

# An Analysis of 'PULSE 2' Cultural Content and How Malaysian ESL Teachers Perceive IT

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## Abstract

Imported English textbooks were introduced to Malaysian schools in line with Malaysia's new CEFR-aligned English language curriculum. One of the books is PULSE 2, in which concern about its foreign cultural content has been widely discussed. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the cultural categories displayed in the PULSE 2 textbook for Form 1 syllabus, investigate how foreign cultures and topics are introduced to the students, and identify the perception of Form 1 teachers of the textbook, specifically on its foreign cultural contents. This study employed mixed-method research. The first phase of the data collection involved quantitative analysis using a questionnaire administered to 30 Form 1 ESL teachers. The qualitative data were collected through content analysis and semi-structured interviews with Form 1 teachers from schools in Perak, Malaysia. The PULSE 2 textbook is culturally rich, especially with UK-centric contents. There is also an imbalance portrayal of cultural categories, and no reference is made to the Malaysian context in the book. Designing personal materials, comparing target and local cultures, and using resources such as visuals and web-based learning are the most common pedagogical methods used by Form 1 teachers in using this textbook with their students. Although the teachers positively perceived the textbook, they disclosed a mixed perception of its foreign cultural content. Despite this, PULSE 2 can still be exploited to benefit students.

**Keywords:** CEFR, Culture, PULSE 2, Textbook Analysis, Teachers' Perception

## Introduction

The bold decision to utilize foreign textbooks in Malaysian schools received mixed views from the stakeholders (Nazari & Aziz, 2020; Shak et al., 2021a). One concern is that the cultural content in the imported textbooks, PULSE 2 in the case of this study, is deemed as limited relevance to Malaysian students (Shak et al., 2021b). Since studies related to the cultural content of the PULSE 2 textbooks are still subjected to rigorous research in Malaysia, the present research is conducted to analyze the cultural categories presented in the textbook

for the Form 1 syllabus. It also investigates how the PULSE 2 English language textbook introduces foreign cultures and topics to Form 1 students. Finally, to explore the Form 1 ESL teachers' perceptions of the PULSE 2 English language textbook, specifically on its foreign cultural content and topics.

Concerns about using the PULSE 2 textbook include the textbook's high lexical richness, high price points, and a lack of congruence between international and local materials. According to Shak et al (2021a), the lexis in the textbook is excessively complex and relatively high for Malaysian pupils, particularly those from rural areas. Various research also emphasizes this issue (Johar & Aziz, 2019; Goh & Aziz, 2020). In addition, multiple academicians, non-governmental agencies, and politicians have highlighted the exorbitant price point of the PULSE 2 textbook of RM38.00 per copy. For example, Zairil Khir Johari, the state assemblyman of Tanjong Bunga and the Democratic Action Party Penang Vice-Chairman, mentioned that the price point of the textbook is five times more compared with the textbooks by local authors (The Star Online, 2018). Another point of contention highlighted is the alignment or lack of alignment of the PULSE 2 textbook content with the local content, particularly with the objectives of Malaysia's language programs and English curriculum (Shak et al., 2021b). Zairil also mentioned that the PULSE 2 textbook has "zero local content" while being enriched with an extremely strong British context (Chow, 2017). Finally, the use of the PULSE 2 Textbook has brought into question the credibility of local authors in producing textbooks that are on par with international-level textbooks (Nazari & Aziz, 2020). Local textbooks provide students and teachers with digital audio, visual materials, and supplementary materials via CDs or online applications to facilitate learning. Even though the PULSE 2 textbook has references to online or digital content inside the textbooks, students and teachers were not given access to any of these materials.

### **Concerns about the cultural context in PULSE 2**

Another primary concern highlighted is the cultural content of the PULSE 2 Textbook. The lack of local content and focus on English-speaking countries' cultures undermines students' sense of belonging as Malaysians (James & Aziz, 2020). Besides, Sabbiri (2017) also stated that imported EL textbook, in this case, the PULSE 2 textbook, is perceived to be irrelevant to local students in terms of content because of the imbalanced and mismatched cultural aspects. A study by Rahim and Daghigh (2019) revealed that the PULSE 2 textbook offers zero content related to Malaysian culture. Similar findings were reported by Johar and Aziz (2019), whereby they concluded the proportion of cultural content in the PULSE 2 textbook to be unequal. Furthermore, they argued a potential threat of using imported textbooks encouraging vast global exposure since the context differs totally from the locally produced one. It is also pointed out that students from rural areas will acquire the language in a familiar context better than in an unfamiliar context.

On the contrary, the secretary-general of the National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP) stated that foreign content (in textbooks) could be meaningful for students to explain other cultures and thus, urge them to do more reading (The Star Online, 2018). Dr. Surinderpal Kaur, the Deputy Dean of postgraduate studies at the University Malaya Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, also assures that it is acceptable to have dynamic content in the textbook. Still, only having a mixture of Malaysian cultural content and "a little bit of

everything else" of the world, global culture, and identity would make an English textbook valuable (The Star Online, 2018).

The cultural representation in the PULSE 2 textbook presents difficulties and challenges for students and teachers. Sabbiri (2017) backed this up by stating that students, particularly those from rural to suburban backgrounds, struggle to relate to the textbook due to a lack of prior understanding regarding the foreign cultural subject. Additionally, Nazari and Aziz (2020) stated that this issue creates hurdles for teachers as they struggle to connect linguistic and cultural information to their student's lives.

Because of the concerns about the cultural context in PULSE 2, and in the spirit of offering suggestions on how it is best for secondary ESL teachers to tackle this content with their students while minimizing potential unfavorable impacts of such content, this study aims to analyze the cultural categories in the PULSE 2 textbook. This study focuses on the cultural categories presented in PULSE 2 and the challenges ESL teachers face while teaching the target culture in the Malaysian context. Additionally, this study examines the tactics employed by ESL teachers to make cultural content more meaningful to their Form 1 students. Thus, this study intends to answer these research questions:

1. What cultural categories are presented in the PULSE 2 textbook for the Form 1 syllabus?
2. How are the teachers introducing foreign cultures or topics from the PULSE 2 English language textbook to Form 1 students?
3. What are the perceptions of Form 1 ESL teachers on the PULSE 2 English language textbook, specifically on the foreign cultural content?

### **Literature Review**

The studies related to the PULSE 2 textbook in Malaysia are still in the initial stage, as the textbook was only introduced in 2018. Hence, it is inevitable to receive criticism when a change is introduced. However, the backlash is swift in implementing the PULSE 2 textbook in the Malaysian education system (Shak et al., 2021b).

A few studies were conducted based on teachers' and students' perceptions of PULSE 2 in the secondary syllabus as they are the pertinent users of the current textbook. For instance, Shak et al (2021a); Johar and Azlina (2019) explored teachers' general perception of PULSE 2 in teaching and learning English in Malaysian schools. At the same time, Goh and Aziz (2020) attempted to explore the secondary school teachers' perception of the speaking activities in PULSE 2. On the other hand, James and Aziz [8] examined the students' perceptions and expectancies of the cultural elements in PULSE 2.

In addition, Nazari and Aziz (2020) analyzed PULSE 2 in terms of its generic structure and cultural representation in the reading texts. The study tried to determine which cultural genre is more dominant, which type of culture is portrayed, and how cultures are represented in the textbook. Meanwhile, Shak et al. [3] addressed the issues and concerns of using imported CEFR-aligned textbooks in Malaysian schools, including the PULSE 2 textbook.

Most of the studies cited employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative research designs in terms of methodology. Shak et al (2021a); Johar and Aziz (2019) collected responses from teachers via a semi-structured interview. The data was evaluated and interpreted thematically to ascertain teachers' perceptions. Additionally, Nazari and Aziz

(2020) used a qualitative research approach in which textual analysis was conducted utilizing Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software. On the other hand, Goh and Aziz (2020) and James and Aziz (2020) used a quantitative study design using a questionnaire. Their data was examined using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software. Given that both research designs have been utilized previously to examine PULSE 2, the current study takes a mixed-methods approach to elicit thorough and contextualized findings (Creswell, 2014).

Overall, the findings of the studies address the pros and cons of the PULSE 2 textbook in the Malaysian syllabus. On the positive side, Goh and Aziz (2020) discovered that the speaking activities in the textbook were practical in teaching speaking skills. They were also easy to use for speaking assessments. Besides, the textbook was proven to help the local teachers administrate speaking lessons despite being authored by a foreigner. Nevertheless, the emerging issue from the other previous studies is prominently focused on the imbalance of cultural content in the textbook. Shak et al (2021a) revealed that the respondents preferred to use imported English textbooks with local modifications in their teaching as the foreign cultural content is somewhat challenging to be explained. James and Aziz (2020) exposed that the students were concerned about the absence of the source/local and international culture other than the textbook's Western or White People culture. These students also believed that Malaysian culture is not emphasized, although many different cultures are presented in PULSE 2. This matter is also supported by Nazari and Aziz (2020), who insisted that the proportion of source culture, target culture, and international culture are treated unequally. Earlier, it was also reported that PULSE 2 offers zero content related to Malaysian culture (Rahim & Daghigh, 2019)

Hence, it is clear from the findings above that the instant replacement of local English textbooks with new imported CEFR-aligned foreign textbooks has provoked numerous individuals and stakeholders to come out against the decision. Nevertheless, there is a scarcity of literature investigating the PULSE 2 EL textbook's content to shed light on the linguistic and cultural categories portrayed in this textbook. After reviewing the literature on imported English language textbooks in Malaysia, it was determined that there are limited studies that have analyzed the cultural content in PULSE 2, particularly on the Form 1 syllabus. Most of the studies addressed the cultural issues in general, were done solely on perceptions and offered limited practical solutions.

Thus, to fill these gaps, the present study did not only address the issue of cultural differences in PULSE 2; it also offers an empirical-based analysis of the foreign cultural categories presented in the PULSE 2 textbook for Form 1 students. The content for Form 1 students was selected because they serve as the foundation for the rollout of PULSE 2 in secondary education in Malaysia. It also aimed to discover how the teachers have introduced the foreign culture contents and topics from PULSE 2 to Form 1 student while exploring the teachers' perception of its foreign culture content.

## **Methods**

This research employed both quantitative and qualitative research designs. In the quantitative stage of the study, the data was collected using the survey method through a questionnaire. The questionnaire was used to explore the perceptions of 30 Form 1 ESL teachers in Perak, Malaysia, on the PULSE 2 textbook, specifically on its foreign cultural

content. The questionnaire was adapted from Mukundan and Kalajahi (2013), who evaluated Malaysian English language teaching textbooks, and Johar and Aziz (2019), who investigated the teachers' perception of using the PULSE 2 textbook in Malaysia. Two Associate Professors first vetted it at a university to maintain a good level of content and construct validity (Creswell, 2015). It relies on a 4-point Likert-Scale, namely "strongly disagree", "disagree", "agree", and "strongly agree". Lobsy (2012) suggested that this ordered scale was chosen to enable the respondents (Form 1 ESL teachers) to select one option that best aligns with their perceptions on the overall presentation PULSE 2. The questionnaire is divided into Part A (respondent's profile) and Part B (cultural content). There are 11 questions altogether in Part B of the questionnaire. It was then analyzed by using the SPSS descriptive statistics analysis.

Meanwhile, in the qualitative stage of the study, the data was collected through content analysis and semi-structured interview sessions. In completing the content analysis part of the study, the researchers employed the criteria on intercultural learning and teaching principles formed by Byram et al. (1994) and Risager (1991). They proposed eleven criteria for analyzing and evaluating cultural learning content in textbooks, and these criteria are a minimal level of cultural understanding that should be included in textbooks. These criteria are:

1. Social identity and social groups
  - Groups within the nation-state include social class, regional identity, ethnic minority, and professional identity.
2. Social interaction
  - Conventions of verbal and non-verbal behavior in social interaction: situations of exchange, interaction and the subjectivity of characters: feelings, attitude, values and perceived problems.
3. Belief and behavior
  - Routine and taken-for-granted actions within a social group (national or sub-national). The moral and religious beliefs and the routines of daily life belong to this criterion.
4. Socio-political institutions
  - Institutions of the state (e.g., health care) and their meanings and values. How do they characterize the state and its citizens?
5. Socialization and the life-cycle
  - Institutions of socialization, e.g., families, schools, employment offices, and military service. What are the expectations and shared interpretations in these cases?
6. National History
  - Periods and events, both historical and contemporary. What is their significance in the material and for the learning process?
7. National Geography
  - Geographic factors and characters. Which are significant for the cultural members and essential for outsiders in intercultural communication?
8. National cultural heritage
  - The nation members know the cultural artifacts, such as Shakespeare in Britain.
9. Stereotypes and national identity
  - What is typical for the target culture (both historical and contemporary)? Symbols of national identities, e.g., famous monuments and people.

10. International and intercultural issues

- Comparisons between the target culture and the pupil's country, mutual representation, image relations, cultural power and dominance, cooperation, and conflict.

11. Point of view and style of the textbook author (s)

- Expressions of attitudes (positive, negative, critical) towards the country and the people.

These criteria were then used to analyze the first six units of PULSE 2, including its Starter Unit, since these units are covered in the Form 1 syllabus as suggested by the English Language Secondary Scheme of Work for Form 1 published by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE).

Michele Crawford wrote the PULSE 2 textbook in 2014 under the publication of Macmillan Publishers Limited. The book was later made into special students' edition and first published in Malaysia in 2017 by the Kumpulan Desa Fikir Sdn. Bhd for the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE). The students' book includes a six-page Starter Unit, nine ten-page units, three Collaborative Projects, and an external exam trainer focusing on listening and speaking tasks. Each unit contains sections integrating four language skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Grammar and vocabulary are also portrayed explicitly based on the themes per chapter. This book is also supplemented with cultural awareness reading texts emphasizing life in different English-speaking countries. Each grammar exercise includes a Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) focus, covering various subjects.

As previously mentioned, only six units were investigated in the current study because these units are incorporated into the curriculum of Form 1. It should be highlighted that these Form 1 units are the pioneer in implementing the CEFR at the secondary level in Malaysian schools. It is also believed that these six units can reveal cultural harmony or disharmony in a foreign textbook by detailing the cultural categories of each unit.

Five Form 1 ESL teachers from different schools in Perak were interviewed for semi-structured interviews to discover how the foreign culture or topics from PULSE 2 were introduced to their Form 1 students. Purposive and convenience sampling were used in selecting these respondents. They should have used the PULSE 2 textbook for at least two years, and they should have been teaching in secondary schools for a minimum of five years.

The interview questions were prepared considering past research by Johar and Aziz (2019); James and Aziz (2020). They examined instructors' and students' impressions of PULSE 2 and its cultural components. Two associate professors then validated the interview questions to ensure their content and construct validity (Creswell, 2015). What follows are the questions for the interview session:

1. What are the teaching methods used to expose the cultural elements in the PULSE 2 EL textbook to your Form 1 students?
2. How do you avoid stereotypes in teaching the PULSE 2 EL textbook, which could account for prejudices about foreign cultures to your Form 1 students?

3. How do you mainly teach the 'cultural awareness' section in each PULSE 2 EL textbook unit to your Form 1 students?
4. What supplementary materials do you use with the PULSE 2 EL textbook when teaching foreign culture to Form 1 students? Please indicate each type of supplementary material you have used.
5. What step-by-step procedures do you use to introduce the cultural elements in the PULSE 2 EL textbook to your Form 1 students?

The interview sessions were recorded and transcribed before they were thematically analysed with the assistance of the Atlas.ti software.

## **Results and Discussion**

### *Research Question 1:*

#### **What cultural categories are presented in the PULSE 2 English language textbook for the Form 1 syllabus?**

From the overall analysis, it is conclusive that all the eleven criteria suggested by Byram et al (1994); Risager (1991) are evident in the Form 1 syllabus of the PULSE 2 EL textbook. Thus, with all the criteria reflected in the Form 1 units, it is proven that the textbook is extensively loaded with cultural contents, especially from the UK compared to other countries. The matter is particularly illustrated through cultural categories such as 'social identity and social groups', 'socio-political institutions', 'socialization and the life cycle, and 'national cultural heritage. This matter was also demonstrated earlier by Nazari and Aziz (2020). They stated that the author attached more weight to the sociological aspect in PULSE 2 as it covers various aspects such as beliefs, values, norms, expectations, and others.

Moreover, from the criterion 'point of view and style of the textbook author (s)', it is noticeable that PULSE 2 was presented thematically. However, many UK-centric contents can be deemed as culturally biased. Several studies are in parallel with this finding. For instance, James and Aziz (2020) reported that Malaysian culture is not emphasized, although many Western cultures are presented in PULSE 2. Besides, they highlighted that the students were concerned about the textbook's absence of local/source and international culture.

This finding was also supported by Nazari and Aziz (2020), which stated that the proportion of source, target, and international cultures are treated unequally. Rahim and Daghig (2019) also found that PULSE 2 offers zero content related to Malaysian culture. Johar and Aziz (2019) agreed that the PULSE 2 textbook activities are entirely based on foreign backgrounds, especially in the UK. There is almost no reference to the Malaysian context, perhaps because a Briton authored the textbook.

From the researchers' point of view, because PULSE 2 is an international Cambridge-certified textbook designed to be used in a global context, the textbook should offer a balanced representation of cultures worldwide to promote intercultural competence among students. Alsheenqeeti (2019) seemed to agree with this. He maintained that stakeholders should understand the importance of balancing cultural information in an international textbook because it helps develop English language skills in a multicultural context. Besides, Goh and Aziz [6] also stated that a more comprehensive grasp of the language could be achieved if local content and elements were integrated into language learning.

Even though some cultural categories are seen in most units, there is an imbalanced number of activities between units in PULSE 2. Hence, the most discussed criterion is 'national geography', with 13 activities and examples in the textbook. This criterion explains the geographic factors and characters portrayed in textbooks from different parts of the world (Lappalainen, 2011). The critical areas under this criterion are world maps and countries, natural disasters, geography and landscaping, endangered species and wildlife reserve, and space and exploration. The researchers believe that 'national geography' is portrayed the most in the textbook because it is universal and covers a wide range of topics (Rissager, 1991).

Furthermore, this category's activities aim to create global awareness and a sense of active global citizenship. Among the six units, two units, namely 'Unit 3: Wild Weather' and 'Unit 4: Life on Earth, carry the theme of health and environment, as underlined in the English Language Secondary Scheme of Work for Form 1 published by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE). Henceforth, most of the materials in the units are designed to adhere to the respective theme, which is allied with the author's style.

On the contrary, the least discussed cultural category in the Form 1 chapters of PULSE 2 is stereotypes and national identity. This criterion is only presented in four activities and examples in the textbook. It portrays typical issues for a target culture in historical and contemporary contexts (Holmes, 2008). The areas reviewed under this criterion are language style, especially in English culture, stereotypes of people, and famous touristic spots. Since the stereotypical aspects are present in the textbook, Clarke and Clarke (1990) argued that British EFL materials are primarily prone to stereotypes and biases on gender, race, class, and religion. They also added that this could be harmful because cross-cultural perspectives will be deemphasized in a pedagogy.

However, the researchers think that the textbook tries to create a sense of harmony between units by giving minimal importance to the stereotypes. This situation might happen because the textbook wants to avoid overgeneralization of beliefs and to avoid biases towards a topic. Tomlinson (2011) mentioned that textbooks should create a neutral outlook to provide a blueprint for directions and ideas on how lessons can be delivered. Nevertheless, Shak et al (2021b) disagreed on this point. They believe cultural barriers in the PULSE 2 EL textbook can cause difficulties for students as they cannot connect the language with the targeted culture.

#### *Research Question 2:*

#### **How the foreign cultures or topics from the PULSE 2 English language textbook are introduced to Form 1 students by the ESL teachers?**

Based on the examples provided above, it is evident that the PULSE 2 EL textbook is rich with cultural content. Therefore, as Goh and Aziz (2020) stated, teachers, can only fully exploit a foreign textbook in teaching and assessing local English classes when the textbook's activities are adapted and improvised to suit the local context. This matter is also supported by Cunningsworth (1984), who mentioned that an ideal textbook does not exist, but it is the vital role of the teachers to find a possible fit between what the textbook offers to their students' needs.



Remarkably this idea was practiced by the five respondents interviewed in this study. They provided insights on how they introduced foreign cultures or topics from PULSE 2 to their Form 1 students. Besides, there is a lack of literature examining how teachers can help teach the cultural categories to the students. Hence, the common methodology shared by the teachers is to relate the target culture to their own. By doing this, students are allowed to make comparisons; identify the similarities and differences of both cultures to develop intercultural competence, thus building cultural awareness (Minoo & Hemaseh, 2013). The teachers also mutually share and design materials to cater to their students' needs. As some of the materials in the textbook are challenging for low proficiency students, some teachers choose to prepare task sheets such as simplified articles, quizzes, information transfer, and reading comprehension practices to aid their students' learning. Besides, they also practice explanation techniques to avoid stereotypes and prejudices regarding the portrayal of foreign cultures with their Form 1 students. This explanation is believed to create cultural sensitivity and a positive outlook on cultures.

Besides that, teaching resources such as visuals and web-based learning are utilized mainly by the teachers in introducing foreign cultures to their Form 1 students. The Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) has engaged in many projects to promote the comprehensive and effective use of ICT in our schools. The shift is towards a more technologically literate, thinking workforce who can perform in a global working environment by using the tools available in the ICT age (Chitravelu & Sitamparam, 2005).

Correspondingly, most teachers in this study use the internet as their primary medium to find information related to the target cultures. Besides, from the interview, young teachers with 5-to 10 years of experience utilize digital avenues such as flipped classrooms, online quizzes such as 'Quizizz', and blogging to log their students' ideas on the cultural contents. This situation could happen because young teachers are expected to face fewer challenges in terms of technical aspects when using technology in their teaching (Umar & Yusoff, 2014). Most teachers also recommended visuals such as pictures and videos to familiarize the students with new cultural elements. The photos and videos are primarily used in the beginning stage of a lesson to activate the students' schemata since visuals can be used to trigger students' interest in the subject matter (Niveen, 2011).

*Research Question 3:*

**What are the perceptions of Form 1 ESL teachers on the PULSE 2 English language textbook, specifically on the foreign cultural content?**

Table 1

*Responses to the questionnaire on teachers' perceptions of PULSE 2 cultural content***1 - Strongly Disagree; 2- Disagree; 3- Agree; 4- Strongly agree**

RESPONSE	1		2		3		4	
ITEMS	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1. The topics of the textbook are rich with different cultural contents	1	3.3	3	10.0	25	83.3	1	3.3
2. The cultural content of the textbook fits my students' age	1	3.3	13	43.3	15	50.0	1	3.3
3. The materials and activities in the textbook develop cultural awareness and understanding of the various countries	1	3.3	3	10.0	26	86.7	0	0.0
4. The materials and activities in the textbook develop cultural awareness and understanding of the culture in the United Kingdom	0	0.0	1	3.3	18	60.0	11	36.7
5. The materials and activities in the textbook increase students' awareness and appreciation of their own culture	5	16.7	13	43.3	12	40.0	0	0.0
6. The vocabulary introduced in the textbook reinforces students' understanding of foreign culture	1	3.3	5	16.7	23	76.7	1	3.3
7. The textbook develops the students' four language skills with the themes and cultural content.	0	0.0	4	13.3	25	83.3	1	3.3
8. The textbook integrates visual images that help students to understand cultural practices in the United Kingdom	0	0.0	5	16.7	21	70.0	4	13.3
9. The textbook offers opportunities for students to demonstrate an understanding of the similarities between their own and foreign cultures.	0	0.0	2	6.7	26	86.7	2	6.7
10. The textbook offers opportunities for students to demonstrate an understanding of the differences between their own and foreign cultures.	0	0.0	5	16.7	24	80.0	1	3.3
11. The materials and activities in the textbook help students understand foreign cultures.	0	0.0	2	6.7	26	86.7	2	6.7
<b>Average</b>	0.8	2.7	5.1	17.0	21.9	73.0	2.2	7.3

Table 1 shows the teachers' perception of the PULSE 2 textbook's foreign cultural content reported through the self-administered questionnaire for this study. For the first statement, 86.6% of the teachers believe that the topics in the textbook are rich with different cultural contents. This matter corresponds with the earlier findings of the content analysis of this textbook, in which it was reported that this textbook is extensively loaded with cultural content, especially from the Western culture). For the second statement, only 53.35% of the respondents agreed that the cultural content of the textbook fit their students' age.

Regarding teaching and learning by using this textbook, most respondents perceived the textbook positively regarding how the foreign cultural contents helped in teaching and learning. For instance, for the third and fourth statements, 90% and 96.7% of respondents agreed that the textbook's materials and activities develop cultural awareness of various

countries and the UK. On the other hand, 60% of the respondents disagreed that the materials and activities in the textbook increase students' awareness and appreciation of their own culture, as noted in the fifth statement.

Besides, 80% of the respondents agreed that the vocabularies introduced in the textbook reinforce students' understanding of foreign culture in the sixth statement, and 86.7% agreed that the textbook develops students' four language skills with the themes and cultural contents in the seventh statement.

Relating to the visual representations in PULSE 2, 83.3% of the respondents agreed that the textbook integrates visual images that help students understand cultural practice in the UK in the eighth statement.

Meanwhile, regarding how the textbook helps students to compare their own culture and the foreign cultural content portrayed in PULSE 2, 93.4% of the respondents agreed that PULSE 2 had offered opportunities for students to demonstrate an understanding of the similarities between their own culture and foreign culture in the ninth statement. Furthermore, 83.3% of them agreed that PULSE 2 had offered opportunities for students to demonstrate understanding of the differences between their own culture and foreign culture in the tenth statement.

Finally, 93.4% of the respondents believe that the materials and activities in PULSE 2 have helped students understand foreign cultural content better.

## **Conclusion**

It is undeniable that the PULSE2 textbook by Crawford (2017) provides a rich portrayal of culture, primarily the foreign culture from the West, as indicated by the study. The study respondents also provided positive feedback on the textbook's foreign cultural content. Even though Johar and Aziz (2019) strongly asserted that the PULSE 2 textbook is not relevant to be utilized in the Malaysian context, considering the students' lack of prior knowledge of the foreign contents and their socio-economic background, this study shows an alternative solution to this issue by discussing the differentiation and adaptation strategies of the textbook's materials done by several Form 1 teachers. These strategies can be exemplified to exploit the foreign cultural aspects of PULSE 2. These strategies will ensure that the potential of the PULSE 2 textbook can be fully optimized, thus providing continuous access to education for students, especially in the era of remote and distance learning (Shak et al., 2022).

It is believed that this study will contribute to several ways to the current discourse about using imported CEFR-aligned textbooks in Malaysia. To begin, a textbook analysis practice like this will propose practical implications for local textbook authors and teachers using these books. PULSE 2 is an international textbook for Spanish students learning English as a foreign language. Therefore, it might have compatibility issues for Malaysian students who learn English as a second language and may require adaptation, particularly regarding its cultural content to fulfill their needs.

Moreover, PULSE 2 is considered a new English textbook in Malaysia that was introduced as a part of the CEFR rollout in Malaysia. Thus, it will be interesting to investigate and analyze the textbook to ascertain its cultural categories and values, as well as how

Malaysian secondary ESL teachers can assist students in improving their ability to comprehend the textbook and its cultural content. Additionally, this study could contribute to providing ideas on how Malaysian secondary ESL teachers best approach the cultural content in PULSE 2. Not only that, but this study can provide information to policymakers; in this context, the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MoE) to streamline future English language textbook selection and development in Malaysia.

Future studies could expand the respondents to school teachers from other states in Malaysia to increase the generalizability of the results. In addition, comparisons on the cultural content of other imported CEFR-aligned textbooks used in Malaysian schools could also be made to analyze whether this cultural content issue applies only to PULSE 2 or the other imported textbooks. Not only that, but such a study could also involve Form 1 and Form 2 secondary school students in Malaysia, as they are the end-users of this textbook.

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