

A Critical Analysis of Moral Values in Vietnam-Produced EFL Textbooks for Upper Secondary Schools

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Abstract Drawing on critical language pedagogy theories, this chapter presents the results of an analysis of moral values embedded in Vietnam-produced EFL textbooks for upper secondary schools. As it is revealed that while both Vietnamese and universal moral values are presented in the textbooks, the learning activities are not adequate to engage students in reading, writing, observing, debating, role play, simulations, and the use of statistical data to develop skills in critical thinking, decision making, and problem solving. The chapter concludes with some suggestions to address this drawback if English education in Vietnam is to enable Vietnamese young generations to develop their linguistic and cognitive skills, social awareness, emotional well-being, critical thinking, and a tolerant world view in order to function competitively in the multilingual and multicultural world.

Keywords Critical language pedagogy • Global citizenship • Moral responsibility • Moral values • Vietnamese secondary schools

1 Introduction

In an unrest world in which terrorism, religious conflicts, and environmental deterioration have become global concerns, English language educators and applied linguists have extended their interests beyond language acquisition and linguistic competence to focus on moral dimensions of language education (e.g., Brown 1997; Johnston 2003; Johnston and Buzzelli 2008; Shaaban 2005). Johnston (2003) argues that English language teaching (ELT) is “profoundly a moral undertaking” (p. 18). He adds that a focus on the moral dimension of ELT can lead both to better learning and to a better world. Since the 1990s, there have been calls for second/foreign language teachers to play the role as moral agents while continuing to develop their

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students' communicative competence in the target language (Brown 1997; Crookes and Lehner 1998; Shaaban 2005; Stempelski 1993). It has been suggested that moral values can be incorporated into English-as-a-second-language (ESL) and/or English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) lessons through the use of instructional materials and resources that are useful, interesting, and attractive to the learners (Pereira 1993). However, scholars (e.g., Johnston et al. 1998, p. 164) have pointed out that the moral dimension is usually represented implicitly in ELT. Johnston (2003) acknowledges the difficult moral dilemmas with which teachers often find themselves confronted. As far as my knowledge is concerned, one of the those dilemmas lies in the fact that teachers, in many Asian contexts, have to finish the textbook according to the mandated syllabus while moral values may not be explicitly presented in the textbook. In fact, the literature on how moral values are presented in either internationally or locally produced ESL/EFL textbooks remains quite scarce. This chapter reports on the results of an analysis of the moral values in the English language textbooks written by Vietnamese authors and currently being in use in all Vietnamese upper secondary schools (Grades 10–12). The analysis was guided by critical pedagogy theories (Canagarajah 2005; Ford 2009; Norton and Toohey 2004).

2 Moral Education in ESL/EFL Classrooms from Critical Pedagogy Perspectives

In this study, I take the notion of moral values as communally accepted constraints on individual behavior regarding interpersonal relationship, materialism, the natural environment, and communal identification. These values vary from society to society. Thus, moral education (alternately labelled character or values education) is defined as “strategic teaching of basic values and principles – such as fairness, honesty, and respect for others – that would develop in learners a sense of social and personal responsibility” (Shaaban 2005, p. 201). Regarding the moral dimension of second language teaching, Johnston and Buzzelli (2008, p. 95) explicitly assert,

Like other kinds of teaching, language education is fundamentally and, some would argue, primarily moral in nature. By “moral”, we mean that it involves crucial yet difficult and ambiguous beliefs and decisions about what is right and good for learners and others. The moral dimensions of teaching inhere in certain key facts. First, all teaching aims to change people; there is an implicit assumption that this change is for the better. Second, there are limitations on the degree to which science, research, and objective facts about teaching and learning can guide teachers in the decisions they make; the great majority of teachers' work in actual classrooms has to be based on teachers' beliefs about what is right and good for their learners – that is to say, it is rooted in moral values. Third, like any relations between human beings, relations between a teacher and her students are moral in nature, resolving around key issues such as trust and respect. The innate power differential between teacher and students merely reinforces this basic fact.

Shaaban (2005) argues that the ESL classroom is an ideal environment for moral education. She argues that the pedagogical strategies used in these classrooms are excellent vehicles for promulgating these values that are widely embraced by ESL teachers and scholars.

Since language is viewed as a social practice (Fabrício 2006 cited in Pessoa and Freitas 2012, p. 757), rather than as “simply a means of expression or communication” (Norton and Toohey (2004, p. 1), language learning is a practice that constructs the ways learners understand themselves, their socio-historical surrounding and their possibility for the future. Thus, language teaching does not lend itself to a simple transmission of factual information about the world, to superficial discussion or playful activities, as is common in communicative teaching. Instead, language classrooms should be places of genuine interaction and critical awareness of moral issues (Pessoa and Freitas 2012) for students to reconstruct their moral identities. In Baladi’s (2007) words, while teaching of English and English language itself have, for a long time, been seen as clean and safe exports, as a practical means of communication carrying few ethical implications, today there is a realization that teaching and spread of English involve complex moral, social, and political implications. In a similar vein, Pennycook (1990) calls for a shift of focus in English language teaching (ELT) from the “trivialization of content and an overemphasis on communicative competence” (p. 13) to “an understanding of how language is socially constructed and how it produces change and is changed in human life” (p. 21).

Drawing on the view of language as a social practice, Kramersch (2000) raises two fundamental questions to any educational planning and instructional practices: how language in discourse both reflects and creates social structures and political ideologies and what the relation of language to social and cultural identity is. Both of these questions have a lot to do with the discourses of reading passages and the reader’s interaction with the texts they read. Hence, as students read for comprehension, they are expected to not only comprehend the linguistic forms but they grab the facts, thoughts, and moral values that come into being with their reading process as well. This perspective has a great deal in common with the critical pedagogy perspective. Ford (2009) asserts that the last few decades have seen a growing interest in critical pedagogy (CP) in both ESL and EFL contexts. In Pennycook’s (1990) words, CP can be defined as an approach to teaching and curriculum that seeks to understand and critique the historical and sociopolitical context of schooling and to develop pedagogical practices that aim not only to change the nature of schooling but the wider society. Akbari (2008) contends that CP in ELT is an attitude towards language teaching, which relates the classroom context to the wider social context and aims at social transformation through education. Canagarajah (2005) introduces CP not as a theory, but a way of doing learning and teaching or borrowing Pennycook’s (2001) terminology, it is teaching with an attitude. In Crookes and Lehner’s (1998) words, CP in English should not be seen as a merely pedagogical method as to “how to teach English,” but as a social and educational approach which is concerned about how English learning can affect personal and social change. Given the aim of the study reported in this chapter is to examine critically the moral values embedded

in Vietnam-produced English textbooks for the upper secondary school students across the country, the following definition of CP by Crookes (2013, p.8) is adopted:

Critical pedagogy is teaching for social justice, in ways that support the development of active, engaged citizens who will, as circumstances permit, critically inquire into why the lives of so many human beings, perhaps including their own, are materially, psychologically, socially, and spiritually inadequate – citizens who will be prepared to seek out solutions to the problems they define and encounter, and take action accordingly.

The above definition implies that language has both structural and functional dimensions, and is socially implicated as discourse and thus involved in the construction of individuals and the maintenance and change of societal structures. Language teaching practice and language learning materials are therefore should promote social justice.

Critical pedagogy (CP) in ELT contexts, according to Akbari (2008), is an attitude towards language teaching which relates the classroom context to the wider social context and aims at social transformation through education. From the CP perspective, teachers, including second or foreign language teachers, are not viewed as merely information banks, but rather as ‘transformative intellectuals,’ to use Giroux’s (1997) terms. Giroux elaborates that, by creating appropriate conditions, teachers enable students to become cultural producers who can rewrite their experiences and perceptions. Ryan (1986, p. 228) claims that teachers should “help children become ethically mature adults, capable of moral thought and action when facing issues such as drug abuse, indiscriminate shootings, and domestic, regional, and global conflicts.” Teaching English as a global language for intercultural appreciation and intercultural communication lends itself to the development of learners’ understanding of their own values and others’ values, which is at the heart of moral education. Adopting critical pedagogy perspectives, different authors have focused on the development of post-method pedagogies (Kumaravadivelu 2006), teacher identity in official educational discourse (Guerrero 2010), ELT and neoliberalism (Block et al. 2012), and the contents and use of published teaching materials (Gray 2013). However, as Crookes (2009) has pointed out that not much research has been undertaken on materials development from CP perspectives, and the question, “What would critical second/foreign language materials be like?” remains unanswered. This study is an attempt to promote this inquiry line.

3 EFL Textbooks and Moral Education

Shaaban (2005) argues that “The ESL/EFL classroom is a natural place for instruction in moral education as the English language education discipline lends itself rather well to the dynamics of moral values” (p. 204). Considering textbooks as the core resources in language learning programmes (Richards 2010), Norton and Toohey (2004) emphasise the need not only to create instructional materials,

“but also to broaden the range of what are considered appropriate materials” (p. 12) from the critical pedagogy perspective. Thus, a critical analysis of the moral values presented in the ELT textbooks could inform local materials developers and classroom teachers of how to develop ELT materials that can help learners to construct and reconstruct their moral identities as agents of transformation in their own society.

Regarding the function of textbooks in the field of ELT, Cortazzi and Jin (1999) claim that a textbook potentially functions as a teacher, a map, a resource, a trainer, an authority, a de-skinner, and an ideology. From a critical theory perspective, textbooks are the major ideological transmitter for conveying dominant beliefs and values of the society (Apple 1992). As an ideology, a textbook reflects a worldview of a cultural system of which moral values are a sub-system. In this sense, textbooks play a pivotal role in the success of language education’s socially transformative agenda. Rinvolucri (1999) has been bitterly opposed to the content of EFL textbooks where the EFL world stays away from the dark side of the life with no mention of death, poverty, or war. Canagarajah (1999) demonstrates such a lack of appropriateness in this way: “The Tamil students sit listening to the teacher reads about the life of a middle-class British university student, while Government helicopters fly above searching for Tamil tigers. The textbooks could not move detached from the students' lives” (p. 10). Smith (2007) argues that people in foreign language textbooks “do not suffer, do not die, do not face difficult moral choices, do not mourn or lament, do not experience or protest injustice, do not pray or worship, do not believe anything particularly significant, do not sacrifice, do not hope or doubt” (p. 39). Osborn (2006) calls this drawback of the textbook “curricular bankruptcy” (p.16). Recently, Baurain (2011) analyzed the listening texts and listening tasks and pointed out that “listening is rarely a matter only of linguistic skills, proficiencies, performances, outcomes, or products. There are moral and relational dimensions which must be included and addressed” (p.175).

Despite the call for need to create and adapt “materials for critical pedagogies” (Norton and Toohey 2004, p. 1), there has been very little literature and empirical research on language textbooks from the critical pedagogy perspective (Crookes 2009; Rashidi and Safari 2011). Rashidi and Safari (2011) present an eleven-principle framework for language materials development, but there is not any framework for language evaluation based on critical pedagogy theories. Viewing the role of textbooks from a critical pedagogy perspective, Shor (1992, p. 35) write,

As long as existing knowledge is not presented as facts and doctrines to be absorbed without question, as long as existing bodies of knowledge are critiqued and balanced from a multicultural perspective, and as long as the students’ own themes and idioms are valued along with standard usage, existing canons are part of critical education.

Taking Shor’s view into consideration, standard content textbook materials should be subject to problematizing and critique though they can be used in the classroom. As the study reported in this chapter is designed to use critical pedagogy theories to examining the moral values presented in a Vietnam-produced set of EFL textbooks for high school students from critical pedagogy perspectives, Shor’s

above-quoted view is used to guide the study. The study is to seek answers to the following research questions:

1. What moral values are represented in the nationally developed English language textbooks for Vietnamese upper secondary school students of Grades 10–12, and to what extent?
2. Is the treatment of moral values in those textbooks adequate to develop students' critical thinking so that they can perceive of moral issues from their life situation, and then reflect and act on them?

4 Moral Values in Vietnamese Educational Discourse

Historically, Vietnamese education philosophy is influenced by Chinese philosophies of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, the French Catholic philosophies, and the Soviet Marxist philosophy. The Vietnamese traditional values, which are still prevalent today, place the teaching profession at a high social status and expect teachers to be moral citizens and role models to the students. Teachers are expected to develop their students' intellectual skills and good morality (Canh 2011).

According to Rydström (2001), “Vietnamese educational discourses hold that a child's body is a passive textual surface on which moral values should be inscribed by teachers and senior kin, who are expected to guarantee a child's successful ‘socialization’” (p. 395). ‘Morality,’ in the Vietnamese context, is understood broadly as the practice, manners or conduct of human beings in relation to each other. Moral education is thus concerned with standards of behavior justified by people as right and proper and is to be conducted willingly without the interference of law. Moral education has always been emphasized as one educational goal, even the most important goal. It is evidenced in the precept “First Morality then Knowledge’ (*Tiên học lễ hậu học văn*), which can be seen on the front of most schools nationwide.

The most basic traditional Vietnamese moral values include family values, ancestral worship, respect for the elder and the superior and self-denial for the inferior’ (*kính trên nhường dưới*), tolerance, harmony (*hòa thuận*), honor and reputation, diligence, and love for nature. It is no exaggeration to state that the family is an important part of Vietnamese culture. However, in the traditional Vietnamese society, the family unit is an extended family –grandparents, parents, nieces, and nephews – all living together. Born into such a culture, Vietnamese children first become socialized into their parents' culture primarily through the medium of language (i.e. Vietnamese), and in doing so, they also acquire the view of the world and moral values specific to that society. Very recently, Pham Hong Tung (2011) reported the findings from a survey on major characteristics and tendencies in Vietnamese youth's lifestyle that the family relationship was the moral value that was most acknowledged while selfishness, ignorance, carelessness, lack of responsibility, and enthusiasm were least acknowledged by the participants. However, there have been strong criticisms against the current pragmatism in Vietnamese education, which overemphasizes knowledge memorization and examination performance at the

expense of moral education. Consequently, school violence and crimes are increasing at an alarming rate. In addition to that the transnational cultural flow under the influence of globalization and the uncritical import of western educational ideologies are contributors to the reshaping of Vietnamese cultural values. As Burr (2006, p. 25) has observed,

Vietnam has historically experienced a hard battle with outsiders intent on reshaping and taking over its territory...Contemporary Vietnam is being invaded in a more subtle but nevertheless nefarious manner, this time by cultural hijackers intent on, among other objectives, introducing children in the region to a new set of values and expectations, without necessarily first doing the groundwork to find out why they follow their current lifestyles.

In such a situation, it is timely to discuss how moral values can be integrated into English language education from a critical pedagogy perspective.

5 English Language Education in Vietnam

Vietnam is currently undergoing a metamorphosis from a relatively closed society with a centrally planned economy, to a rapidly urbanizing one with a global outlook. English language teaching in the country has passed through a host of ups and downs and has experienced extreme courses from being almost downplayed to the status of the dominant foreign language to be taught and learned. As a language of global communication, English has been prescribed as “a compulsory subject” taught from Grade 3 to Grade 12 (the last year of the secondary education programme). In Vietnam, and perhaps in many other Asian countries, English has been viewed as being “instrumental to the Vietnamese young generation’s further study and employability “in a globalized and multicultural and multilingual environment” (Government of Vietnam 2008, p.1). Towards that goal, a new syllabus and a series of new textbooks have been developed for the teaching and learning of English within the national general education system (Ministry of Education and Training 2015). The new syllabus is guided by the proficiency levels defined in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* or the CEFR for short (Council of Europe 2001). Students are mandated to achieve B2 level on the CEFR after Grade 12.

The basic structure of a textbook unit usually begins with a dialogue with at least one illustration followed by comprehension exercises. There then follows a forms-focused section focusing on vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. Next are skills sections covering separately four macro-skills, namely reading, speaking, listening, and writing. After this are *Communication and Culture* and *Project* sections, providing students with additional topic-related information and some practice following the question-and-answer format.

While moral education is not explicitly articulated in the syllabus document, it is implied in the last aim. However, moral education seems to be narrowly defined and somehow limited to the nationalist paradigm rather than attempting to link the local, the national and the global for the development of the students’ sense of cosmopolitan citizenship. Shaaban (2005) suggests that the incorporation of moral values in

ESL/EFL classrooms can be completed first by raising the students' awareness of the values, attitudes, and standards of appropriate behavior prevailing in their immediate social environment, then by developing their capacity to critically judge those values.

6 The Study

A case study method (Duff 2008) along with descriptive content analysis is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the topic under investigation. As a qualitative research practice, the case study method raises a question about something that perplexes and challenges the mind (Merriam 1998, p. 57). In this research, the case is decided to be three course books: TIENG ANH [English] 10, TIENG ANH 11, and TIENG ANH 12 (Ministry of Education and Training 2015), which represent a 'single unit' or 'bounded system' (Duff 2008). Each book consists of ten units and four Review Lessons to be delivered within 32 weeks (4 hours per week). They are all written by Vietnamese authors, printed in Vietnam and prescribed as the core textbooks by Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training. As Creswell (Creswell 1998, p. 65) points out, data collection in a case study involves using multiple sources as in this study; it included the pages of the coursebooks studied to capture the moral values as well as learning activities that help to develop students' moral awareness presented in the course books.

Since the thematic content makes textbooks cultural artifacts (Apple 1992), a content analysis approach (Krippendorff 2008) is more appropriate to the purpose of examining the cultural values they carry. Therefore, this method was adopted for this study. According to Weber (1990), "content analysis is a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text" (p. 9). However, while content analysis can help to examine texts as carriers of cultural information, the approach fails to provide information about how textbooks potentially engage learners in the process of moral meaning making. In order to address this limitation, I also looked at the learning tasks to explore the moral potential that the examined textbooks can engender through learning activities. Therefore, content in this study is understood both as the texts and the accompanying learning tasks in the textbooks.

Although critical analysis has been employed by a number of researchers in examining the ideology embedded in ELT textbooks (e.g., Giaschi 2000; Taki 2008), textbook content analysis is still an under-researched field and lacks a clearly established methodology (Nicholls 2002). Pingel (2010) described two approaches to starting an analysis: either by setting a number of categories that will be followed throughout the textbooks or by reading the textbook first and at the same time deriving a list of categories that seem most prominent or salient. In this study, selecting our criteria for the analysis of the studies, we used the second approach was adopted. First, I read through all the course books under investigation without drawing upon any predetermined categories to see the whole picture of moral values in the

textbooks. Then, I read them again and created a list of moral values that were embedded in the examined course books and created a matrix of those values.

The process of data analysis first began with the content or message of the text. Then, the learning activities were examined and analyzed in terms of their possibility to engage learners with the texts to socially construct the moral meaning. The findings were discussed in light of the critical language pedagogy theory, which emphasizes that language is not just as a means for communication rather it is “a practice that constructs, and is constructed by the ways language learners understand themselves, their social surroundings, their histories, and their possibilities for the future” (Norton and Toohey 2004, p. 1).

As a supplementary method to the content analysis and learning activity analysis, I conducted short interviews with four upper secondary school teachers who had experience in using the course books via email. The purpose of the interviews was to elicit teachers’ views on the moral dimension of English language teaching as well as their opinions of the coverage of moral values in the course books.

7 Findings

7.1 Moral Content

It is claimed in the syllabus that a theme-based approach was adopted for the arrangement of the input for the textbooks (Ministry of Education and Training 2015). Two major themes, *Our Lives and Our Society*, represented in five topics were selected to provide the context in which four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and linguistic input (vocabulary, phonology, syntax) as well as cultural values are practiced. It is stated in the syllabus that the following themes are covered in all the three course books:

- Family
- Social Relationship
- Cultural Identity
- Environmental Issues
- Civic Education

All themes and topics are expanded throughout grades (10–12) but dealt with from different perspectives and at different levels of cognitive complexities to cater for the students’ intellectual and cognitive development.

The results of the content analysis show that quite limited moral values are covered in the three examined course books, and those moral values are largely embedded in the reading texts (see Table 1).

As shown in Table 1, topics in the reading texts cover a limited number of moral values: family values, gender equality, empathy with the disadvantaged, living in harmony with the nature, and respect for cultural diversity. These are not only Vietnamese traditional values, but also universal values.

Table 1 Moral Values in Textbooks

Grade/ unit	Examples drawn from texts	Implied moral values
10/1	<i>In many cultures, doing housework is considered a woman's duty. The mother is usually the homemaker, who has to do most of the household chores, while the father is the breadwinner, who is responsible for the family finances. However, it is not good for the mother when the rest of the family does not help out. When families share household chores, it is good for them as individuals and good for all the relationships within the family (reading text)</i>	Gender roles and gender equality
10/1	<p><i>... In most Singaporean families, both parents work. Very young children go to nursery schools or stay home with a child-minder when their parents are at work. Old people usually live in their own homes or a nursing home if they cannot look after themselves.</i></p> <p><i>... in most Vietnamese families, when both parents work, young children stay home and are looked after by their grandparents or great-grandparents. On the one hand, it is the duty of the young people to take care of their elderly parents. A person will be considered ungrateful if he/she does not take good care of his/her parents or grandparents.</i></p>	Family responsibilities; filial piety in different cultures
10/6	<p><i>On average, women work more than men, but they earn much less. I can give you some information. Women perform 66% of the world's work, produce 50% of the food, but earn 10% of the income and own 1% of the property.</i></p> <p><i>In families where both parents work, for example, men and women spend about equal amounts of time working, but women still have to spend more time on housework.</i></p>	Gender equality
11/1	<p><i>Throughout history, there have always been conflicts between parents and their teenage children. Here are some of the main reasons and explanations.</i></p> <p><i>No matter how old their teenage children are, most parents still treat them like small kids. As they try to help their children to discover the surrounding world, parents strongly believe they know what is best for their children. However, as children grow up, they want to be more independent, create their own opinions, and make their own decisions. They don't feel comfortable when their parents still keep treating them like little kids.</i></p>	Generation gap
11/3	<p><i>For many Americans, a parent's most important task is to teach their children to live independently. From an early age, most children get their own rooms and never sleep with their parents.</i></p> <p><i>...Many Vietnamese parents think their most important role is to protect their children and provide them with a happy and wealthy childhood. Babies often sleep with their parents, and many children do not get to sleep in their own beds until they finish primary school.</i></p>	Parental roles; respect for cultural differences.

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Grade/ unit	Examples drawn from texts	Implied moral values
11/4	<i>Children with disabilities are still treated unfairly and are offered fewer opportunities in life. However, they are part of our society and should be integrated in our communities. Better understanding of cognitive impairments and more contacts between non-disabled and disabled people will change attitudes and reduce discrimination in life.</i>	Empathy with those who are disadvantaged
12/3	<i>Nowadays we know a lot about the link between carbon dioxide (CO₂)emissions and global warming. However, we seem to be unaware of one very dangerous pollutant, soot, also called black carbon.</i> <i>... Large quantities of man-made soot enter the atmosphere every year. The effects are most damaging regionally, especially in south and East Asia, Latin America and part of Africa. In developing countries, reducing soot emissions can be achieved by replacing traditional stoves with clean, alternative fuel cookers and heaters.</i>	Environmental awareness
12/5	<i>When people move to a new culture, they may react differently. Some people feel a strong urge to keep their cultural identity, so they continue to speak their language, cooking their food, wearing their traditional clothing, and celebrating their festivals. They also insist that their children and grandchildren maintain their cultural identity. On the other hand, there are people who choose to abandon their heritage culture and assimilate into the new culture of the majority.</i> <i>Yet, there are people who integrate into the new cultural environment while keeping their own cultural identity and flexibly adjusting to the different aspects of the new culture.</i>	Preserving one’s own cultural identity; developing intercultural attitudes

7.2 Learning Activities

Regarding the learning activities promoted in the textbooks, they appear to emphasise students’ mechanical practice of the target linguistic structure, rather than the empowerment of the students by encouraging them to raise their voice about the topic in question through critical discussion. All the reading texts are followed by the same question-answer format to check the students’ comprehension of the in-text factual information only. For example, in Unit 1 (Grade 10), following the text on gender role and gender equality, students are given seven multiple-choice questions on word-meaning, four display questions that require short answers about the text. This is followed by two questions (*Do you have any problems with sharing housework?; What benefits do you get when sharing housework?*) for the students to discuss with their partner. Below are the speaking activities related to the topic ‘Cultural identity’ (Unit 5, Grade 12, p. 63):

Activity 1. Work with a partner. Discuss and decide if activities (1–4) can help people maintain their cultural identity. Match each of them with its reasons (a–d).

Activities	Reasons
1. Preserving native language	(a) Represents national identities; reflects climatic conditions
2. Wearing traditional holidays	(b) Gives big appetites and adequate nutrition; strengthens cultural ties
3. Celebrating traditional holidays	(c) Develops intellectual abilities; shapes cultural identity
4. Eating traditional food	(d) Offers a sense of being rooted in native culture; brings people together

Activity 2. Use ideas in 1 to fill each of the numbered spaces in the following conversation. Then practice it in groups of three.

- A: *What do think people should do to maintain cultural identity in the age of globalization?*
 B: *I believe they should (1).....*
 C: *That’s true. Language is a vital part of culture and critical to a person’s (2).....*
 A: *Yes, It enables people to communicate, establish links with family and community members, and acquire and value their native culture.*
 B: *I can’t agree more. It is said that people’s first language helps them (3)..... and (4).....*
 C: *That’s absolute correct. Do you have anything else to add?*

Activity 3. Have a similar conversation discussing what you should do to maintain cultural identity in the age of glovalization.

Occasionally, there are activities that require the students to think of action needed to solve a particular problem in the real life. Unfortunately, instead of telling the students to think of their own action independently, action is given to them, and all they have to do is just to match the given action with the given problem. For example, in Unit 4 (Grade 11, p. 53) in the Writing Unit, the students are expected to do this activity.

Instruction: Choose one of the following problems and write an article of 160–180 words, using the outline given. You can use the suggestions below.

Problem	Solution
Many students with visual impairments in regular schools; cannot fully participate in school activities; often left behind	Specialized materials and tools such as braille or large print books, and talking computers; Become part of study group; create atmosphere of friendliness, respect and acceptance during all activities
No pedestrian facilities for people with visual impairments in my neighbourhood	Traffic lights with audible ‘beeping’ signals Different types of ground surfaces to indicate where the road starts

When asked whether English language teachers should be concerned about moral education, all four interviewed teachers were unanimously positive. They all argued helping students to develop their moral values was part of teachers' responsibility regardless of their subject. Regarding their views on the moral values to be integrated in the English language materials, they said that both Vietnamese values and universal values were necessary to prepare the students for their future intercultural communication. They viewed such values as politeness, generosity, tolerance, honesty, and family value. One of the teachers commented,

I think universal moral values should be primarily emphasized because the students need to learn English as a global language. However, I do not mean that Vietnamese moral values are not necessary, but we shouldn't be so extremist. Vietnamese moral values are also integrated in other school subjects, for example the Moral Education subject or the Civic Education subject.

However, they all agreed that the in-use course books did not cover many moral values, and these values were not explicitly presented.

8 Discussion

The findings of the content analysis indicate that a certain number of moral values are embedded in the reading texts of the textbooks for Vietnamese high school students. These values are largely part of Vietnamese moral values system while universal moral values such as honesty, peace-loving, and cultural tolerance are also presented. It can be inferred from these results that morality was considered while the texts were selected. Although the moral values are thinly presented, they can be among the most fundamental Vietnamese and universal values. According to Shaaban (2005), it is not necessary that all topics and content used to teach in an EFL program are related to moral education.

While the coverage of the moral values was relatively comprehensive, the learning activities appear to be problematic from the critical pedagogy perspective in English language education. As revealed in the examples of learning activities presented above, the textbooks overemphasise the acquisition of linguistic knowledge such as grammar and vocabulary as well as the development of communicative competence while paying inadequate attention to the students' personal and social life (Norton and Toohey 2004; Pennycook 1990). Both the language-based and communication-based activities presented in the textbooks fail to take learners beyond the level of relatively passive acceptance of norms to the point at which they can act as reflective moral agents capable of making informed decisions and justifying the principles that guide such decisions. Rarely are there learning activities that engage students in reading, writing, observing, debating, role play, simulations, and the use of statistical data to develop skills in critical thinking, decision making, and problem solving. Put differently, most of the learning activities in the textbooks are only targeted at the exchange of messages at the expense of issues of students' voice and identity.

Mullins (1990, p. 4) recommends active learning as ideal for teaching topics like civic and moral education:

The passive transmission of facts is rejected as an inappropriate method of teaching that should be modified in favor of active approaches to learning. Students are to engage in reading, writing, observing, debating, role play, simulations, and the use of statistical data to develop skills in critical thinking, decision making, and problem solving. Cooperative and collaborative types of learning are also emphasized.

Critical approaches to ELT argue that apart from fulfilling the basic need for learners to develop enough language to transmit messages, there is little present to encourage learners (and teachers) to think critically. Nor is there sufficient consideration of why we are teaching and what society we are teaching for (Gray 2013; Pennycook 1990). This is true of the learning activities in the locally produced English textbooks for Vietnamese upper secondary schools.

To address the limitations regarding the learning activities in the Vietnam-produced English textbooks, I would suggest a critical culturally sensitive pedagogy, which “prepare[s] learners to be both global and local speakers of English and to feel at home in both international and national cultures” (Kramsch and Sullivan 1996, p. 211). Such an approach does not see critical thinking, rationality, and moral education as an automatic and natural by-product of foreign language learning. Instead, it focuses on developing students’ linguistic proficiency, critical thinking, moral education, and rationality so that language acquisition, language use and the worldviews, ideologies, and other kinds of knowledge are inculcated in activities along with language. Following this approach, textbooks should provide learning activities that “generate discussions and arguments which are essential for the development of critical thinking skills as well as positive character traits (Shaaban 2005, p. 204).” Activities of this type would enable the students to identify “language as a scene of struggle, where the world is always/already in the word” (Pennycook 1990, p. 21). In a context where the textbook’s knowledge is considered to be authoritatively valid like Vietnam, the absence of activities that encourage critical awareness in the course book is likely to lead students to accept passively their places in society rather than to take a more active role in determining their experiences and their positions within society in order to transform the society (Akbari 2008; Canagarajah 1999, 2005).

The interview data showed that teachers were aware of the moral nature of teaching (Johnston and Buzzelli 2008), and they considered moral education as part of their responsibility as educators. The question that is not answered in this study is whether or not teachers actually raised students’ critical awareness (Pessoa and Freitas 2012) in their classrooms through activities that help students to (re)construct their moral identities. However, it is speculated that the answer to that question is negative. This is because a great majority of EFL teachers in Vietnamese secondary schools find it hard to change their mindset of teaching the book rather than the students despite recent attempt by the Ministry of Education and Training to encourage teachers to adapt the mandated textbooks to their specific contexts.

Another problem of the examined course books from the critical pedagogy is that the text content largely depicts life as too beautiful, peaceful and perfect without any problems or concerns and people leading a care-free life, everyone being nice to everyone else (Osborn 2006; Smith 2007). The dark side of the life (Rinvolutri 1999) has completely been ignored. Many moral issues of the Vietnamese contemporary society such as academic misbehaviours, dishonesty, drug addiction and selfishness as well as universal moral issues such as terrorism, the gap between the rich and the poor, gender inequality and so on are absent in the textbooks. The inclusion of those themes in the coursebook would help to invoke students' critical discussion and analysis (Rashidi and Safari 2011) because they are derived from the students' real life situations, needs, and interests.

It appears that the traditional means-to-ends orientation which views language teaching and learning as instrumental with a focus solely on skills building and students' fluency in linguistic transactions (Baurain 2011) remains influential in English language education in Vietnam. Such a paradigm is neither in line with the tenets of critical pedagogy in ELT nor adequate to encompass moral dimensions inherent in language education and fails to empower learners to construct and reconstruct their moral identity (Norton and Toohey 2004) so that they can function responsibly and efficiently in a multicultural, interdependent world as defined in the blueprint for foreign language education in Vietnam in the twenty-first century (Government of Vietnam 2008).

Findings of this study also imply that despite the calls for greater attention to the moral dimensions of second language education, such calls remain basically rhetoric, and moral values have not received the attention they deserve from both textbook writers and classroom teachers.

9 Conclusion

The world in which we are living is being faced with numerous moral concerns such as terrorism, migration, ethnic nationalism, environmental deterioration, climate change, widening gap between the rich and the poor, and others. As Brigg and Bleiker (2011, p. 1) observe, "From global terrorism to local community conflicts, cultural difference is widely invoked in conflicts that beset today's world." In such a world, it would be morally wrong if English language educators and textbook writers did not recognize those problems and showed no moral responsibility to the society. This study, to the best of our knowledge, is the first attempt to explore the moral values embedded in Vietnam-produced EFL textbooks. The findings of the study show the inadequacy of both the teaching content and the learning activities in developing the learners' moral identity and global citizenship. While both Vietnamese and universal values such as basic social values and attitudes, societal duties and responsibilities, love for nature, and respect for cultural diversity are represented in the textbooks, the extent is quite limited. The textbook writers seem to avoid deliberately controversial topics such as family violence, cheating in

examination, drug addiction, unemployment, and corruption, which are great concerns in Vietnamese public discourses and the possible solution to those problems. The treatment of the presented moral values is not adequate either since the learning tasks fail to develop critical thinking skills that enable them to figure out what to believe in a variety of contexts and to construct counter arguments and alternative hypotheses.

In light of recent critical orientation in English language teaching, this chapter highlights the need to relate the classroom context to the wider social context with a focus on social transformation through language education. In this sense, textbooks should provide students with the opportunity to engage with a range of fascinating, complex, provocative, and controversial moral issues which concerns the way in which they live and the society they live in. Put differently, English language education should be re-oriented towards two major outcomes: social transformation and language skills development (Rashidi and Safari 2011). This re-orientation is to ensure that the teaching of English is to educate the future rather than to repeat the past.

Given the popularity and the pivotal role of textbooks, the role of textbooks cannot be ignored. Textbooks that can “prompt learners to confront some of the taken-for-granted cultural beliefs about the Self and the Other (Kumaravadivelu 2008, p. 189) have the potential influence to the dynamic construction of students’ moral identities and the development of their “intercultural citizenship” (Byram 2011, pp. 11–12) more than mere development of target language proficiency. Towards those goals, textbooks should include problem-posing and problem-raising activities that encourage the students to “expose their subjectivities in order to understand what is going on around the topic in focus as well as to execute actions so as to construct their personal and collective meanings around the discussions proposed in the classroom” (Pessoa and Freitas 2012, p. 756). By engaging in those activities, the students not only develop their linguistic proficiency but also broaden or change their points of view on different moral issues and moral values that help to guide them to act upon the world. However, the challenges are that both national and international publishers are very unlikely to produce ELT textbooks of critical orientations. To cope with these challenges, teachers need to be encouraged and empowered to produce their own supplementary materials of critical orientations tuned to mandated or prescribed textbooks (Crookes 2009).

Regarding the research method, the content analysis method used in this study suffers from the weaknesses of being disconnected from the context in which the textbooks are presented – the classroom – and can take no account of the learners’ and teachers’ reactions to, and adaptations/subversions of, the textbooks to truly gauge their impact. However, what is significant about this study is that it provides evidence that moral values remain thin and implicitly presented in Vietnam-generated EFL textbooks. Therefore, the study raises awareness among textbook writers and classroom teachers of the importance of morality in English language education and that the technical and instrumental perspective on English language education is no longer adequate to empower learners to develop a sense of critical consciousness of moral issues in their social milieu while improving their English

language skills. In order to have a more comprehensive picture of the issue of morality, ethnographic studies are needed to unmask teachers' and students' beliefs and practices regarding moral issues in the textbooks in particular and in English language education in general.

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