

# **Values Transmitted through English Textbooks and Islamic Identity perception: Reinforcement or Alienation!**

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# Introduction

- This paper aims to investigate values transmission through the English Textbooks for Secondary School Muslim Students (7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> Grades) at the International Islamic School, Malaysia (Secondary) IISMS. The selection of this school is due to its status, as one of the leading Islamic schools adopting the approach of “Integrated Curriculum”.
- Besides being one core subject in IISMS, English is also used as a medium of instruction, communication and management.
- Like any other International School using English as a medium of instruction, IISMS tries to provide better quality textbooks for marketing purposes and also to prepare its students for their International Cambridge Examinations by the end of Grade 11.

## Methodology

- An “Analysis Model” was developed based on Littlejohn’s (1998) textbook analysis model. The subject of analysis in this study is the English language textbook used at the International Islamic School Malaysia, Secondary for the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and the 9<sup>th</sup> grades for the academic year 2018-2019.
- These textbooks were written by a Native speaker for ESL students.

# Levels of Analysis

## **WHAT IS THERE?** (*objective description*)

- ▶ Statements of description
- ▶ Physical aspects of the material
- ▶ Main steps in the instructional sections

## **WHAT IS REQUIRED OF USERS?** (*subjective analysis*)

- ▶ Subdivision into constituent tasks
- ▶ An analysis of tasks: what is the learner expected to do? Who with? With what content?

## **WHAT IS IMPLIED**

- ▶ Deducing aims, principles of selection and sequence
- ▶ Deducing teacher and learner roles
- ▶ Deducing demands on learner's process competence

# Why Learning English?

- ▶ Since English has become an international language, it became necessary for people to learn it especially the ex-British colonies due to the fact that this language is widely used in communication, business, education, tourism etc. Therefore, it became highly demanded for people to master or at least be familiar with the language that can help them to survive in a globalized world and to manage their daily life affairs starting with reading sign boards while driving to reading the ingredients of merchandise to paying their bills. Thus, learning English became an indisputable necessity and an inseparable aspect of learning in schools. Apart from the formal curriculum, learning communicative English is currently in vogue. For many people it is a required skill to secure a job or to use it in ICT or for travelling. Others perceive mastering English as part of being modern.
- ▶ In schools, however, learning English is regarded a requirement for a better education and better opportunities later in life.



# Learning English and Values Transmission

- ▶ According to *Bruner (1986)*, the narrative texts are usually formed of active and serial events, emotional events or a mixture of both. Therefore, the development of any language curriculum either in the field of First, Second or Foreign language has been always questioned, in terms of its significance, purposes and efficacy.
- ▶ The relationship between language and culture is evident. Many believe that it is quite impossible to master a language without indulging in its culture. Hence, textbooks used for teaching languages are commonly used as cultural vessels where all that the Western human being learns to do, to use, to produce, to know and to believe are embedded.



# Islamic Identity

- Many perceive identity as a set of traits an individual usually refers to for identifying the self, or “the qualities of a person or group that make them different from others”. Buckingham, (2008)
- Although some think that the Islamic identity is perceived as abstractive and the meaning designed to it by Muslim theorists and scholars is delusionally utopian and romantic (Al- Azmeh, 1990), others explain the Islamic identity as an ethical identification for all the adherents of the Islamic faith. Its realization takes the form of being faithful towards God by submitting oneself to Him, in his or her own way. Mehmet, (1990). In addition to living according to the Islamic world view.






# **Textbook Analysis**



# General Organization of the Textbooks

- The Secondary Cambridge Checkpoint English textbook for the seventh, eighth, and ninth graders are organized systematically based on themes and units, with a wide range of ideas/topics about getting to know the physical and the social environment of the student.
- For this objective, the theme '*My world*' was allocated for the seventh grade, '*Wider world*' for the eighth grade and '*A World view*' for the ninth grade.
- Each textbook consists of 12 units with 12 different themes, however all the themes are related to the main theme of the textbook in question. The three textbooks are organized in the same standardized format whereby each unit starts with an 'introduction' to prepare students for what they will learn in the unit. Units' passages form the bulky literary texts, reinforced by 'Key points' to provide further explanation and information. Students' learning activities are also clearly stated.

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- 'Tips boxes' are attached in each unit in order to guide students with specific extra information on how to do their activities. Colorful real life picture adorned the pages of the text books, besides sporadic tables and graphs. Apart from the course-book, students are also provided with workbooks for all grade seven, eight, and nine
  - These clear and accessible workbooks are to be used alongside the course-books. Selected answers to the exercises from the Workbook are included on the Teacher's Resource CD-ROM.

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- In each Unit of the Cambridge Checkpoint English textbooks for grade 7, 8, and 9, the depiction of Western characters is very clear and obvious. There is a focus on the traits of characters from America, Britain and Australia. Other foreign characters especially Asians were also highlighted but at a very small scale. As for the topics all the three textbooks discuss about home, relationships, history, places, traditions, life style and people within the Western cultural context. Even the few non-Western examples cited they represent non-Islamic cultures. The following Table highlights all the topics and themes of the three textbooks.

# Content of the Text-Books

Grade	Seven	Eight	Nine
<b>Topics</b>	My World	Wider World	A World View
<b>Contents</b>	Home and school, family and friends	Time and places, people and the things they do	How facts and ideas are presented
<b>Themes/ Unit</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. House and home</li> <li>2. Tall tales</li> <li>3. Favourite things</li> <li>4. School stories</li> <li>5. Up in the air</li> <li>6. Imaginary words</li> <li>7. Down to earth</li> <li>8. Hidden treasure</li> <li>9. Meet the family</li> <li>10. Mysteries and puzzles</li> <li>11. Looking back</li> <li>12. Secret lives</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fire</li> <li>2. Games and sports</li> <li>3. Water</li> <li>4. The feast</li> <li>5. Other lives</li> <li>6. The race</li> <li>7. Time and history</li> <li>8. Exotic places</li> <li>9. Travel and transport</li> <li>10. Animal behavior</li> <li>11. Music and dance</li> <li>12. A load of nonsense</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Art, design and fashion</li> <li>2. Modern living</li> <li>3. Language and communication</li> <li>4. Division and conflict</li> <li>5. Facing the future</li> <li>6. Making choices</li> <li>7. Education matters</li> <li>8. Caring and sharing</li> <li>9. Crime and law</li> <li>10. All in one day's work</li> <li>11. Wings and wheels</li> <li>12. Seeing things differently</li> </ol>



# Findings

- From the first glimpse on the content of the three textbooks as presented in table (3), there is a variety of themes contained in the Cambridge Checkpoint English textbooks for grade 7, 8, and 9 are internationally culture-oriented. All of the 12 Units in each textbook are value ridden. These values vary between universal, Western and Eastern values. However, Western values are rampant for the simplest reason that the author herself is a Westerner. Based on the analysis of the three text books these values were categorized as the following:





# *Imperialism and Hegemony Values*

- ▶ The results show that the contents of the all the 36 units across the three textbooks, to promote the English speaking culture around the world through a variety of poems, typical grammatical explanations, and novels written by prominent Western scholars and movies.
- ▶ Hegemony of English values, means that everything in the world is related to English language and its countries of origin. In brief it is the total dominance.
- ▶ The image of a 'superior', 'modern', 'beautiful' and fun culture' is manifested in the narrative texts. Versus a backward & bizarre culture in other places around the world.





# General Social Values

- These values are related to lifestyles, relations, favorite hobbies, celebration, holidays, fashion and food. In the three textbooks; images depicting different social activities were present. They vary from Western branded clothes to eating habits In addition to pictures of typical Western fairy tales and stories.



# Spiritual & Religious Values

- The spiritual values presented in the three textbooks and their annexed workbooks are of universal nature. They mainly refer to the spiritual aspect and worship activities practiced by believers not necessarily Muslims. There is a tendency not to highlight any specific religion or religious activity at the expense of another.
- Although no much emphasis was given to Western spirituality, Eastern religions were presented as a form of folklore.



# Political & Economic Values

- ▶ Throughout the contents of the textbooks, 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 scientific and technological influence.
- ▶ Example of big multinational companies such as IKEA and The United Colors of Benetton were presented.
- ▶ An explicit promotion of Western consumerism



# Universal Ethical Values

- ▶ The three textbooks contain many universal values which are embraced across cultures. Such as; the value of working hard and self-realization, being loving, caring, romantic, courageous, brave, pious, friendly, loving, patient, enthusiastic, independent, modest, fair, competitive, and to have respect for other cultures.



# Conclusion



- ▶ English language is a cultural vessel charged with Western values, styles of thinking and ways of action.
- ▶ By providing these values the learners are directed for what to do, what to believe, and what to achieve.
- ▶ In countries where English is used as a second/foreign language, textbooks have a great impact on the learners not only in the area of the skills they gain but also on how they perceive the world around them and more specifically on their morality.
- ▶ Muslim students are constantly subjected to types of values which may contradict their own religious values.



# Conclusion

- From the analysis we can conclude that the students of the International Islamic School Malaysia, are subjected to a huge package of values mainly Western. Therefore, it is expected that these students might find themselves in a dilemma in embracing these Western values and adjusting them to their religious values attained through family socialization or through studying other school subjects such as Islamic & Qur'anic studies. Therefore, using textbooks written within a foreign socio-cultural context must be dealt with vigilance. Suitable textbooks should be prepared inclusive of students' culture, religious elements or any other values deemed dear to their minds and hearts. Teachers are responsible to handle the content of used textbooks and be aware of all the cultural challenges students might find themselves dealing with while using these textbooks.





**THANK YOU**