks only center on Anglocentrism and Eurocentrism as well as China while neglecting other outer and expanding circle countries. This also confirms the previous study that Chinese culture is an important part of China's citizenship education and Chinese identity (Law, 2013). In terms of racial diversity, it can be always seen that people of different colors and races communicate freely and equally, as well as do activities together, which may show the harmonious coexistence among humans. Nevertheless, it is questionable that those interactions are limited to Caucasians and Chinese while neglecting other races. The absence of criticality and cultural diversity may create future issues and barriers to intercultural understandings, which may deepen learners' stereotypical attitudes and bias their worldviews.

Moreover, China is a multi-ethnic country which contains not only Han culture but also cultures of different ethnic minorities. Even though themes in textbooks reflect the content advocated by socialist core values to varying degrees, they still concentrate on the aspects of the nation, society and individual citizens, without adequate focusing on ethnic diversity and regional characteristics of China. There are only three pictures showing Uyghur dress, Turpan traditional food and Mongolian yurt without much detailed information. Hence, Chinese culture represented in textbooks centers on Han culture while neglecting the cultures of China's ethnic minorities. This finding is consistent with Zhu's finding (2013) that themes embedded in textbooks focus more on international and national issues instead of local ones and that educational policies and practices which emphasise the Han cultural capital continue to be a central part of the educational system (Postiglione et al., 2005).

Interview results of teachers' weak identification and strangeness toward GCE may confirm Glasgow and Paller's (2016) viewpoint of English as a symbol, and teachers' lack of critical awareness toward teaching materials. Additionally, previous research showed that GCE is a very new concept in the field of ELT (Basarir, 2017), which also echoes with the interview results in this study that teachers are generally lack of knowledge about integrating GCE into ELT. Some teachers believed that GCE should be an issue associated with ideology and moral education course rather than English education, but they ignored the fact that GCE is so wide-ranging that it covers not only a single course or unit, but also should be integrated as a common area of connection within the scope of many disciplines including ELT, and content-based approach was also approved to be an effective way to conduct GCE by previous studies (Hosack, 2011). Therefore, results call for teachers to bear a critical awareness and go beyond linguistic skills and integrate GCE into ELT (Roux, 2019), as well as advocate that GCE should be promoted through more effective online teaching methods during the COVID-19 pandemic such as online project-based approach, etc.

CONCLUSION

This study scrutinised the extent to which Chinese elementary school English textbooks reflect the notion of GCE and teachers' practices when implementing GCE during the COVID-19 pandemic. Being grounded in soft versus critical GCE and Akkari and Maleq's framework, the research adopted a mixed-method design and employed a content analysis combined with CDA and corpus analysis. Findings demonstrate that the themes of GCE are embedded in two versions of textbooks to varying degrees and with unbalanced distribution. Some elements that do not comply with the proposition of GCE and the excluded themes may impede the full realisation of global citizenship values. Soft GCE approach, therefore, takes the dominant role in textbooks and portrays a superficial picture of GCE for students, which needs critical GCE to arouse teachers' and learners' critical literacy. Interview results show that teacher training is urgently needed to integrate GCE into interdisciplinary subjects and raise teachers' awareness towards GCE as well as critical consciousness to challenge the prevailing routines in ELT. The findings could also provide some pedagogical implications for teachers' practices during the COVID-19 pandemic.

SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPLICATIONS

This research is expected to make contributions in two aspects. Theoretically, it is conducive to expanding the relevant theories of GCE in a nation-state and the feasibility of interdisciplinary implementation. Pedagogically, it attempts to deconstruct the notion of GCE embedded in Chinese ELT textbooks and teachers' practices of GCE, the findings of which may provide grounds for further research and a growing understanding regarding how ELT contributes to China's context specific GCE endeavors during the "glocalisation".

The findings bear some implications for policy makers, ELT material developers and ELT teachers. This study argued that policy makers should be more focused on fostering GCE development and implementing GCE oriented ELT reform. ELT material developers should be consciously reducing inequalities and injustice in textbooks and giving a voice to marginalised groups. Moreover, English teachers should have a critical awareness toward GCE values that are embedded in ELT textbooks, and instill in students an inclusive and just worldview rather than reproducing inequality. Besides, teachers should actively explore effective GCE methods in teaching practices amidst and post COVID-19 pandemic.

LIMITATIONS

This study examined only two versions of ELT textbooks for Grade six and interviewed only five English teachers, so the insufficient samplings may limit the generalisability of the research. Future studies maybe more prudent to enlarge the samplings for more versions of teaching materials and different educational levels as well as diversified participants.

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