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Integration of Cultural Representation and 4C Skills in the EFL Teachers' Teaching Modules: A Content Analysis

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Abstract

Preparing students for globalised communities, English language teaching (ELT) should prioritise not only linguistic competence and cultural experience, but also 21st-century skills, particularly 4C skills. This study aims to investigate types of cultural representation in two EFL teachers' teaching modules at SMAN 1 Gunung Talang and their integration with 4C skills. This study employed content analysis of two teaching modules and semi-structured interviews, applying frameworks of cultural origins, cultural elements, cultural senses, intercultural communicative competence, and 4C skills. Findings revealed that, first, cultural origins were dominated by the source culture (Indonesian culture). Second, cultural representation was primarily expressed through pragmatic and sociological senses. Third, 4Ps were expressed through products, practices, and perspectives, with no representation of persons. Fourth, the integration scores varied considerably between the two teachers' modules. T1 showed limited integration, while T2 showed moderate integration, with Communication as the highest score. This was manifested through dialogue and discussion activities situated within cultural contexts, especially Minangkabau contexts. While previous studies have examined cultural representation, ICC, or 4C skills separately, few have explored their integration in EFL teaching modules. This study extends previous research by examining the intersection of these three dimensions, providing empirical evidence on the gap between cultural content presence and pedagogical integration in the Indonesian EFL context.

Keywords: 4C skills, cultural content, cultural representation, ICC

1. Introduction

English has emerged as a global language, and its role in English language teaching (ELT) has become progressively crucial, especially in the context of English as a foreign language (EFL). With its status as a foreign language, English learning is inseparable from culture since language learning emphasises cultural contexts (Prihatiningsih et al., 2021; Rashidi & Meihami, 2016). This aligns with Brown's (2007) principle that language and culture are intricately interwoven, such that separating them would undermine the significance of both. Consequently, ELT should emphasise the interconnectedness of language and culture (Budairi, 2019; Kramsch & Hua, 2016; Putra et al., 2020; Saemee & Nomnian, 2021). As language and culture are intertwined, ELT increasingly emphasizes cultural aspects, particularly societal values and communicative norms. In response to this need, the Indonesian Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education released *Panduan Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris*. Emilia et al. (2025a p.11) highlight the intention for intercultural communication to understand and respect Indonesia and foreign cultures' perspectives, practices, and products, which underscores the guideline's purpose for developing students' intercultural communication skills. This relationship offers an essential strategy in enhancing language skills and intercultural communication (ICC) abilities through cultural context, while helping teachers provide culture-based content (Hicham et al., 2025; Kramsch, 2013; Kramsch & Hua, 2016).

In addition, ELT also fosters 21st-century skills, particularly the 4Cs: critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration. These skills are essential for reinforcing students in globalized communities' engagement. In this study, cultural representation serves as the content embedded in the teaching module's materials, while the 4C skills are the competencies to be acquired through that material. It highlights the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with people from different cultural backgrounds (Byram, 1997). It goes beyond mere linguistic proficiency, encompassing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to navigate intercultural interactions successfully. According to Byram (1997), ICC has five key components: attitudes (curiosity and openness), knowledge of social groups and practices, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. In the context of EFL teaching, ICC is developed when students engage with cultural content (representation) while simultaneously practicing 4C skills. As a result, students learn to analyse cultural perspectives (critical thinking), generate creative responses (creativity), communicate across cultural boundaries (communication), and collaborate with diverse peers (collaboration).

Culture is also known as a foundation in learning English for intercultural communication that cannot be separated from communication, characteristics, customs, values, and opinions (Thulasivanthana, 2024). Its purpose also shifted from internationalising the language to conveying culture through thoughts and norms (Sihombing & Nguyen, 2025). As a result, the process of learning a foreign language is essential for comprehending the meaning and interpretations that are constructed by cultural contexts in which language is used (Jenkins, 2023a). For instance, utilizing local culture representation promotes students' own culture (Adelliya et al., 2025) and cultural awareness while fostering national identity (Budianto & Pradana, 2025). Meanwhile, the purpose of English relates to the *lingua franca,* promoting multiculturalism and intercultural implications among EFL students (Alawlaqi & Basya, 2023), familiarising students with authentic native-speakers' contexts (Alfaya et al., 2023), sharing meaning among people from various cultural backgrounds and making international interactions (Rusydah & Amalia, 2023).

Despite these debates, English language learning continues to emphasise the importance of cultural awareness. Whether the focus is on local or target cultures, the essence of ELT lies in understanding language within its cultural context. This principle is also reflected in the implementation of Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum, which provides teachers with greater autonomy to determine the cultural content incorporated into English learning materials. It provides an opportunity for teachers to create their own teaching modules. As a result, teachers are able to embed cultural context in their own teaching module. Even if it is designed for pedagogical purposes, it also reflects cultural transmitters embedded implicitly within learning materials (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Hall, 1997; Xiong et al., 2022). However, Adnan & Yunisari (2023) had found that in content knowledge development, most of the teachers in senior high school were struggling to select appropriate sources for ELT. Teachers often adopt online materials from the internet without evaluating cultural appropriateness and skills alignment, despite culture and 4C skills being integrated into language learning.

This has attracted researchers to examine cultural representation in English textbooks (Fitriani et al., 2025; Buraidah et al., 2022; Mahbub et al., 2024). However, these studies only focused on cultural representation and its content in textbooks across different levels of education rather than teacher-developed teaching modules, which are used in Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum. Furthermore, existing research has only examined cultural representation, without considering how it is integrated with 4C skills. This is significant because the Merdeka Curriculum emphasises both cultural content and 21st-century skills, yet little is known about how teachers integrate these dimensions in their teaching modules. Addressing the gaps, this study examines cultural representation in teaching modules and its integration with 4Cs skills. The research questions for this study are as follows:

1. What are the types of cultural representations in the EFL teachers' teaching modules in *SMAN 1 Gunung Talang*?
2. How are cultural representations integrated with the 4Cs skills in the EFL teachers' teaching modules in *SMAN 1 Gunung Talang*?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Cultural Representation

The cultural representation is grounded from two words, which are culture and representation. According to Hall (1997) culture is societal meaning, while representation is the medium to convey meaningful ideas. Representation of culture through language is a necessary method by which meaning is produced, because culture emphasizes language meaning and the process of people understanding the world. This representation as a medium to prepare people for a globalized world, reflects the interaction process in society (Byram, 2020). This interaction should not be limited to the target cultures, but students should value their own cultures, especially in the context of English as a *lingua franca*. It highlights communication and interaction across different cultural values and traditions around the world. Therefore, the interaction in ELT should facilitate students with real-life interaction in communities because meaning and its interpretation are constructed by cultural contexts (Jenkins, 2023). In this way, Jenkins promotes three interrelated elements to comprehend cultural approaches in language learning: artefact and practice, fact and process, and interculturality. Overall, the concept of cultural representation is expressed how language is needed by culture and meaning as a core within social interactions based on real-life settings.

2.2 Cultural Origins

Cortazzi & Jin (1999) propose culture as a dynamic process of learning. Its purpose is to communicate with real-life contexts. However, it is necessary to distinguish between students' local culture and foreign cultures because it provides different interpretation according to its contexts. Therefore, Cortazzi & Jin introduce culture as source culture, target culture, and international culture. For instance, source culture, also known as students' local culture, target culture refers to native speakers from English-speaking countries such as the UK and USA, and international culture is from other countries around the world. Meanwhile, (Kachru, 2014) argues three concepts of culture in ELT: the inner circle culture, outer circle culture, and expanding circle culture. The inner circle culture refers to English as their mother language, such as the UK and USA; the outer circle culture is defined as past colonial countries that use English as a second language, such as India and Malaysia, and expanding circle culture is countries that use English as a foreign language such as Indonesia and Japan.

2.3 Cultural Elements

Moran (2001) Conceptualises cultural context in language learning into four dimensions: knowing about, knowing how, knowing why, and knowing oneself. First, knowing about refers to cultural products, practices, and perspectives. Second, knowing how involves communicative interaction through cultural practices. Third, knowing why develops students' perspectives through cultural engagements. Fourth, knowing oneself highlights self-awareness and ideas. Therefore, this principle views culture as a product, practice, and perspective. To extend this concept, Yuen, 2011a) argues that cultural content should include people (person) because they use cultural knowledge in daily practices.

2.4 Cultural Senses

Adaskou et al. (1990) claim that content in language teaching embeds cultural elements that are constructed through social practices, values, meanings, and communicative behavior. These elements consist of aesthetic sense, sociological sense, semantic sense, and pragmatic sense. These principles examine the process of cultural information is conveyed, the situational of cultural context is embedded, and cultural content utilized as communicative materials in language learning. Thus, cultural elements in language learning produce multidimensional principles and practices. These are developed through Big "C" (invisible culture) and small "c" (visible culture). To be specific, the Big "C" culture is classified into history, political systems, institutions, and high artifacts such as literature, architecture, and music. These elements are often formally represented and visible, making them easier to identify in instructional materials. On the other hand, small "c" culture represents minor issues in people's daily lives. This includes opinions, preferences, body language, habits, and interaction patterns. Although these elements may appear less dominant, they provide the invisible cultural values, beliefs, and assumptions that guide behavior and communication.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This research employed a content analysis design. According to Downe-Wamboldt (1992), content analysis is a systematic method that discusses controversial issues from passages or

materials. Also, content analysis is inferring data from passages or materials for contextual use, which focuses on recognizing meanings and significance (Krippendorff, 2022). In order to recognize the meanings, content analysis connects the systematic and objective data to their produced environment or context (Bengtsson, 2016). Thus, the concept of content analysis is a methodological analysis of inferring meanings and their contextual relationship. Within this study, the researcher examined the cultural representation in two EFL teachers' teaching modules in *SMAN 1 Gunung Talang* and its integration with 4C skills. The unit of analysis was the teaching module, while the unit of coding was the instructional components: learning objectives, learning stages, learning materials, and assessments within each meeting. Cultural representation was coded at the level of sentences, phrases, or activities within these components.

3.2. Data and Source of Data

The data were obtained from two EFL teachers' teaching modules in the 11th grade of *SMAN 1 Gunung Talang.* The teaching modules were Advanced English or *Bahasa Inggris Tingkat Lanjut* for the second semester. The researcher used purposive sampling to intentionally select participants and sites to comprehend the main issues (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The researcher selected the EFL teachers' teaching modules based on the teachers' competence. First, the teachers had over 5 years of teaching experience at *SMAN 1 Gunung Talang.* Second, they were recent modules that had been used by teachers in classroom practice. Fourth, the teaching modules provided more than 3 meetings of English for each material. Therefore, Analytical Exposition Text and Discussion Text teaching modules were utilized in this research. Two EFL teachers participated in this study, and four teaching modules (two from each teacher) were analysed.

3.3. Instruments

This study employed two data sources: teaching modules and semi-structured interviews with two teachers. To collect data from these sources, two research instruments were developed. They were a document checklist and a semi-structured interview guide. According to Cresswell & Plano Clark (2011), document is informative data to help the researcher comprehend the phenomenon in qualitative research, while a semi-structured interview uses predetermined open-ended questions while allowing flexibility during the interaction for depth information.

The document checklist was developed by combining frameworks from Adaskou et al. (1990), (Byram, 1997) , Cortazzi & Jin (1999), Moran (2001), and Yuen (2011). These principles of cultural representation were developed into a framework for a document checklist and semi-structured interview guidelines. This framework provided structured criteria for examining cultural representation criteria, ICC, and instructional components within the teaching modules. The components for cultural types and elements referred to cultural topics and themes (Big C vs small c; 4P for products, persons, practices, perspectives; and 4 cultural senses such as aesthetic sense, sociological sense, semantic sense, and pragmatic sense) and cultural origin (source/local/expand-circle culture, target/inner-circle culture, and international/outer-circle culture). In addition, the instructional components referred to the structured elements within the teaching modules, including texts, dialogues, grammar sections, examples, and learning tasks.

To ensure consistency, the semi-structured interviews protocol will be developed based on a similar framework and themes. Meanwhile, Byram's model of ICC will use as the alignment analysis of cultural representations and the 4Cs skill document checklist. Each cultural representation

pattern is mapped onto ICC dimensions (attitudes, knowledge, skills, and critical cultural awareness) and then aligned with the 4Cs competencies; see Table 1.

Table 1: Cultural Representation Integration with 4C Skill

Cultural Representation in Teaching Module	ICC Component (Byram)	Related 4Cs Skill
Cultural facts, themes, and background knowledge	Knowledge	Communication
Cultural products, practices, and perspectives	Knowledge	Communication
Cultural comparison activities	Interpreting and relating skills	Critical Thinking
Text interpretation across cultures	Interpreting and relating skills	Critical Thinking
Intercultural dialogue tasks	Discovery and interaction skills	Communication
Authentic interaction scenarios	Discovery and interaction skills	Communication
Group discussion on cultural issues	Attitudes	Collaboration
Tasks promoting openness to differences	Attitudes	Collaboration
Cultural problem-solving cases	Discovery and interaction skills	Critical Thinking
Conflict mediation scenarios	Interpreting and relating skills	Collaboration
Reflective cultural questions	Critical cultural awareness	Critical Thinking
Evaluation of cultural values	Critical cultural awareness	Critical Thinking
Role-play across cultures	Interaction skills	Collaboration
Cultural adaptation tasks	Discovery and interaction skills	Creativity
Multicultural project work	Attitudes and interaction skills	Creativity
Personal cultural reflection tasks	Attitudes and critical awareness	Creativity

To ensure validity, the document checklist and interview guide were reviewed by one lecturer in ELT with expertise in intercultural communication. The expert evaluated the instruments based on three criteria: (1) clarity of the items, (2) relevance to the research objectives, and (3) completeness of the cultural representation and 4C skill dimensions. Additionally, a preliminary coding trial was conducted on one of the teaching modules to test the clarity and applicability of the checklist. Based on this trial, minor adjustments were made to the coding categories to improve consistency, particularly in distinguishing between the four senses of culture. The module used in this trial was retained in the final analysis, as the trial served only to refine the instrument, not to generate final data. While a single expert review is a limitation, it provided valuable insights for refining the instruments.

3.4. Data Analysis Techniques

To obtain the data, the researcher used two instruments: a document checklist and a semi-structured interview as triangulation data. The document checklist was utilized to collect data about types of cultural representation and its integration with 4C skills. The indicators of the document checklist were developed through the cultural representation concepts: cultural origins,

cultural elements, cultural senses, ICC, and cultural integration with the 4C skill index (0-3). The data were interpreted in accordance with Table 2.

Table 2: Cultural Representation and 4Cs Skills Integration Level within the EFL Teachers' Teaching Modules

Integration Score	Integration Level	Component-Based Meaning
0 – 0.4	No Integration	Cultural content does not activate the stated ICC component and does not support the related 4Cs skill.
0.5 – 1.4	Limited Integration	Cultural content is present, but the ICC component is weakly activated; 4Cs skill support is indirect or implicit.
1.5 – 2.4	Moderate Integration	Cultural content clearly activates the ICC component and supports the related 4Cs skill through guided tasks.
2.5 – 3.0	High Integration	Cultural representation explicitly activates the ICC component and requires active demonstration of the related 4Cs skill.

Meanwhile, the semi-structured interview was used to ensure consistency and provide deeper interpretation by comparing, combining, and cross-checking the results from the document checklist. First, EFL teachers read the consent form before the interview. Second, the interviews were recorded with participants' consent. Third, the interview transcript was coded deductively based on the predefined categories: purpose of English teaching, understanding cultural representation, understanding of 4Cs skills, integration of cultural representation and 4Cs skills in teaching modules, and teachers' reflection on gaps and constraints in integrating cultural representation and 4Cs skills. Fourth, the data were analyzed through themes.

Triangulation was conducted by comparing findings from the document checklist with findings from the semi-structured interviews. Specifically, the cultural representation patterns identified in the teaching modules were compared with teachers' explanations of their cultural content choices. When discrepancies emerged—for example, when a teacher stated an intention to include target culture but the module showed limited target culture content—the researcher returned to both data sources to identify possible explanations. This process ensured that the findings were not based on a single data source and provided a more comprehensive understanding of cultural representation and 4C integration.

3.5 Trustworthiness

To ensure trustworthiness, several strategies were employed. Credibility was established through triangulation of the document checklist and semi-structured interviews. Transferability was supported through thick description of the research context (*SMAN 1 Gunung Talang),* participants (two EFL teachers), and teaching modules (Analytical Exposition Text and Discussion Text). Dependability was ensured through an audit trail documenting all research decisions and coding procedures. Confirmability was maintained through reflexivity, where the researcher kept a reflective journal consisting of handwritten notes, annotated prints, and digital notes. These records documented coding decisions, emerging questions, and observations throughout the research process, helping the researcher identify potential biases and ensure that findings were grounded in the data.

4. Results

This section presents the results of the study, which aimed to examine the types of cultural representation in EFL teaching modules (RQ1) and how these representations were integrated with the 4Cs skills (RQ2). The data were obtained from document analysis of two teachers' teaching modules and semi-structured interviews with the teachers.

4.1. Types of Cultural Representation in the EFL Teachers' Teaching Modules

4.1.1 Cultural Origins

The analysis of cultural representation showed that source culture (Indonesian) was the most dominant type across both teachers' teaching modules. Source culture appeared in every meeting of both teachers, primarily through routine classroom practices such as student-led prayer, the *Adiwiyata* program, and discussions of local environmental issues. Target culture (English-speaking countries) appeared only in T2's modules, through references to Western media such as CNN, BBC, and National Geographic. However, international culture was also present only in T2's modules, reflected in themes such as global warming, globalisation, and cultural homogenisation (see Table 3).

Table 3 Frequency of Cultural Origins in the EFL Teachers' Teaching Modules

Code	Cultural Origins	Frequency of Teacher 1 (T1)	Frequency of Teacher 2 (T2)
SC	Source Culture (e.g. Indonesian culture)	15	23
TC	Target Culture (e.g. English-speaking countries' culture like USA and UK)	1	9
IC	International culture (e.g. other nations worldwide's culture)	0	10
Total		**16**	**42**
		58	

According to Table 3, 58 instances of cultural origins were coded across the four teaching modules. Source culture accounted for 38 instances, while target and international cultures accounted for 10 instances each. T1's teaching modules contained 16 instances, while T2's contained 42 instances. The high frequency of source culture indicates a focus on students' local culture, with limited exposure to target culture or international culture.

In detail, the source culture was primarily constructed from local communities' issues such as religious-based practices, local environmental issues, health problems, school admission procedures and announcements, and local adolescents' social media problems. These issues were presented through different media such as YouTube videos, texts, warm-up questions, and assessments. Meanwhile, target culture from both teachers was provided in different media: T1 utilized text about teenagers' problems in the USA, while T2 used YouTube videos from the UK and USA. Furthermore, international culture was absent from T1's teaching modules, while T2 provided text and videos with international issues such as global warming.

4.1.2 Cultural Elements

The analysis of cultural elements across both teachers' teaching modules revealed a sharp contrast in the breadth and depth of cultural representation (see Table 4).

Table 4: Frequency of Cultural Elements in EFL Teachers' Teaching Modules

Code	Cultural Elements	Frequency of Teacher 1 (T1)	Frequency of Teacher 2 (T2)
PRD	Product (Tangible artifacts: food, clothing, books, pictures)	1	8
PRC	Practice (Social routines, behaviours, ceremonies, traditions, daily life)	14	29
PRS	Perspective (Values, beliefs, worldviews, attitudes, reasoning patterns)	3	22
PER	Person (Cultural actors, characters, historical or contemporary figures, names)	0	0
Total		**18**	**59**
		77	

As shown in Table 4, the analysis of cultural elements across both teachers' modules revealed a total of 77 occurrences. T1 accounted for 18 occurrences, while T2 accounted for 59 occurrences. Among the four cultural elements, Practices (PRC) were the most frequently occurring category, with a total of 43 occurrences. T1 contributed 14 practices, while T2 contributed 29 practices. This was followed by Perspectives (PRS), which appeared 25 times in total, with T2 accounting for 22 occurrences and T1 only 3. Products (PRD) appeared 9 times in total, with T2 contributing 8 occurrences and T1 only 1. Persons (PER) were entirely absent from both teachers' modules, with 0 occurrences.

4.1.3 Cultural Senses

Cultural senses refer to different ways in which culture is manifested linguistically and socially in educational content. This framework is categorised into four senses: aesthetic sense (AES), sociological sense (SOC), semantic sense (SEM), and pragmatic sense (PRA). To ensure consistent identification across the teaching modules, six decisions were applied (Table 5), one for each sense. Generic references to art, social practices, language, or communication without cultural specificity were not coded (see Table 5).

Table 5: Frequency of Cultural Senses in the EFL Teachers' Teaching Modules

Code	Cultural Elements	Frequency of Teacher 1 (T1)	Frequency of Teacher 2 (T2)
AES	Aesthetic Sense (Artistic, literary, or pop culture: literature, music, songs)	0	0
SOC	Sociological Sense (Social institutions, family roles, hierarchies, community norms)	22	28
SEM	Semantic Sense (Culture-specific meanings, idioms, metaphors, sayings, proverbs)	0	0
PRA	Pragmatic Sense (Language use norms, politeness strategies, conversation rules, speech acts)	2	0
Total		**24**	**28**
		52	

As shown in Table 5, sociological sense (SOC) was the predominant cultural sense, with 22 occurrences in T1's modules and 28 in T2's modules. Pragmatic sense (PRA) appeared twice in T1's modules. Aesthetic sense (AES) and semantic sense (SEM) were absent from both teachers' modules.

4.1.4 Synthesis of Research Question 1

In summary, the analysis of cultural representation in both teachers' teaching modules revealed that source culture (Indonesian) was dominant, while target and international cultures were limited. Practices (PRC) were the most frequently occurring cultural element, followed by perspectives (PRS). Persons (PER) were entirely absent. Sociological sense (SOC) was the predominant cultural sense, while aesthetic and semantic senses were absent. These findings indicate that while both teachers incorporated cultural content, the representation was heavily skewed toward source culture and sociological aspects, with limited engagement with target and international cultures.

4.2 Integration of Cultural Representation with 4Cs Skills

4.2.1 Overall Score of Integration of Cultural Representation with 4Cs Skills in Document Checklist

The integration of cultural representation and 4C skills was connected through ICC dimensions, where cultural representation acted as material content and 4C skills as competencies to be developed. The integration was assessed using a 0–3 scale (see Table 6).

Table 6. Average Integration Scores of Cultural Representation and 4Cs Skills in the Teaching Modules

No	Meeting	Critical Thinking		Creativity		Communication		Collaboration		Overall Score
		T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	
1	Material 1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.12
2	M1 – M1	0.2	1.6	0.33	0.0	0.25	1.5	0.25	1.0	0.64
3	M1 – M2	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.33	0.0	0.75	0.0	0.25	0.22
4	M1 – M3	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.33	0.0	0.75	0.0	0.25	0.22
5	M1 – M4	0.2	1.8	0.33	2.67	0.0	2.25	0.0	1.25	1.06
6	M1-M5	-	2.6	-	3.0	-	2.5	-	1.25	2.3
7	Material 2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
8	M2 – M1	0.2	2.2	0.33	2.33	0.25	2.5	0.25	1.25	1.16
9	M2 – M2	0.2	1.4	0.0	1.0	0.0	1.75	0.0	0.75	0.64
10	M2 – M3	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.7	0.0	1.25	0.0	0.25	0.34
11	M2 – M4	0.2	2.2	0.0	2.67	0.0	2.75	0.0	1.5	1.17
12	M2 – M5	0.2	2.6	0.33	3.0	0.0	2.5	0.25	1.25	1.27
	Average	**0.11**	**1.32**	**0.11**	**1.34**	**0.13**	**1.54**	**0.06**	**0.75**	**1.14**

As shown in Table 6, the overall integration score across both teachers was 1.14, indicating limited integration. T1's average scores across all 4C skills did not exceed 0.13, with collaboration recording the lowest average (0.06) and communication the highest (0.13). T2's modules demonstrated higher scores, with communication recording the highest average (1.54), followed by creativity (1.34).

4.2.2 Critical Thinking

Both teachers acknowledged the importance of critical thinking, but their approaches differed. T1 used debate activities through Discussion Text with pro and contra groups to foster critical thinking, though the topics were generic and not explicitly linked to cultural content. The teacher viewed these activities as a way to help students solve problems and reach conclusions, but did not deliberately connect them to cultural issues. T1 said:

> "*... Students who think critically usually show curiosity by asking questions and expressing their own ideas. Sometimes, a few students ask thoughtful questions that other classmates have not considered. These questions often reflect deeper thinking and demonstrate that they are analysing the topic rather than simply accepting information*."

T1 expressed that cultural content was primarily used for familiarising students with pronunciation rather than cultural awareness:

> "*... Since English is a foreign language in our context and our students are not native speakers, I try to expose them to authentic English as much as possible... allowing students to hear authentic pronunciation and intonation."*

On the other hand, T2 explicitly linked critical thinking to cultural content by having students analyse and evaluate arguments on local cultural topics, such as the relevance of *merantau* tradition in the digital era. T2 said:

> *"I selected local culture because one of the discussion topics in my teaching module is "Should the Minangkabau tradition of merantau be maintained in the digital era?" In this topic, students are presented with three supporting arguments related to economic benefits, family relationships, and mental well-being. The text follows the structure of a discussion text, consisting of a thesis, arguments, and a conclusion within the context of Minangkabau culture."*

In this activity, students were asked to identify valid data, evaluate arguments, and think critically about cultural issues. T2 explained:

> "*... They evaluate the evidence presented in each text, determine which arguments are more convincing, and justify their conclusions. Through this process, students develop their critical thinking skills while learning about cultural issues. In other words, culture is not only the topic of discussion but also a context through which students develop their thinking and reasoning skills."*

4.2.2 Creativity

Creativity was fostered through hands-on activities, but again with different levels of cultural integration. T1 used dialogue creation tasks where students worked in pairs to develop their own dialogues based on daily activities. Students were given freedom to choose their topics, which encouraged personal expression, but no cultural content was specified:

> "*... Students work in pairs to create a dialogue based on a topic of their choice, usually related to their daily lives. I give them the freedom to determine the topic and develop the dialogue creatively, as long as it includes the language features that have been taught, such as giving suggestions or expressing opinions."*

T1 expressed this limitation as a constraint in his/her teaching stages:

"I believe I have incorporated those aspects into my teaching. However, these were constraints that need improvements. If there are additional strategies that can strengthen the integration of cultural representation and the 4Cs skills…"

However, T2 explicitly linked creativity to source culture by having students create slogans about *merantau* (*Minangkabau* tradition) and posters about environmental issues. Students used digital skills to produce these creative outputs. T2 said:

"To develop creativity, I ask students to create slogans related to the Minangkabau tradition of merantau. They also use digital tools to design their work, such as creating bilingual posters. Through these activities, students are encouraged to express their ideas creatively while developing their digital skills."

T2 not only embedded cultural content for students' activities, but also encouraged them to utilize digital media to enhance students' creative output.

4.2.3 Communication

Communication was expressed in both spoken and written expression, but their choice of topics differed. T1 used dialogue creation and recount texts based on personal experiences, where students wrote and then performed their own dialogues or shared personal stories. These activities developed both writing and speaking skills, but cultural content was not mentioned. T1 said:

"One activity I often use to develop communication skills is dialogue practice. After explaining the lesson, I ask students to work in pairs and create their own dialogues based on the language expressions they have learned… Students also communicate through recount texts, which are based on their own experiences. For example, after a school holiday, I ask students to write and tell their experiences during the holiday."

T1 believed that by writing students' own experiences and talking about it in front of the classroom would help students to enhance their speaking and writing ability:

"In this way, students develop both writing and speaking skills through the same learning activity…"

Nevertheless, T2 directly integrated communication skills with cultural issues through writing analytical texts about students' local culture and classroom debates on cultural topics. These were expressed with the values of *rendang* as both writing and debating topics:

"I usually ask students to communicate in two ways. First, students write an analytical exposition text about their own culture, such as the value of hard work in rendang… Through this activity, students learn how to explain their local culture clearly and in detail in English. They also learn how to introduce and describe their culture to people from different cultural backgrounds. Second, I organize class debates… Through the debate, students develop both their speaking and writing skills while communicating ideas related to cultural topics.

T2 encouraged students to know their cultural identity as the Minangkabau community while fostering their English language:

"For me, local culture should remain a priority. My teaching module is designed for English learning, not for teaching civic education. Therefore, students should not only learn about

cultural topics, such as the rendang and merantau, but also be able to explain and communicate these cultural topics to others in English by applying the 4Cs skills."

4.2.4 Collaboration

Collaborative orientation highlights how cultural representation not only structures interaction but also shapes the range of interpretive possibilities available to students. Such representations allow students to negotiate cultural meanings together, supporting interaction and cooperation during language learning tasks. As a result, both teachers incorporated collaboration through pair and group work, but lacked of cultural content. This was due to the fact that collaboration remained the weakest skill in both teachers in terms of alignment scores with cultural content.

5. Discussion

5.1 Cultural Representation Origins: The Dominance of Source Culture

Source culture dominated both modules, appearing in every meeting through routine practices such as student-led prayer, the Adiwiyata program, and local environmental issues. These practices reflect Indonesian cultural identity and character education. Therefore, connecting classroom practice with cultural identity promotes social harmony, tolerance, and respect (Husain et al., 2022; Putri et al., 2024). This aligns with the goal of English learning to foster understanding and respect for multiculturalism (Emilia et al., 2025) . It is essentially resonates with *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* or known as unity in diversity which demonstrated the context of *Pancasila* as Indonesian ideology. Embedding local heritage can channel English skills through cultural understanding (Arfani et al., 2022), enhancing students' cultural awareness and cross-cultural understanding (Adelliya et al., 2025; Agustina & Kencana, 2023; Rizkya Ramadhani & Nurkamto, 2024). As a result, local narratives and social principles are framed as guidance for materials development beyond language objectives. For example, praying together reflects inclusivity and mutual respect, conceptualising intercultural competence as a combination of attitudes, knowledge, skills, and reflexive learning (Deardorff, 2018). However, McGrath (2013) argues that teachers draw on familiar contexts to enhance comprehension, localising content to increase relevance. These contexts familiarise them with local contexts while utilizing English as the medium of instruction (Syahputra et al., 2025). This suggests that source culture acts as content while English serves as the medium, potentially shifting the purpose of English learning from global communication to promoting local identity (Budianto & Pradana, 2025).

Additionally, a notable gap emerged between teachers: T1 included minimal target culture and no international culture, while T2 included Western media and global themes. This suggests that teachers' beliefs and pedagogical orientations influence cultural content selection. T2's inclusion of target and international culture reflects a more comprehensive understanding of ICC (Byram, 1997), while T1's focus on source culture may limit exposure to diverse perspectives. This finding resonates with the work of Rathert & Cabaroğlu (2024), who found that culture-based classes enhance both language skills and ICC. The integration of cultural content into language instruction improves linguistic proficiency and develops critical awareness, openness, and adaptability (Félix-Brasdefer, 2025).

In conclusion, while both teachers teach English to promote students as part of global communities, facilitating students with critical interculturality fosters self-defence in intercultural

education. Resonating with both teachers who adopted cultural content as a medium for English learning, prioritizing source culture while filtering foreign influences based on religious and cultural compatibility. This suggests that culture should not be treated as fixed or tied exclusively to national identities (Dervin, 2025). Hence, culture should not be treated as fixed, homogeneous, or tied exclusively to national identities.

While previous studies have examined cultural representation in English textbooks (Fitriani et al., 2025; Kuraedah et al., 2022; Mahbub et al., 2024), they have largely overlooked teacher-developed teaching modules. This study addresses that gap by revealing that source culture dominates teacher-developed modules, with limited target and international content. This finding extends previous research by demonstrating that even when teachers have autonomy to select cultural content, source culture remains the primary focus, suggesting that teachers' personal beliefs and pedagogical orientations play a significant role in cultural content selection.

5.2 Decontextualized Cultural Content

The analysis of cultural elements (4Ps) revealed that practices were the most frequently occurring dimension across both teachers, while products and perspectives appeared more consistently in T2's modules. Meanwhile, Persons were entirely absent from both modules. This finding is consistent with Yuen (2011), who found that Practices are the most common cultural element in ELT materials, while Persons are frequently absent. This highlights a missed opportunity to incorporate cultural products and persons to enrich representation. Research by Hasnah et al. (2024) similarly found that Indonesian EFL textbooks overrepresent cultural products while underrepresenting perspectives and persons (Irawati et al., 2024; Syahputra et al., 2025). The absence of Persons suggests that cultural content was presented in a decontextualized manner, without cultural actors who could serve as relatable role models (Byram et al., 1997). This is due to the fact that culture is not only a collection of practices, products, or perspectives; it is also transmitted through people (Moran, 2001). Therefore, this decontextualization can lead to superficial understanding, where students learn about practices without grasping the human experiences behind them (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). By neglecting Persons, modules miss the opportunity to humanize cultural content and provide tangible examples of cultural identity.

Moreover, the absence of Persons also limits learners' ability to develop empathy, as individuals serve as bridges between abstract concepts and human experiences (Byram et al., 1997). Moran (2001) argues that 'knowing about' involves personal responses to what is learned, while Yuen (2011) notes that cultural persons illustrate the people through whom culture is enacted. Culture is thus not static material but a dynamic phenomenon experienced daily.

Previous studies have examined cultural elements in textbooks (Moran, 2001; Yuen, 2011), but few have explored how these elements are represented in teacher-developed modules. This study addresses that gap by revealing the absence of Persons in both teachers' modules, indicating a decontextualized approach to cultural representation. This finding extends previous research by showing that even when teachers incorporate cultural content, they may overlook the human dimension of culture, limiting students' ability to develop empathy and identification with cultural others.

5.3 The Influence Factor in the Integration of Cultural Representation and 4C Skills

RQ2 revealed a clear contrast: T1 scored 0.11 (No Alignment), while T2 scored 1.34 (Moderate Alignment), indicating that T2 was more effective in using cultural content to develop

4C skills. In T1's modules, cultural content was not explicitly linked to any 4C activity; topics remained generic. This aligns with Sercu (2006), who found a disconnect between teachers' intentions and practices, with culture teaching focused on transmitting knowledge rather than developing intercultural skills. In contrast, T2 deliberately linked cultural content to each 4C skill. Critical thinking was developed through analysis of arguments on local cultural topics, aligning with Byram et al. (1997) concept of critical cultural awareness for students. However, students still have freedom to comprehend the foreign cultural values by critically review and evaluate to their needs without violating local norms. While the findings underscored the cruciality of students' critical thinking in learning language and culture, the government and teachers must carefully select the material and develop the learning content to fully provide the alignment with national education and curriculum policy without left behinds the Pancasila values. This is due to the fact that culture reflects the shared knowledge of people in a particular society and can be expressed through arts, places, events, symbols, and ways of living. This suggests that teachers must carefully select materials that align with national education policy while fostering critical thinking (Jenkins, 2023).

Second, Creativity was developed through slogan and poster creation linked to merantau and environmental issues, reflecting the P21 framework's emphasis on generating and refining ideas. These tasks allowed students to engage with cultural values while developing creative competencies (Moran, 2001). When students are asked to create slogans or posters based on local traditions, they are not only practising language skills but also engaging with cultural values, beliefs, and perspectives. Such tasks allow students to explore their own cultural identity while developing creative and communicative competencies.

However, the findings also reveal a gap: while T2 successfully integrated creativity with source culture, there was limited use of target or international cultures as a basis for creative tasks. This suggests that creativity activities in the modules were predominantly confined to the learners' own cultural context, which may limit students' exposure to diverse cultural perspectives and their ability to express creativity across different cultural settings. It also may simultaneously constrain creative engagement, because cultural perspectives are less frequently represented. It limits critical engagement with cultural differences (Anggraini & Rohmah, 2024). Basically, a strong orientation to the local or source culture reflects creativity when various cultures in Indonesia are represented in an English teaching module. It exposes students contextually and imaginatively while learning the language, because of the sense of cultural identity and ownership.

Third, communication is expressed through writing about rendang and class debates, and collaboration through group discussions on cultural issues. This intentional integration reflects a more pedagogical approach to both cultural content and 21st-century skills, consistent with the recommendations of the Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21) framework. The P21 framework emphasises that communication and collaboration are essential competencies for success in the modern world, and that these skills are best developed when they are embedded in meaningful, real-world contexts. In T2's module, writing about Rendang required students to articulate cultural knowledge in a structured, analytical manner, while class debates on cultural topics demanded both oral communication and the ability to construct and defend arguments. Similarly, group discussions on cultural issues fostered collaboration by requiring students to work together, share ideas, and negotiate meaning (Sabillawati & Putra, 2023). This integration of communication with cultural content in these activities aligns with the principles of task-based

language teaching (Nunan, 2004) and intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 2020). When students write about Rendang as a representation of Minang values, they are not only practising language skills but also engaging with cultural perspectives and learning to express cultural meaning in English. This dual focus on language and culture reflects the interconnected nature of communicative competence and intercultural understanding. However, T2 also acknowledged challenges, including the difficulty of finding debatable local topics and the tendency to focus on grammar and text structure over 4Cs integration. This suggests that even when teachers have a clear vision for integration, practical constraints such as curriculum demands, time limitations, and the availability of suitable materials can hinder implementation. This finding is consistent with research on the challenges of implementing 21st-century skills in language teaching and the need for deliberate instructional steps to ensure integration (Juhana et al., 2025)

Fourth, collaboration is expressed through group discussions on cultural issues, where students were required to work together, share ideas, and negotiate meaning. This process aligns with sociocultural theory, which positions learning as fundamentally social and dialogic in nature. Walsh & Li (2016) argue that classroom talk and interaction from a sociocultural perspective, where language acts as a mediating tool and learning is enhanced through co-construction. In the present study, group discussions on cultural issues provided students with opportunities to engage in such collaborative dialogue, moving beyond individual learning toward shared understanding. Furthermore, the collaborative nature of group discussions aligns with the principles of cooperative learning, where positive interdependence and individual accountability enhance motivation and academic achievement (Tamah, 2014). When students work together to discuss cultural topics such as local traditions or social issues, they are not only practicing language skills but also developing intercultural awareness through shared inquiry. The cultural context provides a meaningful and authentic purpose for collaboration, as students must negotiate different perspectives, respect diverse viewpoints, and co-construct understanding of culturally situated issues. This process reflects the principles of cooperative learning, where positive interdependence is emphasized, such as relying on each other to complete the task. Moreover, it enhances individual accountability, with each student contributing to the group's shared goal to enhance both motivation and learning outcomes. In the context of cultural discussions, collaboration becomes particularly meaningful when students are required to engage with culturally diverse perspectives. Positive interdependence is fostered when group members must rely on each other's cultural knowledge and insights to complete the task, creating a shared purpose that transcends individual effort. Individual accountability is reinforced when each student is expected to contribute unique cultural perspectives or arguments, ensuring that all members actively participate in the collaborative process.

While previous studies have examined cultural representation or 4C skills separately, few have explored their integration in EFL teaching modules. This study addresses that gap by demonstrating that the presence of cultural content does not automatically lead to meaningful pedagogical integration with 4C skills. While both teachers incorporated cultural content, only T2 deliberately linked it to 4C skills, whereas T1 treated cultural content separately from skill development. This distinction extends previous research by showing that cultural representation and 4C integration require intentional design and pedagogical awareness. This has important implications for teacher training and module development, suggesting that teachers need support not only in selecting cultural content but also in designing activities that integrate it with 4C skills.

6. Conclusion

This study examined the types of cultural representation present in EFL teaching modules and the integration of these representations with 21st-century skills (4Cs) in two teachers' modules at an Indonesian senior high school. In answer to RQ1, the analysis revealed that source culture (Indonesian culture) dominated both teachers' teaching modules, appearing in every meeting primarily through routine classroom practices such as student-led prayer, the Adiwiyata program, and local environmental issues. Target culture appeared only in T2's modules through references to Western media, while international culture was also present only in T2's modules. Cultural representation was primarily manifested through Practices (PRC) and Sociological Sense (SOC), while Persons (PER), Aesthetic Sense (AES), and Semantic Sense (SEM) were entirely absent from both modules. Additionally, in answer to RQ2, the integration of cultural representation with 4C skills varied considerably between the two teachers. T1 recorded an overall alignment score of 0.11, indicating No Alignment, while T2 achieved an overall score of 1.34, indicating Moderate Alignment. T2 deliberately linked cultural content to each 4C skill, whereas T1 treated cultural content separately from skill development.

A central contribution of this study is the finding that the presence of cultural representation alone does not necessarily result in meaningful integration with 4C skills. While both teachers incorporated cultural content into their modules, only T2 deliberately linked that content to 4C skills. T1's modules contained cultural content, but it was not used as a vehicle for developing critical thinking, creativity, communication, or collaboration. This finding extends previous research by demonstrating that cultural representation and 4C integration are not automatically connected because they require intentional design and pedagogical awareness. This distinction has important implications for teacher training and module development, as it suggests that teachers need support not only in selecting cultural content but also in designing activities that integrate that content with 21st-century skills.

Theoretically, this study extends previous research by examining the intersection of cultural representation, ICC, and 4C skills in teacher-developed teaching modules, which has received limited attention. While scholarly studies have examined cultural representation in textbooks or 4C skills in isolation, few have explored how these dimensions are integrated in teacher-developed teaching modules. By demonstrating that cultural representation alone does not guarantee meaningful 4C integration, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between cultural content and 21st-century skills. Furthermore, pedagogically, this study offers a framework for evaluating the integration of cultural representation with 4C skills in teaching modules. The 0–3 integration scale and the alignment between ICC dimensions and 4C skills can be used by teachers and curriculum developers to assess and improve the quality of cultural content in EFL materials. The findings also highlight the need for professional development that supports teachers in designing activities that deliberately integrate cultural content with 4C skills, rather than treating them as separate components.

This study has several limitations. First, the sample was limited to two EFL teachers and two teaching modules from a single school (*SMAN 1 Gunung Talang*). This small sample size limits the generalizability of the findings to other teachers, schools, or contexts. Second, the study relied on teaching modules and semi-structured interviews as data sources, without classroom observation. This means that the study examined what teachers intended to do (as stated in their modules and interviews), not what they actually did in the classroom. Third, the instrument validation involved

only one expert in ELT, which is a limitation. Future research would benefit from a panel of experts to strengthen content validity. Finally, the study focused on two text types (Analytical Exposition Text and Discussion Text), which may not represent the full range of cultural content in EFL teaching modules.

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, several recommendations for future research are proposed. First, future studies should include classroom observation to examine how teachers actually implement cultural content and 4C integration in practice, rather than relying solely on teaching modules and interviews. Second, future research should involve a larger and more diverse sample of teachers and schools to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Third, future studies could examine other text types and teaching materials to provide a more comprehensive understanding of cultural representation in EFL teaching modules. Fourth, research could investigate the impact of professional development on teachers' ability to integrate cultural representation with 4C skills. Finally, future studies could explore students' perspectives on how cultural content and 4C skills are integrated in their learning experiences.

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