

Values Transmission through English Textbooks for Secondary School Students and its influence on their perception of the Islamic identity

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Introduction

The first World Conference on Muslim Education (Mecca 1977)
and nascence of modern Islamic schools

Characteristics of modern Islamic Schools

1. Curriculum (methods of teaching, assessment, accreditation, and in some cases the usage of English as a medium of instruction)
2. Balancing the acquisition of both revealed and Western sciences
3. Co-curricular activities
4. Market competition.

Introduction

The challenge

1. Provision of suitable text books

(Textbooks remain the main teaching material used in schools for students to gain knowledge and for society to pass its culture)

2. Usage of English as a medium of instruction

(Language text books in particular are tools to transmit values)

It is thought that Students who use imported English textbooks will not only develop their language skills, they will also - in most cases - form their views about themselves and their physical and social environments ,in most cases based on the values of the writer of the text book.

This paper is based on a research grant that was conducted by the team, and aimed at studying the values transmission through the western English textbooks and their effect on secondary Muslim students' perception about the Islamic personality and teachings at the International Islamic School Malaysia (IISM)

Research Questions

- What is the role of literary texts in transmitting values to students?
- What are the values contained in the English text-books for secondary students at the International Islamic School Malaysia?
- What is the effect of the transmitted values in the English textbooks at IISM secondary on students' understanding of the Islamic identity?

Research Method

Text-book analysis as suggested by Littlejohn (1998)

Little John framework consists of a three-stage process

- A- What aspects of materials should we examine?
- B- How can we examine materials?
- C- How can we relate the findings to our own teaching contexts?

Sample of the Study: Where?

- The International Islamic School Malaysia (IISM) was the fruit of years of study by Muslim scholars from various parts of the world who taught in the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) and thirst for a model of integrated Islamic education that could serve the children of IIUM Muslim expatriates. The idea of the School was sparked in the mid -1990s by Dato Dr Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman, then the Rector of IIUM.

- The International Islamic School opened its doors for students for the first time, in September 1998 and at this point it was located in Batu 11 Jalan Gombak. The School is thus, a testimony to the university's continuous effort in providing quality, affordable, balanced, integrated and holistic education guided by the principles of Islam.
- The International Islamic School has grown from a humble beginning of 30 students to an enrolment of approximately 1000 students today, ranging from the primary level up to A-levels

Sample of the study: Text book

The subject of the study consists of three (3) English text books with their annexed work books. These books are used at the level of Grade 7, 8, and 9. They are entitled 'Cambridge Checkpoint English Course-book' and 'Cambridge Checkpoint English Workbook'. the Cambridge University Press.

Findings of the study

Values Transmitted in the textbook

In contrast to the general themes (My World) given to the three textbooks, it was found that most of the values transmitted through those books are purely and in most cases they contradict non-Western values especially the Islamic values. These values were categorized as the following:

1. Linguistic Imperialism and Hegemony Values

The contents of the all 36 units across the three books, are to promote the English language around the world through a variety of poems, typical grammatical explanations, and novels written by prominent Western scholars and movies. Poetry was used too, mainly to develop students' interest in creative writing and to have pleasure reading. Hegemony of English values, means that everything in the world is related to English language and its countries. The image of a “superior culture” or even a beautiful culture is manifested in the narrative, texts and even the writing style such as cursive writing. For example, in unit 4, p.50 and unit 11, p.145-147 for book one for grade Seven, shows the ‘cursive’ alphabetical in a nostalgic- historical demonstration.

2. Social Values

In the three books images from the social activities presented to students vary from Western branded clothes Unit 1, p.10 of book one (1) from The United Colors of Benetton (UCOB) to Western food and eating habits, though the books talk about other types of food from around the world but the dominant style is the Western style.

3. Spiritual and religious values

The writer did not explicitly explain about religious activities of Christian but inaudibly describe ‘church’ as a peaceful and sacred place in a poem (unit 3, p.36)

Other than Christian religion, students are introduced to Chinese religious customs folklore as well as the celebrations. Students are instilled with happiness and pleasant festival of Chinese New Year. The ideology of religious belief is perpetuated too. This can be seen in the text (unit 3, p.34)

Another superstitious belief discussed in the textbook is regarding the female *Hindu goddess Taleju* which is worshipped by Hindus in Nepal region. As shown in the picture (unit 9, p.110)

4. Political and economic values

There is an emphasis on the unquestionable supremacy of the West in general and the US as a superpower in particular. It is not because of the military might only, but also because of its economic, education, culture, and surely its sciences and technological influence. These aspects were manifested in promoting the famous outfit brand such as ‘The United Colors of Benetton’. It also highlights the ways to commercialize fashion, its slogan, advertisement and the latest designs aim for both youth sexes. Capitalist symbols are used such as some names of transnational companies like IKEA, and the only currency mentioned throughout the textbook is dollar with sign of \$ (unit 3, p.40)

Conclusion

From the above analysis we can conclude that the students of the International Islamic School Malaysia, find themselves in a dilemma in absorbing these Western values and adjusting them to their religious values attained through family socialization or through studying their subjects such as Islamic education.

Recommendations

1. Using textbooks written within a foreign socio-cultural context must be dealt with vigilance.
2. Textbooks should be prepared inclusive of students' culture especially Muslim students, due to the particularity of the Islamic culture and the great emphasis it gives to the spiritual aspect in education.
3. Teachers are responsible to handle the content of their text books and be aware of all the cultural challenges students might find themselves in while using these text books.

Thank you