



A CONCEPTUAL CONTENT ANALYSIS  
OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS  
CONCERNING ISLAM AND MUSLIMS.

BY

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## ABSTRACT

The changing landscape of English language teaching and learning has compelled English language teaching materials to be culturally sensitive and appropriate to the context in which the language is taught. There is a need to match teaching materials with the goals, objectives and philosophy of a programme and to ensure consistency with learners' attitudes, religious beliefs and/or preferences. In other words, English Language Teaching (ELT) materials must be consistent with the needs and interests of the intended learners, as well as being in harmony with institutional ideologies and religious doctrines. The objectives of the study are to codify ELT materials based on socio-cultural and religious perspectives and to examine features of ELT materials based on the adapted Byram's cultural content list. Five English language textbooks used in the intensive language programme at the International Islamic University Malaysia are analysed based on the conceptual content analysis. The findings reveal that the ELT textbooks are organized based on four main categories; namely, belief and behaviour, socialization and life cycles, stereotypes and national identity and social and political institution. The findings of the study indicate that there are 14 neutral items, eight negative items and one positive item that mention Islam and Muslims. Furthermore, there are 77 items which are found not to be in harmony with Islam ranging from food, drinks, recreation and sports. The findings also suggest that the textbooks are loaded with features of Western culture. While the textbooks are relevant to the learners' culture, teachers need to inform the students that there are differences between Islam and the Judeo-Christian worldview.

## خلاصة البحث

إنّ التغيّر الواسع في مجال تعلّم اللغة الإنجليزية وتعليمها قد أجبرت مواد تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية لتكون أكثر حساسية للثقافة وأكثر تناسباً للمحيط الذي يتم فيه تدريس اللغة. فهناك حاجة ماسة لمطابقة المواد التعليمية مع الغايات والأهداف وفلسفة البرنامج لضمان تناسقها مع مواقف المتعلمين ومعتقداتهم الدينية واهتماماتهم. لذلك ينبغي أن تكون مواد تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية متسقة مع احتياجات ورغبات الدارسين المعنيين، بجانب كونها متوائمة مع أيديولوجيات المؤسسة والمذاهب الدينية. وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تنظيم مواد تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية من منظور اجتماعي وثقافي وديني، وتحليل خصائص تلك المواد بالاعتماد على قائمة بيرام المعدلة للمحتويات الثقافية. وتمّ تحديد خمسة كتب دراسية في اللغة الإنجليزية تُستخدم في البرنامج اللغوي المكثّف في الجامعة الإسلامية العالمية بماليزيا لتحليل المحتوى المفاهيمي فيها. وتكشف النتائج أن تلك الكتب الدراسية في تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية قد تمّ تنظيمها بناء على أربعة عناصر، وهي الاعتقاد والتصرف، ثم السلوك الاجتماعي ودورات الحياة، ثم القوالب النمطية والهوية الوطنية، ثم المؤسسات الاجتماعية والسياسية. وتشير نتائج الدراسة إلى أنّ هناك ١٤ عنصراً محايداً، و ٨ عناصر سلبية، وعنصراً واحداً إيجابياً أشار إلى الإسلام والمسلمين. بالإضافة إلى أن هناك ٧٧ عنصراً لم تكن منسجمة مع الإسلام في مجالات تتعلّق بالأطعمة والمشروبات والترفيه والرياضة. وتشير النتائج أيضاً إلى أن تلك الكتب الدراسية تحمل سمات الثقافة الغربية. وعلى الرغم من كون تلك الكتب الدراسية متناسبة مع ثقافة الدارسين، إلّا أن المعلّمين ينبغي أن يبيّنوا للطلبة أنّ هناك اختلافات بين الإسلام ونظرة اليهودية والمسيحية.

## ABSTRAK

Perubahan dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris, menjadikan Bahasa Inggeris begitu sensitif terhadap sesuatu budaya sesuai dengan konteks bahasa tersebut dipelajari. Terdapat beberapa keperluan bagi suatu program untuk menyesuaikan sesuatu bahan pengajaran berdasarkan tujuan, sasaran dan falsafah bagi memastikan konsistensi dengan sikap, keyakinan pelajar, agama atau beberapa perkara yang lain. Selain itu, bahan pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris (ELT) yang digunakan seharusnya konsisten dengan maksud keperluan dan kepentingan pelajar, serta selaras dengan ideologi institusi dan doktrin-doktrin agama. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji bahan ELT berdasarkan perspektif sosial-budaya dan agama serta menguji ciri dan bahan tersebut berdasarkan senarai yang disesuaikan oleh Byram. Kajian ini menganalisis lima buku teks Bahasa Inggeris yang digunakan dalam program intensif bahasa di Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia berdasarkan analisis isi konseptual. Hasil kajian menunjukkan buku teks ELT dapat dibahagikan kepada empat kategori utama iaitu kitaran, keyakinan dan perilaku, sosialisasi dan kehidupan, stereotaip dan identiti kebangsaan dan institusi sosial dan politik. Kajian ini juga menunjukkan terdapat 14 item neutral, lapan item negatif dan salah satu item positif yang menyebut atau berkaitan dengan Islam dan Muslim. Didapati terdapat 77 item yang tidak selaras dengan Islam dari segi makanan, minuman, rekreasi dan sukan. Dapatan kajian ini juga membuktikan buku teks ELT ini lebih banyak mengandungi ciri budaya dari Barat berbanding Islam. Walau bagaimanapun, buku teks ini masih relevan digunakan dalam pembelajaran cuma guru perlu memaklumkan kepada para pelajar tentang perbezaan pandangan Islam dan Yahudi-Kristian.

## APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Human Sciences (English Language Studies)

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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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Date .....

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*Lillahi Ta'ala,  
My Parents,  
Abd Rashid Shaari and Zaiton Kamis,  
As Well As To My Entire Family,  
This Dissertation Is Lovingly Dedicated*



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

as	May Allah be pleased with him
saw	Peace be Upon Him
swt	<i>Subhanahu wa Ta'ala</i> (Praise be Upon Allah and The Most High)
IIUM	International Islamic University Malaysia
LS	Listening and Speaking



## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Many researchers highlight the important role of textbooks in teaching and learning, especially in foreign language learning. Hatoss (2004) emphasizing the importance of culture teaching through language learning, states that without textbooks, English teachers would find it difficult to teach cultural contents to their students, as textbooks supply this need without transporting the students to a native speakers' country. However, as there are numerous choices of commercially available textbooks in the market, there is a growing need to determine whether the teacher or the decision maker makes the right choice concerning the appropriate textbook for the correct purpose.

Wright (1999), whose study of the factors shaping the attitudes of secondary education learners in Great Britain towards French, identified that textbooks are viewed by learners of languages as having a significant influence on their attitudes towards the target culture and there is a significant positive correlation between this influence and the attitudes of many pupils. Yamada (2006, p. 20) states that a textbook is not merely a commercially available reference book, which is used in language teaching program, but also serves as an important means to deliver political and ideological orientation. She points out that "textbooks can be understood and examined as curricular materials, which project images of society and culture. They reflect historical, social, cultural and socio-cultural, economic and political contexts". Dellinger (1995) also asserts that language is a type of social practice among many

used for representation and signification (including visual, images, music, gestures, etc.) Texts, including textbooks, are written by socially situated speakers and writers. Thus, textbooks descriptions can be examined as a social product. In other words, textbooks determine not only material conditions for teaching and learning but also in defining what is elite and legitimate (chosen by the author) to be imparted to learners (Apple,1991) Apple and Christian-Smith suggest that a textbook signifies “particular constructions of reality, particular ways of selecting and organizing that universe of possible knowledge” (1991, p. 3)

The changing landscape of higher education compels the teaching and learning of English to be culturally sensitive to context usage and how the language is taught. (Kachru, 1994; Prodromou, 1998; 1994; Fawwaz and Oqlah, 1996; Ratnawati, 2005; Phillipson, 1992; Al-Attas, 1978; Pennycook, 1994; Canagarajah, 1999; Cardona, 2008; Yamada, 2006 and Ainol and Isarji, 2007) Despite the importance of meeting the needs of ESL learners, institutions, and industry, it is extremely difficult for teaching materials to be socio-culturally neutral because they express social orders and value systems, implicitly or explicitly (Risager, 1990). The absence of proper guidance makes the tasks complicated, in terms of deciding whose value system or social orders are incorporated.

On this account, it is important to study English Language Teaching (ELT) materials from socio-cultural perspectives and their appropriateness to Muslim learners to ensure that the materials complement learners’ needs, the vision and the mission of the institution.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The literature on Second Language (L2) teaching and learning and ELT materials address the need for both learners and teachers to be aware of the dynamic interplay of language, thought, action of macro and micro cultures concerning ELT theory and practices. Many studies have undertaken socio-cultural perspectives relating to Islam and Muslims in second language teaching and learning. These include the works of Haja Mohideen (1999, 2000, 2001), Casewit (1985), Shamimah (2008), Mojgan Majdzadeh Tabatabaei (2006), Mohamed S. Haded (1998), Abdullah (1999), Yadullah (1997), Ratnawati (1997, 2005), Tariq (2005), Martin (1994), Fawwaz and Oqlah (1996), Ali Ahmed (1996), Dahiru (1996), Mohamed Ismail (1999), Grace (2005), Qiang and Wolff (2005), Sohail (2005), Mohammad Shafi (1983), Farzad (1999), Pennycook (1994), Sami (2000), Ainol and Isarji (2007), Isarji and Mohd. Feham (2000).

Casewit (1985), for example, states that in developing appropriate materials for learners in Muslim societies, one must look beyond, and beneath, such superficial confirmation of the social psychological theory of foreign language acquisition. He further states that multicultural TEFL materials could be prepared in such a way as to promote more favourable attitudes and stronger motivation on the part of learners in Muslim societies.

Similarly, Haja Mohideen (2000, 2001) articulates that language teaching and learning materials need to include a section dealing with offensive expressions, to warn users against their usage because English today is not used exclusively by native speakers of English and there are vast numbers of English as second language speakers who like to use the language appropriate to their religious and cultural values.

Washima, Harshita and Naysmith (1999) highlight the need to actively promote materials relevant to the home culture of learners. This is an effort to minimize the negative effects of ELT materials that have harmful and contradictory values. The incorporation of local cultures encourages both students and teachers to be aware of potential conflicts, to discuss and to critically reflect upon how both learners and teachers might respond.

The 6<sup>th</sup> International Islamic Education Conference in 1998 ([www.tesolislamia.org](http://www.tesolislamia.org), n.d.) states that in selecting reading materials, teachers of Muslim learners need to exercise discretion in the choice of reading material. In classes where the learners have a reasonable degree of maturity, the teacher needs to develop the skill of critical reading with particular reference as to how easily the unsuspecting reader can be misled into accepting values and norms, which are unsuitable to the Islamic way of life.

Even though Washima, Harshita and Naysmith (1999), Casewit (1985), and Haja Mohideen (2000) and many others provide critical appraisal of ELT materials in L2 teaching and learning, there is a need to include empirical evidence with data from ELT materials. Considering this inadequacy and in view of the fact learners are the most important clients of an education institution, it is imperative to study this concern systematically to ensure that it accurately serves the needs of the learners and the institution.

The main purpose of the study is to analyze the socio-cultural and religious content of ELT textbooks usage in the English Language Programmes at the International Islamic University Malaysia. Consistent with the content analysis, the study also seeks to ascertain in what way the content materials are portrayed according to a checklist adapted from Byram's Cultural Content Checklist with

regards to Belief and Behaviour, Socialization, Life Cycle, Stereotypes, National Identity, and Social and Political Institution in the textbooks.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. to codify ELT materials based on socio-cultural and religious perspectives
2. to analyze features of western culture in ELT materials in relation to Islam and Muslims based on Byram's cultural content checklist.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following research questions are for the purpose of the study.

1. Are there contents that relate to Islam or Muslims in the textbooks?  
How are the contents portrayed?
2. Are there contents not in harmony with Islam or Muslims in the textbooks?
3. Which contents that is not in harmony with Islam and Muslims relate to-
  - a. belief and behaviour?
  - b. socialization and life cycle?
  - c. stereotypes and national identity?
  - d. social and political institution?

## **ELT MATERIALS**

Of the ELT materials used in the English Language programme, five were selected for the purpose of this study (Table 1).

Table 1.1  
The corpus of the research

Title	Year	Author(s)	Publisher
Interactions1: Listening and Speaking	2007	Judith Tanka and Paul Most	McGraw-Hill
Interactions 2: Listening and Speaking	2007	Judith Tanka and Lida R Baker	McGraw-Hill
Interactions 2-Reading	2007	Pamela Hartmann and Elaine Kirn	McGraw-Hill
Consider the Issue: Listening and Critical Thinking Skills. 3 <sup>rd</sup> edn.	2003	Carol Numrich	Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc
Engaging Writing-Paragraphs and Essays	2005	Mary Fitzpatrick	Pearson Longman

## **METHODOLOGY**

The methodology in this study follows the qualitative method. The data collection utilizes document search and conceptual content analysis. The five ELT textbooks were identified based on the document search, while a conceptual content analysis was employed to analyze the textbooks and was assigned to the Byram's cultural content framework.

## **DESCRIPTION OF CONCEPTUAL CONTENT ANALYSIS**

A sample of five ELT textbooks, from the Pre-Sessional English Language Program at the Centre for Languages and Pre-University Academic Development (CELPAD), International Islamic University Malaysia by the intermediate and advanced level students (levels 3,4,5,6) were analyzed using a conceptual content analysis approach advocated by Neuendorf (refer to appendix C) according to Krippendorff's framework. Krippendorff (1981, p. 21) states that:

Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context. As a research technique, content analysis involves specialized procedures for processing scientific data.

Like all research techniques, its purpose is to provide knowledge, new insights, a representation of “facts” and a practical guide to action.

McMillan and Schumacher (2001) explain that some researchers start with preresolute categories as follows: (a) the research questions, (b) the research instrument, such as an interview guide, (c) prior personal experience that becomes relevant from the field work, and (d) categories unearth in the literature. In this study, four categories of Byram’s checklist are employed as the predetermined categories or a code in the codebook being similar to Krippendorff’s clustering. According to Krippendorff (1981, pg. 257), “clustering is an analytical technique used to group categories that share some observed qualities”. The technique divides a set of objects into “mutually exclusive” qualities, whose boundaries reflect differences in observing the qualities of their members.

Four categories of Byram’s (1993a) checklist; namely, 1. Belief and behaviour, 2. Socialization and the life cycle, 3. Stereotypes and national identity, and 4. Social and political institution were employed to evaluate, the extent and manner, in which, a textbook contains a focus on socio-cultural and religious content. The four categories of the content checklist are shown in figure 1.

---

Belief and behaviour (Moral, religious beliefs, daily routines)
Socialization and the life cycle (Families, schools, employment, rites of passages)
Stereotypes and national identity (What is “typical”, symbols of national stereotypes)
Social and political institution (State institutions, health care, law and order, social security, local government)

---

Figure 1: Byram’s Cultural Content Checklist

For each textbook, indicators appropriate for each category from the checklist were identified and explored. Then, the interpretations were code-determined within a descriptive framework. The pre-resolute categories are mutually exclusive and exhaustive and are listed in the codebook. Mutually exclusive and exhaustive means each part of the textbooks can only fit onto one category provided.

## **ORGANIZATION OF CHAPTERS**

The study consists of five chapters: introduction, theories/literature review, methodology, findings and discussion and the conclusion. This chapter introduces what the study is, as well as stating the problem. Chapter 2 evaluates applicable theories and introduces relevant topics and findings from previous studies that support these theories. Chapter 3 focuses on the methodologies that are useful, in order to answer the research questions, discussing in detail, the procedures before arriving at the final outcomes. Chapter 4 presents the data according to the classification of the research objectives, further analyzing the answers of the research questions. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes the study by reviewing the fundamental issues of this work, therefore, suggesting prospects in this field of research.