

***Milieu Disparity Between Author and Reader Generates Complexity: ESP & ELT
as a Case Study***

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to gain insight into the necessity of Islamic linguistic skills in terms of moral modifications and cultural relevancies for the improvement of ELT materials. The paper highlights the required assessments for the current need of English language for Muslims on all dimensions of ELT problems. This is enhanced through examining the reality of existence of Islamic approach to English usage in reference to its nature, historical background and contemporary impacts of English literary developments among Muslims. The result indicates that an Islamic approach to the language use and application should co-relate with universal features that include lexis, grammar, topic, style, audiences, code mixing: all of which express social and cultural identities. The ultimate goal is the attainment of communicative competence in English among Muslim learners through the medium of Islamic culture and systematic applications of the modern methods of English language learning and teaching.

Keywords: *Disparity, milieu, linguistic, identities, complexity*

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Introduction

Coupled with the idea of students coming from different backgrounds, Kucer (2005) discusses the discrepancy not only between reader and reader but also between reader and author. “Not only do readers and writers bring their language to the printed page, conceptual knowledge is brought as well. There exists a symbiotic relationship between the knowledge conveyed through a text by the author and the knowledge conveyed through a text by the reader. In general, the more the reader’s and author’s backgrounds parallel one another, the smoother the construction of meaning is likely to be” (Kucer, 2005, p. 120). If a connection is not made or is not addressed in terms of the students’ knowledge of what the author is writing about, meaning can be lost before the process of reading has even begun.

According to Kucer (2005), our knowledge and experiences are culturally based. This means that we cannot experience or gain knowledge that is not “culturally coded” (Kucer, 2005, p. 125). What students bring to reading is culturally based and if what they bring differs from what the author or writer brings, there may be a loss of meaning within the scope of the text. As a result, compensations need to be made in the area of schemata if the reader possesses differing or conflicting knowledge of the author or writer. Based on the role that cultural variation plays in the acquisition of literacy, one must understand that there are various foundational theories that inform this acquisition. The psycholinguistic theory bears considerable ideas and concepts on how literacy can be acquired. This research provoked the idea that literacy is not something one was taught to do but rather something one learned or acquired; individuals made sense of what they encountered based on what they already knew, by accessing prior knowledge (Pearson & Stephens, 1992, p. 28). The psycholinguistic perspective has also affected one’s views of teaching and learning in a fundamental way. This fundamental learning theory allows one to comprehend that instead of teachers asking what they can do to teach students to read, they should be asking what they can do to help their students to read (Pearsons & Stephens, 1992, p.29). Literacy acquisition occurs with the understanding that the relationship between teacher and student is vital to that student’s literacy success. Teachers are not in the classroom to simply teach but to foster an environment where not only learning but also acquisition can happen.

Language and culture

According to Ratnawati, dimensions of culture should be included when teaching a language to foster understanding between people of different cultures, to motivate learners and to help make it easy for the learners to assimilate into a foreign society. It is the teaching of English for the purpose of communication that emphasizes the teaching of not only what is linguistically appropriate but also socio-culturally appropriate which has been the focus of English pedagogy in the last few decades. Cultural implications have always been a matter of concern for the Muslims in teaching English language. According to Hyde (1994), “using English is often associated with image: “speaking English is the key to employment”, “speaking English speaks for modernity”, “and speaking English joins you to the international community” and so on.”

Milieu transformation is unjustified among the concerns of the Muslims. According to Alptekin (1993), "writers compose through culture specific schemas; and because most textbook writers are native speakers of English, they consciously or unconsciously transmit the views, values, beliefs, attitudes and feelings of their own English-speaking society." Most of the Muslims think that if they are exposed to western ELT materials only, they will likely adopt those ideas and culture that seem very modern to all. That is why if there is a practical approach of Islamization of education, there will be less influence of the western ideas and their Islamic worldview and culture will be unaffected. However, producing such ELT materials is a real challenge. It is because distortion of any text culturally for focusing on one view is very difficult which in turn results knowingly or unknowingly in Text complexity.

Text Complexity

Text complexity is based on the skills of the reader. When students have the literary skills necessary to read a text, they are likely to understand what they are reading. The Literacy Dictionary: The Vocabulary of Reading and Writing (**Harris & Hodges, 1995**) defines readability as "*the ease of comprehension because of style of writing*" (p. 203). This definition expands the idea of readability from the skills of the reader to include an analysis of the style of the writing. There are some writing styles that are harder for readers to understand than others. The Greenwood Dictionary of Education (**Collins & O'Brien, 2003**) defines Readability a bit differently: "*The quality and clarity of a piece of written work. Writing that can be understood by those for whom it is written*" (p. 295).

Methodology

A number of researchers have identified the various considerations that should be addressed in an effective meta-analysis (Glass, McGaw, and Smith, 1981; Rosenthal, 1991a, 1991b; Wolf, 1986). These include: (1) defining the domain of research, (2) identifying the moderator variables, (3) establishing criteria for inclusion in the study, and (4) determining the type of effect size to be used. Marzano (1998) explains that within the narrative approach, a researcher attempts to logically synthesize the findings from a collection of studies on a given topic by looking for patterns in the studies reviewed. He further explains that the utility of a theory as the basis from which to conduct a meta-analysis on instructional research is best understood if one considers the differences between frameworks, theories, and models. Anderson (1990a) explains that theories can be articulated at a number of levels. He specifies that some studies used in this meta-analysis provided an evaluation of the methodological quality of the study or studies they included. Marzano (1998) summarizes that a theory-based meta-analysis of the research on instruction involves four elements of human information processing which are the self-system, the metacognitive system, the cognitive system, and knowledge. Durlak (1995) notes: "The ultimate goal of a literature research is to obtain a representative and non-biased sample of relevant investigations. . ." (p. 323)

The method is extracted because it complements the study that aims to focus mainly on to have a deep insight for the necessities of Islamic linguistic skills in terms of moral modifications and cultural relevancies for the improvement of ELT materials.

Most of the ELT textbooks do not have any features of Islamic linguistics and any moral values, which is found by referring to the theories on evaluation of the ELT materials. The textbooks which are out now do not have any moral values in the text and Islamic linguistic skills which results in a negative influence on the Muslim youth as it corrodes their minds and thinking. Students who pass the schools are academically strong but Islamically damaged. This paper propounds to make the Muslim world realize that to effectively execute the Islamization of knowledge and education, we need our own textbooks. The attainment of communicative competence in English among Muslim learners can be done through the introduction of Islamic English and linguistic skills which will retain the meaning of the words and the meaning of the terms and values will not be distorted. The medium of Islamic culture and systematic applications of the modern methods can be introduced in the English language learning and teaching.

Results and discussion

The main problem is in the teaching materials, which include textbooks and the publications. Saeedah (2012) mentioned that textbooks, as the printed form of instructional materials, play a vital role in any English language-teaching program. Theorists such as Hutchinson and Torress (1994) said that “a textbook is an almost universal element of teaching”. Some others perceive their importance as one of the main tools of the trade in the language classroom. Sheldon (1988) suggests that they represent “the visible heart” of any ELT program. She highlighted that textbooks often contain ideologically-oriented values, cultural biases and social stereotypes. Another researcher Richards (2001) asserts, “They may distort content”. Many studies have demonstrated that racist attitudes, linguistics biases, gender dominance and cultural prejudices constitute part of the unrealistic view of the textbooks (Clarke and Clarke, 1990; Carrell and Korwitz, 1994; Ansary and Babaii, 2003). Sheldon (1988) propounded a theory on the evaluation of ELT materials, which said that the Literature on the subject of textbook evaluation is not very extensive. He mentioned that the publishers sometimes neglect matters of cultural appropriacy and they fail to recognize the restrictions operative in most teaching situations. Many textbooks, for example, use artificial, whole-sentence dialogues, despite the descriptions available of the truncated nature of authentic oral interaction (Cunningsworth, 1987). Therefore, he says, disjointed materials are produced in specific and possibly limited situations which are generalized and stitched together under flashy covers.

Teaching Materials and teachers

According to Sepidah (2013), Instructional materials take two forms: Printed ones, such as textbook, workbook, teacher’s guide, etc., and non-print ones, such as audiotapes, videotapes, audiobooks and other computer-based materials. Sheldon (1988) suggests that textbooks do not only represent the visible heart of any ELT program, but also offer considerable advantages for both students and the teachers when they are being used in ESL/EFL classrooms. Hutchinson and Torres (1994) argue that the textbook has a very important and a positive part to play in teaching and learning of English. They state that textbooks provide the necessary input into classroom lessons through different activities, readings and explanations.

Simmons and Baines (1998) assert that the schooling years are of great significance to students as these school students recognize that they are encountering physical, psychological and intellectual changes. Usually, textbook writers have better resources than the ordinary teacher do (Compendium 3, 1989). However, they lack personal experience and knowledge of particular classes. According to Nunan (1991), the development of teaching materials includes three aspects namely, selection, adaptation and creation. Appropriate teaching materials can be used to maximize the learning outcome. Rossner (1988) provides several reasons for the importance of teaching materials.

1. Teaching materials should provide information on how language works.
2. Teaching materials should provide a focused practice in manipulating language forms and developing communicative skills.

Teaching materials should also focus on understandable, relevant and interesting exchanges of information to enhance the learner's communicative abilities of interpretation, expression and negotiation (Richards and Rodgers, 1986). Rowntree (1974) classified that teaching materials prepared by teachers should imply the functions such as engaging the students motivation, recall earlier learning, provide new learning stimuli, activate the students response, give speedy feedback and encourage appropriate practice. According to Corbel (1985), there are three major procedures in developing teaching materials. The first is the identification of the learner's area of interest. The second is the identification of communication situations related to the learner. The third stage is to adapt or create teaching materials.

Discussion

The theories and ideas of different researchers and academicians in ELT world highlights the main problems with the materials. When teaching a language like English, there are words which distort the real meaning of the word in Arabic and do not fulfill the need of the word. Universal features which include lexis, grammar, topic, style, audiences, and code mixing of any language express social and cultural identities. English and Arabic language both have their own social and cultural identities. The cultural and social identities of each language should be maintained by its users, learners and teachers. As we know that language is the skeleton of any content, hence the content is to be taught in language, mostly English as it is a lingua franca. The English vocabulary is so vast that it almost caters the meaning of any word but the words actually do not give the right meaning of some words which are in Arabic language. Therefore, the Islamic language i.e. Arabic and its universal features should be taken in consideration and the meaning of the words should not be distorted. The nature of distortion is by Translation and Transliteration. They are capable of great distortions of the form and content of Islamic concepts. Distortion, which is done by translation, actually changes the whole meaning of the word. For example: *Salah* which is often translated as 'prayer' but in English, 'Prayer' is any communication with whatever is taken to be one's god, even that if it is an idol. But actually *Salah* is the supreme act of worship in Islam which is conducted five times a day for the purposes defined by Shari'ah. It should consist of precise recitations, genuflections, prostrations, standings and sittings with orientation towards the Ka'bah and should be only entered into after ablutions and solemn declaration of intention or Niyah. Imagine, how can all this be compressed into a word 'prayer', which actually

corresponds to the meaning of Arabic word Du'a. This is the concept of Islamic English which was proposed by Al-Faruqi. This concept allowed the learners to improve their communicative competence using the right word with the right meaning when speaking the global language i.e. English. English is the language which is used by the whole world to communicate which also includes the Middle East region, which has the highest population of Muslims. The influence of the language has led to the Muslims adopting it more than Arabic with the culture of the language layered underneath. Therefore, to protect the culture and Islamic identities among Muslim youth, the immersion of Islamic English and values in the ELT materials will bring a huge difference in their thinking and way of life. Every layer or line in the materials designed by the authors can have moral values packed in it which can make them both academically and Islamically successful.

Conclusion

As Tok (2010) states that a textbook plays an important role in the teaching–learning process and they are the primary agents of conveying the knowledge to the learners, therefore these primary agents are to be handled by best researchers and scholars which can control in demoralizing the learners. Today, the teaching materials which include textbooks do not have any objectives and are just created without knowing the learners' interests and their area of preference. There is no authentic resource which can confirm that the information provided is accurate or up to date or not. There are no authentic resources through which the textbook writers or the creator of the teaching materials can show parallelism. As seen before, the researchers who have evaluated the material which are being taught to the students in schools and colleges say that the materials just focus on imparting any kind of information irrespective of its moral value or ideological value.

The Muslim youth today is aiming for high accreditation and education. They are very competitive and want to excel in every field. They struggle to learn and attain command on the language. English language has made its mark on the whole world and the struggle of people to learn the language has also increased. But in this run, mostly the values, meanings, culture and social identities have changed a lot among the Muslims which is unfortunate. The scholars and the researchers are trying their level best to eliminate this problem. One of the ways is by actually producing their own materials i.e. Islamization of Education, a concept propounded by scholars like Dr. Bilal Philips. By taking this step we can stop the materials with no moral values and infuse Islamic values into them in order to reach the children. We can impart the correct meaning and the value of that particular word which they should understand. Islamization of knowledge and education can be done in any field which will make the Muslim learners not only academically strong but also Islamically strong. The Muslim learners should be aware of the distortion through translation and transliteration and understand. They should know the difference and be able to rectify the problems with Islamic values in the teaching-learning process. They should become volunteers in imparting the right words with the right meaning. Hence, immersion of Islamic English in enhancing the meaning and the universal features of a language should be used. This will help to ensure that the learners will learn the proper language and meaning of the words without distorting the real meaning of the word.

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