

An analysis of textbooks series based on English as International Language

Ahmed, Sami Hussein A. ✉

University of Holy Quran & Islamic Sciences, Sudan (Samihussein40@hotmail.com; komer307@gmail.com)

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze a textbook series in terms of its depiction of English as an International Language (EIL). To achieve the set objective, the following criteria were employed: Reference to Inner Circle countries, reference to Outer and Expanding Circle countries, conversation in non-English speaking countries. Six English instructors were interviewed. The study revealed that the textbooks is mainly attached to Inner English speaking culture.

Keywords: English as International Language; textbooks; inner; outer; expanding

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1. Introduction

Linguistics theories and approaches play a vital role in determining the content of a textbook. Several studies were focusing on the analysis of a textbook based on certain approach. When no specification is available, it is usually the purpose that determines most, the type and amount of the material. The framework of syllabus design is mainly affected by the theory and approaches. Consequently, different methods could be used in analyzing textbook. However, few studies have been conducted on the analysis of a textbook based on the notion of English as International English (EIL). This study is designed to shift from a monolithic view to a pluralistic view of English, bearing in mind, the current status of English in the world. Therefore, this study aims to use EIL as criteria for analyzing ELT textbooks.

1.1 Aim of the Study

To analyze a textbook series in terms of its depiction of English as an International Language (EIL).

1.2 Research Questions

- To what extent do the reading texts of the book reflect concentric circles, namely Inner, Outer and Expanding circles?
- To what extent do dialogs in the listening part display a variety of accents; how many of the dialogs are in native-native, native-nonnative and nonnative-nonnative relations?
- How famous people are treated in illustrated, written and listening parts of the book; are they from Inner, Outer or Expanding circle countries?

2. The study

2.1 Material - The material of this study

The material of this study consists of Headway New Third Edition, namely: intermediate, upper intermediate and advance. Headway is widely used in Sudanese universities, especially for teaching English as university requirement subject. It also widely used textbooks in English language institutes. Kachru's (1986) Inner Circle countries, references to Outer and Expanding Circle countries, non-native accents, dialogues in non-English speaking countries, the place of home culture and famous people was used.

2.2 Interview

Semi-structured interview questions sent to 10 English instructors via e-mail. Only six instructors responded to the e-mail. They were addressed to answer the following questions:

- To what extent do the reading texts in Headway depict target culture, local culture and world cultures?
- To what extent do dialogs in the listening part display a variety of accents; are there other varieties used such as native-nonnative or nonnative-nonnative or are they target culture-oriented?
- How famous people are treated in illustrated, written and listening parts of the series; are they generally from target culture, local culture or world cultures?

- What is your general idea on Headway' integration culture into the language classes? Is it enough? Is it culture-bound? Is it ELF-friendly?

3. Results

The coursebook series under interrogation has been scanned in terms of its depiction of English as an international language and the findings have been revealed in the figures.

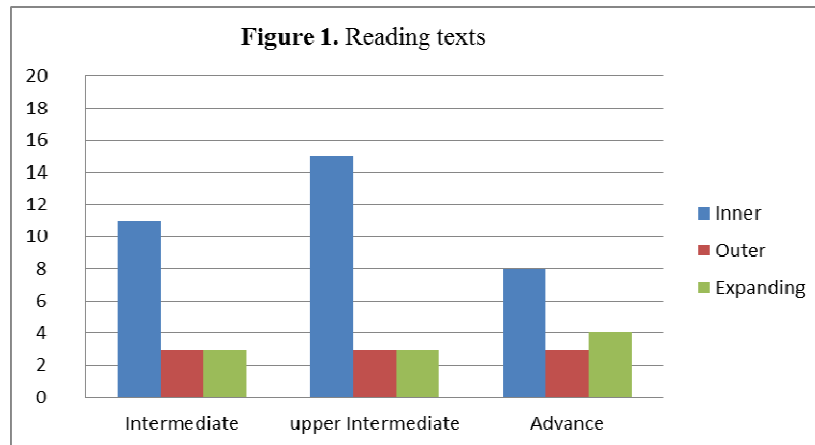


Figure 1

Figure 1 demonstrates the frequency of reference of reading texts to inner circle, and reveals the decrease of reading texts that represent outer and expanding circles respectively. Texts of these types are usually situated in or representative of a particular cultural context. The topic/text types of the readings are various, encompassing science, culture, short story, poetry, people, sports, language skills, etc.

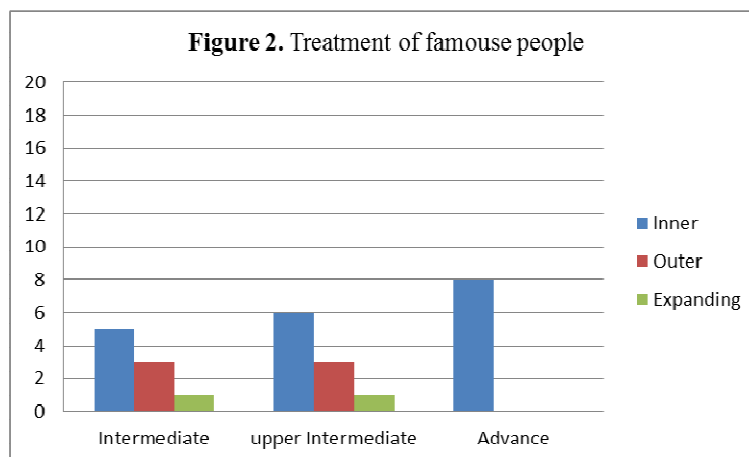


Figure 2

Figure 2 indicates that the treatment of famous people presented in the text books are mainly related to inner and outer circles. They show all aspects of the model taken into account. For example: American episodes, Hollywood stars, movie directors, British novels, American singers, American presidents, etc. Regarding dialogues in the listening parts, for instance, in the Intermediate book, there were 114 dialogs, Upper were 76, Advance were 86. Almost all of them are in British accents. No dialogues in Native-Nonnative Accents.

3.1 Findings from interviews gathered from English Instructors

Most of the instructors believe that the series is target culture-bound and reflected the world just from the

Inner circle countries.

To what extent do the reading texts in Headway depict target culture, local culture and world cultures?

Headway is mainly focused on target, UK culture. There are a few passages about cultures other than UK as far as I remember. There is passages about national things in one of the books. However, my students did not find it very familiar with themselves (Informant 2).

As far as I can see, the reading texts cover the target culture by introducing U.K. Almost all the information is related to British culture, even in a simple dialogue- where the target is a grammar point- an example of an actor is, of course, American a so-called famous actor. In my opinion, reading texts are already boring for most of the students since there is a great deal of unfamiliar vocabulary and structures. Considering this, the topics should be more familiar to the students. Other cultures, on the other hand, are not mentioned frequent enough for me to recall (Informant 3)

To what extent do dialogs in the listening part have a room for a variety of accents (native-nonnative or nonnative-nonnative) or are they target culture-oriented?

There is no variety of accents and they are target culture-oriented (Informant 5).

They were mainly representing a various British accent (Informant 1).

How are famous people treated in illustrated, written and listening parts of the series; are they generally from target culture, local culture or world cultures?

They are generally from target culture and need to be updated immediately. In general, Headway is an outdated school book (Informant 4).

What is your general idea on Headway' integration culture into the language classes? Is it enough? Is it culture-bound? Is it ELF-friendly?

Two years ago, we used Headway as our main course book in my institution and I think all the parts of the course book aim to teach some elements of British culture. Especially, when you look at the back of the book, you can clearly see Culture Shock parts including items to learn about United Kingdom and in those parts, we were teaching all about United Kingdom. Therefore, in my opinion, you can see British culture a lot, but you may not find many types of different cultures in the book. Sometimes, the students were wondering about other cultures; for instance, they were asking some questions like 'Then, what is American people's policy like?', and so on. In short, I do not think it is completely an ELF-friendly course book (Informant 6).

4. Discussion

The textbook analysis revealed a tendency towards a world from inner circle. This finding is in harmony with Brown (1995) points out; "the majority of materials prepared for both ESL and EFL instruction focus primarily on Inner Circle norms. However, the exposure to other non-native varieties would help learners to become more aware of English as an international language (Kachru 1992; Matsuda 2000) and learners would feel more positive about and be willing to communicate in their own varieties (Matsuda 2000; Fraser 2005). Most of the famous people come from Inner circle countries. Alptekin (1993) states that most EFL textbooks written by native English speakers focus on cultural references to the US and UK as being elements of target culture.

5. Conclusion

The study aimed to analyze the textbook based on the principle of EIL. The study found that the textbooks under analysis is heavily loaded with homogenous English speaking – culture community. ELT materials ‘sticking to native speakers’ norms are really unreliable. More cross-cultural perspectives learning English meaningfully and relevantly is highly needed. McKay (2002) focuses on the importance of an intercultural atmosphere created by teachers and materials in EIL classrooms, ‘so that individuals gain insight into their own culture. These insights can then be shared in cross-cultural encounters undertaken in international contexts’.

5.1 The pedagogical implications and suggestions of the study

- Content of reading texts → more multicultural topics, more depictions of Outer and Expanding circles (more diverse racial and cultural backgrounds so that more exposure to different perspectives).
- More representation of nonnative accents → more mixed-country English uses, examples of communication between nonnative speakers at an internationally intelligible level. More celebrities from the other two categories → more relevant and familiar.
- Perceptions of the instructors → instructors taking a multicultural approach and consciousness, sensitivity and understanding for the differences and similarities of the nations and cultures.
- A balanced combination of localized, native-speaking, and internationalized forms of culture with an incorporation of a variety of ‘Englishes’ in teaching materials → to facilitate learners’ intercultural competence.
- Redesigning them → for understanding of the spread of English in the world and its connection with globalization and development of critical thinking and intercultural skills.

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