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MUSLIM STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF WESTERN VALUES AS PRESENTED IN ENGLISH TEXT BOOKS: INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC SCHOOL MALAYSIA (SECONDARY) AS A CASE STUDY[1]

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Abstract

This paper examines the perception of Muslim teachers and students of the values embedded in the English textbooks at the Secondary level of the International Islamic School Malaysia (IISMS). The effect of these values on the students' vision of an Islamic identity are also analyzed. IISMS offers IGCSE curriculum and uses textbooks written and published in the United Kingdom. It is quite impossible to learn English without delving in its culture. This issue becomes more serious when the textbooks used to teach this language are written in a completely different social and cultural context, alien to the students' social milieu. Interviews with a number of selected students and teachers were conducted; as well as classroom observations to observe how values are disseminated to students in order to enrich the obtained data. The analysis of the data showed that the Western values embedded in the English textbooks were explicitly and implicitly manifested. The study also showed that there was considerable contradiction between these values and those values propagated in other textbooks used by the same students for other subjects, as well as with values propagated by teachers and parents. It was concluded that Muslim students' perception of Western values varied between acceptance and rejection.

Keywords: Muslim students, Western values, English Textbooks, Islamic identity, Islamic values

Introduction

Islam's relationship with the West has always been marked by a high degree of enmity and rivalry due to historical, economic and religious reasons. Muslims usually feel that there is an eminent Western cultural threat directed against their beliefs. On the other side, the West deals with Islamic values and practices with suspicion and mistrust. Education is no exception to this conflict. In many Muslim countries the argument over "what", "with what objective" and "how to teach"; is a controversial subject of debate. The debate is usually tainted by the conflict between the advocates of modernization and the traditionalists. Issues such as to what extent Muslim students should be open to Western values and the mechanisms to counter any potential cultural invasion are of great importance to Muslims in general and Muslim educationists in particular. Education is the most crucial tool among all means to counter foreign values embodied in foreign languages, especially those that are globally renowned and widely used; such as, Spanish, French and English. There is no doubt that teaching a foreign language will definitely include the teaching of foreign culture, a dilemma faced by teachers, students and parents. In most educational systems in Muslim countries, learning a foreign language is deemed crucial. English, French and other languages are taught either as a second language or used as a medium of instruction. Currently, due to the economic control and the cultural dominance of Western countries, especially Western Europe, England and the United States of America, the English language is regarded as the language of everything and all things: communication, science and technology, tourism, fashion, trade, cuisine, aviation, entertainment etc. Crystal (2003) classifies the major social aspects where English is widely used as a medium of communication such as in the media, advertising, broadcasting, cinema, popular music, international travel and safety, and most

importantly in education.[2] As a result, teaching English in schools has become a prerequisite of the 21st century education. The teaching and learning English also comes with a hefty price on local languages as it diminishes their role and hinders their progress to become languages of science and technology. Besides, learning foreign languages is always accompanied explicitly or implicitly by learning their culture. In fact, speaking any foreign language will definitely have an effect on local cultures, modes of thinking, morals and values. Indeed sociologists define 'education' as a deliberate process of transmitting culture from adults to the young. "Skills, facts, values, or attitudes are significant parts of the cultural heritage which are to be taught to the young."[3] Thus, in some societies, using a foreign language, such as English, as a medium of instruction will raise many issues in relation to transmitting values which might contradict local values and norms.

Due to the fact that, preserving one's mother tongue is a crucial part of preserving one's identity; this could be the core reason why people always go the extra mile to preserve their written and spoken languages; a point which was stressed by two Australian Aboriginal language and culture advocates, Dhurrkay and Galiwin'ku. They strongly believe that languages help people to shape their identity. They added that since cultural heritage and knowledge are passed through languages from one generation to another, language is therefore integral in maintaining the well-being, self-esteem and strong sense of identity among the people.[4]

Learning English as a Form of Neo-colonialism

The development of language curriculum, either in the field of foreign or second language, has always been questioned in terms of

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[2] D. Crystal, *English as A Global Language*, 2nd edn. (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 90-100.

[3] C.J. Hurn, *The Limits and Possibilities of Schooling: An Introduction to Sociology of Education* (United States of America: Pearson, 1993), 4.

[4] Refer to Dhurrkay and Galiwin'ku, "Keeping Indigenous Language and Culture Strong," *Parliament of Australia*, 2005, https://www.aph. gov.au/Parliamentary_ Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=atsia/languages/r eport/chapter2.htm

its significance and purposes. From an official curriculum perspective, the primary goals of teaching the English language are to prepare the native and non-native learners with better communication skills in using this language and also, to develop a rich vocabulary and higher-order thinking skills either as a native or foreign or second language. Since English has become an international language, it has become necessary for people to learn it especially people in the former British colonies because languages form an important component of the inherited colonial cultural heritage. Therefore, it is highly demanded for people to master or at least be familiar with the language, which helps them to manage their daily affairs starting with reading signboards while driving, to reading the ingredients of any merchandise, to paying their bills. Thus, learning English has become an indisputable necessity and an inseparable aspect of learning in schools.

Like many other countries which teach English as a second language or use it as a medium of instruction, Muslim countries are influenced and controlled by the 'hegemony of English'[5] The hegemony of English has given rise to the perception of English as Neo-colonialism. Tsuda in his article titled The Hegemony of English and Strategies for Linguistic Pluralism: Proposing the Ecology of Language Paradigm, explains that English is regarded as the most prevalent language in today's world. He adds that English speakers tend to control communication to their own advantage. This situation is valued as a stern crisis in the educational system in many Muslim countries, including Malaysia. One of the most important channels to inculcate Western values is through the teaching of the English language.[6] Both the language and culture are interconnected[7] and the textbook is the main teaching material in which this relationship

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[5] Y. Tsuda, "The Hegemony of English and Strategies for Linguistic Pluralism: Proposing the Ecology of Language Paradigm," in *The Global Intercultural Communication reader*, 2nd edn., ed. M. K. Asante, Y. Miike, and J. Yin (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 445-456.

[6] A. Mahboob, "English as Islamic Language: A Case Study of Pakistani English," *World English* 28, no. 2 (2009): 175-189.

[7] E. Abdollah Zadeh and S. Baniasad, "Ideologies in the Imported English Textbooks: EFL Learners and Teachers' Awareness and Attitude," *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning* 2, no. 217 (2010): 1-17.

is clearly manifested. In addition to being the most influential teaching materials in schools, the English textbooks are regarded as a primary source in transmitting Western values. This process is more evident especially when students are using imported English textbooks written in different social and cultural contexts, mainly Western. This phenomenon is related to the concept of 'ethnocentrism' as explained by Neuliep and other researchers. They have highlighted that; an ethnocentric person is, biased in favour of the 'in-group' and would see the 'in-group' as superior to the 'out-group'.[8] According to Webb and Sherman, who tried to analyze the perception of native speakers such as Americans about the English and the self, have explained that "Americans are always that passionate about the transmission of the core values of their culture uncritically in a way to avoid the risk of ethnocentrism."[9] Other scholars think that globalization and internationalization are other contributing factors; as English has become the main required language to be taught and learnt as a second or foreign language in many countries in order to cope with the requirements of our modern time. Consequently, it hinders the usage of the native language of the countries and affects the people's perceptions of their own identities. Freire and Shor suggest that "imparting language which is alienated from learners who come from a distinct language background will actually limit liberating education, and lead to the culture of silence and sabotage."[10]

Njemanze[11] backed this point. In his study about the English language and sustainable development in Nigeria, he explained that

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[8] J. W. Neuliep, S. M. Hintz, and J. C. McCroskey, "The Influence of Ethnocentrism in Organizational Contexts: Perceptions of Interviewee and Managerial Attractiveness, Credibility, and Effectiveness," *Communication Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (2005): 41-56.

[9] R. B. Webb and R. R. Sherman, *Schooling and Society*, 2nd edn (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1989).

[10] P. Freire and I. Shor, *A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education* (London: McMillan Education Ltd., 1987) 143.

[11] For more details about the usage of English and conflicts with local dialects refer to Q. U. Njemanze et al., "Analyzing the Advertising Language of the Mobile Telephony in Nigerian Newspapers: A Atylistic Approach." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 5, no. 1 (2015): 136-144.

although the Nigerians speak more than four hundred languages, the English language has superseded their mother tongue. English is used as an official language in all governmental transactions, administration, trade and commerce, law and justice, and most prominently in the instruction of education. Crystal has explained that "such dilemmas were created by Britain (as a colonial power) aimed at placing the English language as a world language for a certain purpose/goal. The desired goal of Britain is to conquer the world and they had succeeded to broaden their authority and power to cover nearly a third of the earth's surface."[12]

To a certain extent, the political culture of the 'English Man' is extensively controversial because the establishment of this language in other non-speaking countries will automatically prevent the locals from de-colonizing their own local languages. Moreover, "Britain's colonial expansion established the pre-conditions for the global use of English, taking the language from its birth place to settlements around the world. The English language has grown up in contact with many others, making it a hybrid language which can rapidly evolve to meet new cultural communicative needs."[13] Countries like Nigeria and India are among the well-known countries, which have adopted and enforced the usage of English as a medium of instruction in their education system. As a consequence; many Indians have become dissatisfied with the regulations and have begun to suspect that the use of English language in education is actually a tool in the hands of the social elite to maintain their privileged position.

In other views, English textbooks in general do in fact consistently present a certain set of stereotyped values. This has been drawn up by Hilliard who is of the view that English language textbooks are produced with an over emphasis on Western images, values and cultures. "Because culture is such an integral part of language, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to teach a language without teaching at least some aspects of its culture."[14] In every textbook, whether it is, locally or internationally produced; the values

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[12] Crystal, *English as A Global Language*, 78.

[13] D. Graddol, *The Future of English* (London: The British Council, 1998), 6.

[14] A. Hilliard, "A Critical Examination of Representation and Culture in Four English Language Textbooks," *Language Education in Asia* 5, no. 2 (2014): 238.

of the West are presented. The proper syntax and its grammar are presented, as a reflection of how Westerners speak in their daily lives.[15] Hilliard stresses that because the main goal of the English textbooks is to focus on the Western culture, Westerners tend to present students with unrealistic and inaccurate ideas about other cultures and people. In a study conducted in one junior high school in Nigeria regarding the biased values presented in the English textbooks, Mustapha evaluated the books that discussed the gender role of males and females. The findings of his research show that women were over-represented in roles confined to the home-domain like child bearing, caring and doing home chores. Meanwhile, males were over-represented in roles in public-sphere with highly professional skills. The textbooks are actually emphasizing on certain stereotypes which society is struggling to eradicate.[16]

In addition, the English language is also accused of establishing unreal facts to students about their social and cultural reality. Beckett and Guo explained that English as a dominant language worldwide is forcing unfamiliar pedagogical and social culture on its learners, socio-psychologically and politically putting them in danger of losing their first languages, cultures, and identities, and contributing to the devaluation of the local knowledge and cultures."[17]

In a study about "Dualism in Education in Malaysia" conducted by Rosnani Hashim in 1996, it was explained that "the British introduced the first English school in Penang in 1816 where the English language became the medium of instruction. Initially, the school was established to help the British to spread their culture and of course Christianity."[18] It was understood then, that Christianity could only be spread when people are able to understand and speak the English language. Although many local people were not

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Refer to A. S. Mustapha, "Sex roles in English Language Textbooks in Nigerian Schools," *Journal of ELT and Applied Linguistics* 2, no. 2 (2014): 69-81.

[17] G. H. Beckett and Y. Guo, "The Hegemony of English as a Global Language: Reclaiming Local Knowledge and Culture in China," *Convergence, XL* 40, no. 1-2 (2007): 117.

[18] Rosnani Hashim, *Educational Dualism in Malaysia: Implications for Theory and Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 6.

interested to attend the British school, even the aristocrats, the British aimed to expand the usage of the English language to the local people as a step to gain their minds and their hearts. The British had even attempted to force the local Malays to accept their language, culture and religion and at the same time tried to displace the language, culture and religion of colonized people.

In his study about the usage of English as a multinational language, V.G. Leffa has also highlighted that establishing the English language (as official language of instruction) by displacing other languages has resulted in creating difficulties for the non-native speakers.[19] It creates a huge problem for the non-native speakers in expressing themselves using a foreign language. These negative effects, are in fact due to the hegemony of the English language. Accordingly, people would believe that English, as an international lingua Franca, grants more power and confidence to its speakers in the global context.

Learning English in the Islamic Context

In his study on English as an International Language, Mahboob has clarified that in Pakistan (like many other Muslim countries), the status of English embodies a new form of linguistic colonization. This is evidently shown, when English becomes one of the official languages other than Urdu (the official and local language) and is taught as a single compulsory language in schools. At the university level in Pakistan, English has become a powerful language and it is a compulsory subject at the undergraduate level.[20] Although in many Muslim countries it is usually propagated that schools should aim at building the Islamic identity by inculcating Islamic values, and teaching Arabic as the language of the Islamic faith, English reigns supreme as the favorite international language. Rosnani Hashim has highlighted that, Muslims are not just facing a language problem but

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[19] V. J. Leffa, "Teaching English as a Multinational Language," *The Linguistic Association of Korea journal, Seul, Coreia* 10, no. 1 (2002): 29-53.

[20] For more refer to T. Anbreen, "The influence of English Second Language Learning on Pakistani University Students' Identity," *Social and Behavioural Sciences* 192 (2015): 379-387.

the problem of dualism[21] in education in general. Islamic versus Western Secular systems. She claimed that "the greatest grievance against both systems of education lies in the discontent over their graduates, who critics claim, do not possess the integrated personality of the ideal Muslim."[22] This issue adds on to the challenges faced by education in Muslim countries especially the dilemma of espousing conflicting values. Although it is compulsory for Muslims to study religious education, students are taught natural and social sciences, and literature which are not based on Islamic perspectives. There is a clear contradiction in the disseminated sets of values – "whatever students learn in religion classes is different from what they learn in humanities, social and natural sciences.[23]

British colonialism had initially reshaped the educational system of Muslims based on the rational-scientific logic of the West at the expense of the Middle-Eastern and theological formulation of Islam."[24] Therefore, the curriculum in general and teaching materials like textbooks in particular, which are used in Malaysia and other Muslim countries are based on the Western view of knowledge and the schools are implementing the contents and values presented in the textbooks, consciously or unconsciously diminishing the Islamic values which are important to be transmitted to students.

In their study of teaching materials in Moroccan secondary schools in 1990, Adaskou, Britten, and Fahsi found nothing beneficial or motivating in including Western culture. By introducing Western culture there is a tendency for cultural comparison which in turn breeds discontent among learners with their own culture.[25]

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[21] Dualism in this context is used in reference to the co-existence of two educational systems; Islamic and Western secular system.

[22] Rosnani Hashim, *Educational Dualism in Malaysia* . . . , 9.

[23] Ibid., 11.

[24] K. B. Ahmad and P. Jory, "Islamic studies and Islamic Education in Contemporary Southeast Asia," in *Colonial Knowledge and the Reshaping of Islam, the Muslim and Islamic Education in Malaysia*, ed. A. B. Sahamsul and A. Aziz (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Yayasan Ilmuan, 2011), 113.

[25] K. Adaskou, D. Britten, and B. Fahsi "Design Decisions on the Cultural Content of a Secondary English Course for Morocco," *ELT Journal* 44, no. 1 (1990): 3–10, https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/44.1.3

Besides, certain patterns of behaviour in English-speaking social contexts are not desirable, being incompatible with local values.

In another study about "Traces of Cultures in English Textbooks for Primary Education", Budi Hermawan and Lia Noerkhasanah affirmed that it is obvious that the core of English the textbooks promote is still the country in which English is spoken as the first language.[26] This traditional view of English has a big possibility to restrict students' horizon of the role of English nowadays. This implicates that the exposure to the culture of other speakers of English is indispensable and the portrayal of the culture of non-native speakers of English needs also to be depicted in the textbooks.

The school undoubtedly functions as a status quo maintaining institution, through underpinning societal dominant values and ideologies using certain methods and mechanisms. One of these mechanisms is the usage of textbooks as an effective tool in transmitting society's knowledge, rules and values. Dewe,[27] Bobbitt,[28] and Harold Rugg,[29] highlighted that the curriculum of education would equip students with experiences as they go through the process of learning. The experiences gained by students are also a final product of what has been planned and directed by schools including information, skills and values. Values can be defined as socially acceptable norms to appraise a person, object, or any situation. They develop the characteristics and identity of people since values 'describe people'. Therefore, people are known and recognized by others through the values they embrace "values are considered as the aims of human life and as the backbone of a civilized society"[30] Wangyal elucidates values as "… a set of ideas

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[26] Budi Hermawan and Lia Noerkhasanah "Traces of Cultures in English Textbooks for Primary Education. Conaplin Journal," *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistic* 1, no. 2 (2012): 49-61.

[27] John Dewey, *The Child and the Curriculum*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1902), 11-12.

[28] John Franklin Bobbitt, *The Curriculum* (Houghton Mifflin, 1918), 43.

[29] Harold Rugg, *Encyclopedia of Curriculum Studies* (Sage Publications, 1927), 8.

[30] D. Bhardwaj, H. K. Tyagi and D. Ameta, "A Study on the Role of School Curriculum and Teachers in Inculcation of Values Among Elementary School Students," *Journal of Education and Practice* 6, no. 31 (2015): 33.

and beliefs which influence the thought(s) and action(s) of a person. They help people to organize social relations by distinguishing between what is socially acceptable from what is not. Values can be shaped by numerous factors including religion, socialization, education and cultural norms among others".[31]

The notion above exemplifies that values are usually imparted through education in general and the transmission of knowledge through textbooks in particular.[32] The intended values to be transmitted and taught are either clearly presented or hidden in the form of texts, factual articles, stories, images, symbols and activities in the textbooks. Thus, the English language textbook is not used in a language course for teaching language skills per se. In fact, certain values to be propagated to targeted learners are well included in the textbooks based on the representation of culture. The dissemination of ideas and contents in the comprehension passages or pictures in the textbooks is not essentially neutral or value-free. Each unit or theme comprises some determined norms and values of certain groups of society to be taught to students. Culture, values, and norms are inseparable ideologies which are intrinsically transmitted in English language teaching.

Given the significant role of English language textbooks in shaping Muslim students' self-perception, it is important that values contained in English textbooks be evaluated. Specifically, this research tries to answer the following question: How do Muslim teachers and students perceive the Western values contained in the English language textbooks?

Research Method

To address the research question, a study was conducted at the International Islamic School Malaysia Secondary. The focus of the study are the English textbooks for Grades Seven, Eight and Nine as well as the perceptions of teachers and students using those textbooks. It aimed at identifying the types of values embedded in

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[31] T. Wangyal, "Ensuring Social Sustainability: Can Bhutan's Education System Ensure Intergenerational Transmission of Values," *Journal of Bhutan Studies*, *3*(1) (2001): 108.
[32] Ibid.

the English language textbooks, how these Muslim teachers perceive and deliver these values during their lessons, and equally important how the   Muslim students perceive and reflect on them.

For this purpose, six students and three teachers were selected to be interviewed. The sample of student-participants was chosen on the basis of three criteria; one male participant and one female participant from each grade. Each participant from Grade Eight and Nine must have spent at least one academic year in the IISMS. For Grade Seven, each participant must be a student who studied at least in Grade Six in IISM Primary. Meanwhile, the selected sample of teacher-participants in the interview was based on the following criteria; either male of female English teacher from each Grade of Seven, Eight, and Nine. Teachers who have been teaching in IISMS for at least two years. The rationale behind this criteria is to select teachers who are familiar with the school culture and also have been using the textbooks for quite some time. Prior to data collection, research protocols were developed, such as informed consent forms and a brief explanation of the objectives of study. Consent from the school principal was obtained to allow the researchers to conduct the research (interviews and classroom observations) in the school. Another informed consent was also obtained from teachers to conduct the classroom observations in order to observe the types of teacher-students and students-students interactions taking place in the classroom. All participants were assured of confidentiality and informed of the ability to withdraw at any time. By the time of the actual collection of data, the students and the teachers became accustomed to the presence of the researchers, as the latter had paid many visits to the school (prior to the official time allocated for the interview and the class observations) in order to create a bond between them and the respondents. The interview's main focus was on whether the contents of the textbooks (inclusive of values) meet and cater to the linguistic needs and language skills, and the Islamic character building of their students. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participants. Open-ended questions were asked, to allow the researchers opportunities to ask probing questions as means of follow-up, to extend interviewees' responses, to enhance the richness of the data being obtained, and to give clues to the

participant about the level of response that is desired. The interview recordings were transcribed and a professional editing of the verbatim was conducted.

Respondents' real names were replaced with pseudonyms, to protect their anonymity.

The following table contains the details of the participants and discourse unit (DU) codes assigned to them. Participant 1, 2, and 3 refer to the teachers. While participants 4 to 9 refer to the students.

Table 1 Discourse Unit (DU) codes assigned to participants

Participants	Pseudonyms	Discourse Units (DU)
Participant 1	Teacher Lala	1-576
Participant 2	Teacher Lili	1-261
Participant 3	Teacher Lulu	1-283
Participant 4	Omar	1-87
Participant 5	Syani	1-251
Participant 6	Ali	1-214
Participant 7	Syana	1-270
Participant 8	Ahmad	1-304
Participant 9	Zila	1-206

After transcribing the data collected from all participants via the interviews, they were allowed to review their interview transcripts to verify the accuracy of transcription. Lala, and Zila made a few minor changes to their responses with no significant change to the meaning of their original responses.

To support the interview data, classroom observations were used as a second tool to collect data for triangulation and verification. For this purpose an observation form was designed. It contained 12 items, which included types of interactions, students-teacher discussions, students-students discussions and other forms of expression used during the lessons. In addition, the observations were also aimed at identifying the additional materials used by the teachers during the lesson as well as their styles in teaching morals in English language lessons. Prior to conducting the classroom observations and interviews, the instruments were circulated to three (3) experts from

the Kulliyyah (Faculty) of Education, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) to evaluate its content validity. The classroom observations were conducted at three different times and dates, after the interview was completed in order to probe into the details of students' needs and interaction. Although the school had two classes for each grade, the observation was conducted in one class representing each grade. The selection of the classroom was based on availability. The observations was 'structured observations' which means that the observations were directed by a pre-set guide or checklist of what to observe – as prescribed in the observation form.[33] Attention was paid to the different reactions, feedback and questions raised by the students during the discussion of ideas and the responses from teachers to students' queries. The data collected from the 12 items contained in the observation form and the interview questions were analyzed by streaming them into four (4) main themes: The role of the texts in disseminating values, types of values found in the textbooks, methods of teaching values and students' reaction to non-Islamic values.

The researchers tried their best to adhere to the techniques of trustworthiness of research as mentioned by Lincoln and Guba (1989) especially in establishing research credibility such as prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, member checking and peer debriefing.[34] The researchers spent three months in collecting data, did three recorded observations, check the consistency of findings from interviews with formal and informal observations, check for accuracy of data transcription by showing it to the participants for verification and performed member checking for interpretation among the researchers and participants

Findings and Discussion

Based on the data obtained from individual interviews and the class observations, students and teachers gave the following as the main concerns and issues they faced when using the three English

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[33] E. Taylor-Powell, S. Steele, and M. Douglah, *Planning a Programme Evaluation*, (University of Wisconsin, 1996), http://learningstore.uwex.edu/assets/pdf/ g3658-pdf
[34] Egon G. Guba and Yvonna S. Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation* (SAGE, 1989).

textbooks: the role of the literary text in disseminating values; types of values found in the textbooks; methods of teaching values; and students' reactions to non-Islamic values.

The Role of the Literary Text in Disseminating Values

Teachers and students stressed the importance of studying English as an international/universal language. The findings indicate that all teachers came to similar opinions by claiming that the English language textbooks are the primary materials used in the classroom. They assert that although the primary objective is to teach students about grammar, comprehension, writing, and other linguistic skills, it is crucial to discuss the values contained in the texts. As explained by the literature, the dissemination of ideas and contents in the comprehension passages or pictures in the textbooks are not essentially neutral or value-free. Each unit or theme comprises some pre-determined norms and values of certain groups of society to be taught/disseminated to students. Zu and Kong view that textbooks are vital mechanisms in providing systematic and comprehensive cultural perspectives to both teachers and learners.[35] The same view was stressed upon by Hilliard who is of the view that English language textbooks are produced with an over-emphasis on Western images, values and cultures. In every textbook, whether it is locally or internationally produced, the values of the West are presented. The proper syntax and its grammar are presented as a reflection of how Westerners speak in their daily lives.

In relation to this, the respondents emphasized the fact that handling these values by discussing them or not, depended on teachers' understanding and convictions. A fact, which was proven during the class observation. It was observed that not all teachers gave emphasis on discussing the values. Their main concern was to finish the language aspects of the lesson. They argued that they had a syllabus to finish with time constrains and the textbook is just a tool to fulfill this task, even though it contained a cultural component. The most important criterion for them was that the textbook was

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[35] L. Zu and K. Kong, "A Study on the Approaches to Culture Introduction in English Textbooks," *English Language Teaching* 2, no. 1 (2009): 112-118.

suitable to their students' level of understanding and helped them acquire the important language skills.

> "It's a reading material for the students and actually when we learn language, we learn culture of the people who speak the language. Thus, when we read a text, the content is actually a selected content for the target audience. That means (in our case here) the secondary students. So the content selected should be, suitable for the students' level. So, that will obviously help them in their studies. Because the textbook is actually covering the syllabus and help them improve their English and also to understand the culture of the people who are speaking the language." (Teacher Lala/DU13-21)

Types of Values Found in the Textbooks

Apart from learning the language skills, teachers and students admitted that the three textbooks for grades 7, 8 & 9 contained a variety of moral values which are implicitly and explicitly embedded through different passages, pictures and other symbols. Bohlin[36]and Pantic[37] explicate that morality is always taught through literature. Although students are not specifically learning literature or considering it as their major subjects, yet the English textbooks would include short literature texts in the form of extracts from the master pieces of the English literatures such as *Romeo and Juliet*. As summarized by Bohlin, usually in literature there are many stories told to students in an attempt to provide ideas and questions to help them illuminate the moral meaning of a text. In summary, the teaching of norms, moralities, and values of the native speakers in English textbooks are consistently persistent because language and culture; are two inseparable elements in teaching and learning English. In fact, respondents' views varied in relation to this between those who claimed that there are similarities of Western values and

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[36] K. E. Bohlin, *Teaching Character Education Through Literature* (New York: Routeledge Falmer, 2005).

[37] Refer to N. Pantic, "Moral Education through Literature," *IPI* 38, no. 2 (2006): 401-414.

Islamic values (at least what is embedded in these textbooks) and those who claimed that Muslim students 'being exposed to other's culture' is a crucial part of learning even though it contradicts Islamic values. It is also worth mentioning that the textbooks contained some universal values, which were seen to be of great benefit to the students. In this respect, there was a consensus that these values are universal and applicable to all human societies regardless of their cultural and religious background. The following responses are examples of such universal values;

> "Most of the passages are about people (humans). Such as the text about Usain Bolt…it teaches the value of determination and never give up." (Ali/DU 13-14, 15-17)

Another respondent explained that there are

> "other passages talking about preserving animals and caring about things we share with others…" (Syana/DU17-19)

and a third example about the moral of 'not wasting'

> "there is a text criticizing wasting food in Western countries. I realize that I also waste quite a bit foods too." (Ahmad/DU25-26)

Another respondent gave some examples of these universal values that he learned;

> "… to be kind, respectful, equal to everyone and to treat everyone with respect." (Syani/DU198-199)

As for the teachers, it was concluded that there was no denial that the English textbooks are filled with Western values which they regard as universal. On respondent explained that;

> "language textbooks written by Westerners display Western values as universal values. I think they have already been accepted beforehand as universal." (Teacher Lulu/DU110-117)

In fact teachers don't see any harm in using these textbook. One respondent expressed her views by saying that;

> "I actually like the way… the textbook is presented. But…does it necessarily teach you something… suitable for Muslim students in particular! I don't think so because when I think, I believe that when they actually plan the textbook, it is not catering to one specific… group of people. Because they would (in reference to the writer) actually inculcate universal values relevant to everybody from all walks of life." (Teacher Lili/DU35-44)

The same teacher added that

> "moral values are something universal, being polite, being punctual, being true to yourself and to do the best in your capability with every task that you get is something that is universal." (Teacher Lili/DU87-95)

It was stated by most respondents (teachers and students) that the majority of values embedded in the English textbooks are Western in addition to some universal values. A fact, which was verified during the class observation.

Methods of Teaching Values

McKay continues his discussion on the need for materials in English to contain aspects of the cultures and values of Western traditions by explaining that along with the pressure to learn English comes the concern about how English should be taught and what role culture should play in the teaching of English." [38] Frequently, in many countries, the Western culture is disseminated through English textbooks, by making differences between the culture of the West and the local cultures, which are later, accompanied by an emulation of Western culture and traditions."[39] From these differences, we can see the culture takes place in the values that are described, in the

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[38] S. L. McKay, "Western Culture and the Teaching of English as an International Language," *English Teaching Forum* 42, no. 2 (2004): 11.
[39] Ibid.

dialogues and texts of the textbook.[40] Thus, the influence of the values is inevitable. Some responses from the teachers affirmed that being teenagers, students are very vulnerable to any kind of influence. They also mentioned that they have their own ways in preventing this kind of influence when confronted by values contained in the English textbooks; that is by either focusing on the language skills or by explaining to students the irrelevancy of the Western values to Muslims.

> "I believe that as a teacher… you also need to inculcate some moral values in the students' understandings. Actually, it doesn't matter what the context or the relevancy of the context is but you still need to somehow make them understand that as Muslims they need to understand that there are sometimes things which are not suitable for them and they are found in the textbook." (Teacher Lulu/DU39-44)

In reference to students' responses about learning values they varied between not giving much importance to these values as shown in the following response to the question whether students should get involved in discussing values

> 'I simply leave it'. I don't really get myself too involved in this kind of thing as I am not interested… because they do not concern me. (Ali/DU152-153)

Another respondent added that what is missed in the English language lesson in relation to the discussion of values is usually covered in other lessons such as in Hikmah (P4C) class

> "we have 'Hikmah'… so we talk about values. Most of the time, when we do have 'Hikmah', that's where we get to talk about values." (Syana/DU171-172)

It was also observed (during the class observations) that teachers opened the discussion for all students without specific guidance. This is the reason why some students in some cases, referred to other

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40 Ibid.

subjects' teachers for clarification. Some English teachers don't even see the contradiction as justified by one respondent:

> "another function is to improve their English and to understand the culture of the people who are speaking the language." (Teacher Lala/DU13-21)

Another teacher explained that, "language textbooks written by Westerners display Western values as universal values." She further explained their legitimacy by saying that,

> "I think they have already been accepted beforehand by locals. So I don't really think that it is undermining local values." (Teacher Lulu/DU110-117)

This response showed that some teachers had a confusion about what is acceptable, universal and Western. However another teacher thought that;

> "it doesn't matter what the context or the relevancy of the context is, you still need to somehow make them (in reference to students) understand that as a Muslim they need to understand that there are sometimes things which are not suitable for them to know that can be found in the textbook." (Teacher Lulu/DU39-44)

In conclusion, all teachers agreed that English textbooks are universal. Thus the contents, images, and symbols used in the textbooks are universal too, regardless of which culture was being propogated. Whereas, students were of the view that because there was no clear manifestation of the clash between values, it was acceptable to embrace the content. They also thought that the textbooks are relevant for Muslim students because of the universal values contained in them, which are applicable for all, regardless of the religious and cultural background.

They also added that if some of the texts or pictures shown were not relevant to the students, then it would be the responsibility the teachers to guide them and to make the students understand the reasons for using them in the classroom. In addition, they believed

that being Muslim teachers, teaching Muslim students, this would create a kind of protection towards absorbing any non-Islamic values.

Students' Reactions to Non-Islamic Values

Discussing students' reaction to the influence of Western culture, as cited by McKay "Prodromou …hypothesizes that the students" interest in British life and institutions may be due to students' belief that if they knew more about British life, they would do better on the British-based Cambridge exam. If that is the case, overall these students did not find learning about culture, either their own or others, very motivating."[41]   One respondent's answer goes along with this as he stated that:

> "I agree with it (in reference to the English text book content) because our books are from Cambridge. They are not going to have Hadith, or what the Sheikh (Muslim scholar) say. Obviously, it is from an English-speaking country, so, it would be transmitting more English values than Islamic." (Syana /DU180-182)

The findings for this part revealed that majority of the students did feel confused while discussing Western values. They acknowledged that these values were sometimes clashing with the Islamic values. There was only one student who felt that the values embedded in the textbook were not really confusing her or saw any clashes between Western and Islamic values. It is important to mention here that the confusion is sometimes not created by Western values only but by other values and practices from other non-Islamic cultures. This confusion is not created by textbooks only but by other agents such as the media. In response to the questions whether the students felt confused about the clash between Western values and Islamic values, students' answers were:

> "I get shocked on how they write the essays or show the images because it is not suitable for us Muslims." (Omar/DU61-62)

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[41] Ibid., 11.

In another response, one student explained that he got confused so often by saying;

> "I have been confused for a couple of times because the way values are explained, it is hard and not simple…" (Omar/DU75-76)

> "Yes, of course I felt that before. But, I went to my counselling teacher and asked her. And I ask my Hikmah (Islamized P4C Subject) teacher." (Zila/DU186-187)

In another response, one student gave a specific example about the confusion over some controversial issues by saying;

> "Yes (the confusion is happening) because sometimes talking about music." (Ahmad/DU270), which is controversial in Islam.

Another one affirmed that:

> "I guess it is yes, these values have confused me at one point. Like last year… when we were talking about marriage from a Western view. Few things were not similar to our Islamic values. So, I felt confused." (Syana/DU220-223)

However, other respondents clarified that more confusion is created, by other agencies such as the media;

> "The big confusion is not from the textbook." (Syani/DU215). "I don't know, maybe from television and like the news something." (DU217)

Generally speaking, students felt alienated as the content of passages, pictures and other symbols used in the textbooks were completely foreign to the norms and values embraced and exercised within their families and the school culture in general. Thus, the feeling of alienation was expressed as in the following;

> "I do agree with this because most of them (values) are Christian values… the topics are reflecting Western

culture. For example, the heroes mentioned in the textbooks; are Western; while other significant people to us (Muslims) for example, the 'Sahabah' of the Prophet are not, mentioned." (Ali/DU141-143)

In fact, this alienation was explained by the literature. Hilliard explained that the main goal of the English textbooks is to focus on the Western Culture, Westerners tend to present students with unrealistic and inaccurate ideas about other cultures and people.[42]

The same view is clearly, expressed in the following response:

"I am aware that many ideas and teachings portrayed in the textbooks are reflecting Western cultures and ideas that are contradicting Islamic teachings. If the message is obvious and a known contradiction such as the promotion of relationship outside marriage, drinking, eating pork or gambling, I can immediately point it out and can reject its origin. If it is an issue or something more obscure, I can always ask my teachers or parents for clarification before I made a decision or form an opinion." (Zila/DU187-193)

It is important to mention here that the students shared similar views in reference to the contradiction of some Western values with Islamic teachings and *Shari'ah* (Islamic Laws) to which they adhere in their daily life activities.

This confusion was also demonstrated in the contradiction between the Western values in the English textbooks and other school subjects. Though they confirmed that the contradiction does exist; students consider the latter (other school subjects) as an efficient mechanism enabling them to counter Western values and provide some sort of 'immunization' against any influence as these subjects provide relevant values reflecting the Islamic way of life. They mentioned that other school subjects are crucial to them. In their responses to the question about other significant school subjects in which Islamic values are clearly manifested, they mentioned:

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[42] Hilliard, "A Critical Examination of Representation . . ."

"Islamic studies and the Islamic history". (Ahmad/DU220). "Islamic studies". (Syani/DU167) & (Zila/DU133)

In those subjects, one respondent explained:

"teachers explain different 'Hadith' sayings of the prophet) and how to follow them. Some of them are about good character, and teach what we have to do and what we need to avoid, such as jealousy." (DU169-172)

Another respondent clarified that:

"I learn better values, from other subjects. For example, Islamic studies or Arabic or Quran. They usually teach us values which conform to what we practice". (Ali/DU135-136)

Besides Islamic Studies, Islamic History, Arabic and Qur'an; they have mentioned another subject:

"We have another subject called 'Hikmah', a form of discussion between teachers and students. We talk about our problems and how we should solve them." (DU140-142)

"We talk about values. Majority of the time, when we do have 'Hikmah' we talk about values." (Syana/DU171-172)

It was concluded that; these school subjects, provide the students with a kind of "defense mechanisms" or tools for arguments in discussing Western values embedded in the textbooks. During the class observation, it was noticed that students showed their oppositions when discussing the values such as in the Text 9A, Text 9C, and Text 9D, which can be summarized below:

"Believing in Horoscope" which is not allowed in Islam. "Believing and worshipping a girl as a goddess." And the morality of "Keeping wild animals as pets."

Students felt that it was hard to imagine themselves as 'Taleju'[43] the goddess when asked by the teacher. They felt that this was something unimaginable since they did not believe in this kind of religious practices. It important to mention here that the findings concur with the literature about the confusion usually created by the English language in the minds of its learners. A drawback to this, as noted by Beckett and Guo, English as a dominant language worldwide is forcing unfamiliar pedagogical and social culture on its learners, socio-psychologically, politically putting them in danger of losing their first languages, cultures, and identities, and contributing to the devaluation of the local knowledge and cultures."[44]

Implications

Although, the study is limited to three (3) English language textbooks, and a small number of respondents which may not represent other Muslim students; and the findings may not form a solid ground for generalization, the main contribution of this study is providing empirical evidence on the existence of a dilemma faced by Muslim students in dealing with non-Islamic values while studying the English language using foreign textbooks. It also provides a platform for researchers who are active in the field of reviving Islamic education, Islamization and Integration to conduct other related studies and to plan for the production of textbooks suitable for students' religious convictions and cultural heritage. It is our belief that the current study would be of great help to the International Islamic School Malaysia Secondary and guide teachers on how to deal with different sets of values usually embedded into different textbooks.

Conclusion

This present study, which explored Muslim students' perception of Western values as presented in English textbooks at the International

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[43] A Hindu Goddess mentioned in the textbook of grade Nine (9).

[44] G. H. Beckett & Y. Guo, The hegemony of English as a global language: Reclaiming local knowledge and culture in China. *Convergence, XL (1-2),* 117-131, 20017, 117.

Islamic School Malaysia (Secondary), highlighted the existence of a cultural dilemma faced by Muslim students when dealing with non-Islamic values embedded in English language textbooks. As the findings of this study revealed that IISM students wanted to study English and develop their linguistics skills because they considered it a prerequisite of the 21st century and to be successful in their future career. However, it is a must to consider looking into the contents of the textbooks. Taking into consideration the religio-cultural background of the students is a mandatory requirement in the selection of any teaching material especially textbooks, in order to eliminate or at least reduce the factors of alienation and confusion while learning foreign languages or using educational material produced in a different socio-cultural milieu. Doing a 'needs analysis' is also crucial before planning, designing and implementing any curriculum. Consequently, teachers' awareness of students' cultural sensitivity is crucial and which shouldn't be ignored. The study also suggests that future studies need to be carried out on other factors related to learning values through other school subjects, school culture and family influence. A longitudinal study is also necessary in order to see how students deal with different sets of values embedded into different school subjects as they transit form one level to another.

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