Authenticating 'Cover to Cover' Reader Series vis-à-vis Cultural Norms for the Iranian community[1]

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Abstract

This research study was an attempt to explore hidden cultural components in an ELT textbook from Oxford University Press (OUP) titled 'Cover to Cover'. Two research methodologies were relied on to unveil the western ideologies in this series: Firstly, a qualitative review over its reading textbooks was undertaken for authenticating the hidden western values for Iranian contexts. At this stage, analyses over randomly chosen units of the three-volume CTC book were managed via qualitative content analysis using inductive category formation techniques. In a second stage, a focus group including English language teachers indulged in teaching this series were interviewed to enrich the data with lived experiences. Overall, the findings revealed that the hidden values in the sampled texts might transmit some counter-local perspectives against Iranian leaners' local culture. Pedagogical suggestions as to improving critical cultural awareness practices for non-native students in the light of material development practices for EFL settings were discussed at the end.

Keywords: authenticity, material development, Islamic values, L2 culture, cultural awareness.

Introduction

After the introduction of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the previous two decades, using authentic reading materials in English Language Teaching (ELT) contexts was considered crucial as far as they could signify real uses of language in genuine contexts of communication. By definition, authentic materials refer to texts prepared by native speakers for non-pedagogical purposes (Bacon &Finnemann, 1990). Some scholars in the field redefined authenticity, which required language educators to re/consider this aspect. Among these critical figures was Widdowson (1979 cited in Feng&Byram, 2002) who distinguished genuine texts from the so-called authentic texts. To his view, while genuineness might refer to the quality of the texts, authenticity was believed to be more associated with the match between the intentions of text producers and the target readers or users of text materials. In so doing, authenticating commercial best sellers was deemed worthy of note due to the influence that the notions might have on their users. Appel (2011, cited in Garton and Graves, 2014) even maintained that '…In no other school subject do course books exert a similar influence as in language teaching' (50–51).

With regard to the above-cited distinction between authenticity and genuineness and in line with recent critical approaches within ELT realms that are associated with cultural artifacts hidden in textbooks for language education purposes, in this research, the author re/considered one commonly-used teaching material titled Cover to Cover (CTC) from Oxford University Press (OUP) and managed to make a survey on its compatibility with the Iranian university settings in terms of reader-writer uses of the texts.

Background of the study

A quick review in the existing literature signified that the number of research inquires prevailing even in major databases around the globe did not satisfy expectations in materials designing arenas as a crucial subdomain within ELT. Quite recently, Tomlinson (2012) in a state-of-the-art review of materials development for language education arenas declared that material designing in ELT has been one of the under-researched lines of enquiry. He maintained that teaching materials have been evaluated thus far just on pedagogical viewpoints and not for the sake of research into teaching materials themselves. To his view, various researchers have hitherto focused on development (Harwood, 2010), evaluation (Shaw and Masuhara, 2013) and adaptation of materials (Bell and Gower, 2011) separately not in tandem (Tomlinsons, 2012, all cited in Garton and Graves, 2014).

In the last decade, critical figures such as Gray &Holborrow (2012) and Pennycock (1994) brought to mind the currently commercialized textbooks on the grounds that they might culturally be value-laden to a certain degree and counteract local cultural norms of the community to which they are targeted. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, optimal utilization of authentic reading texts then has also been recently turned into one of the hot subjects bringing about lots of debates among language teaching experts concerning the justification and uses of their texts for this situation (Gilmore, 2007).

With regard to the use of authentic teaching materials referring to the first above-cited definition for genuineness, the pros and cons for pedagogical purposes have created two lines of researchers. There were some scholars like Shorthall (2007), Edge (1996), Krashen (1982, 1984) and Day &Bamford (1998) who believed that both authentic and inauthentic texts must be utilized together in EFL classrooms. In Gilmore (2007), it was stated that inauthentic teaching materials might fail to evoke the learner's natural curiosity in other cultures. The result was that when enough information was absent in the materials, students might assume that other cultures were exactly the same as their own. On the other hand, Carter (1998) and Garinger (2002) highlighted the fact that authentic texts could be modified so that they were made more accessible to language learners, while retaining some of the intriguing features of a natural language. Hedge (cited in Rahim Abdul-Hussein, 2014), for example, stressed that there were some authentic teaching materials organized for the purposes of teaching the language like TV commercials, films, news items, weather forecasts, airport and station announcement, radio talks, interviews, and debates, which were considered critical sources for teaching a language but they could be used with caution (here, English).

Other researchers in the second line above believed that the teachers themselves could excrete controls over genuine teaching materials though they could not incorporate any other artistic practices to such books. As evidence, Richards (2007) claimed that teaching materials should be analyzed in terms of hidden ideologies:

> Teachers are now encouraged to examine and confront the underlying ideologies of texts and textbooks. Textbooks, no longer seen as indispensable tools, are viewed as controlling instruments, hindering the creativity of the teacher, maintained in place through the pressure of publishers, and may result in the deskilling of teachers through their recycling of old, but tried and tested teaching techniques. They are transmitters of a dominant and dominating ideology. (Interview sessions available at http:// www.JackRichards.com)

Commercial books: Whose hidden ideologies do they carry?

At this point, it can be clear that teaching materials as such might be endowed with some values and ideals. Regarding this argument, Gray (2010) maintained that textbook titles such as "Interchange Series", "Top notch", "True to Life" and "Streamline" among many other teaching materials, which are also available as commercial textbooks in Iran, reflect learning English as a cross-cultural or international experience or journey. This reference to ordinary life of human beings in English teaching textbooks is a strong clue that culture is a pertinent and unavoidable aspect embedded in such books.

Van Dijk (1993)-a prominent scholar in discourse analytic studies-maintained that 'language is invested' (p. 250). By this assertion, he meant that language is not neutral in transmitting knowledge. Within ELT arenas, language uses and all communicative events must be noteworthy of hidden epidemiological values of the utterers. Lakoff (1973) also took the same view declaring that society is reflected in the language, with the values and assumptions held by society being mirrored in the language. But one may ask what these values might signify for the international contexts.

Values and ideologies in commercial best sellers

Traditionally, gender roles, norms of conduct, power balance in the society etc. have been the targets in those studies associated with values in teaching materials. As evidence, in a study by Shardacova and Pavlenko (2004), it was revealed that in a Russian textbook series for reading purposes, women had been denied as a class of social members with less capability and predominantly placed more in lower family domains. They had worked on two books as such which depicted some suboptimum stereotypes for women as inferior creatures being more preoccupied with romantic relationships. Men, on the other hands, had been shown to be more concerned with more practical, social jobs and careers.

Canagarajeh (1993) reported of another similar undertaking in his EFL teaching setting in which case consumerism had been publicized from US thinking styles and patterns of thoughts into the Sri Lankan curriculum.

Some other scholars like Gray (2010) have also considered international Mc-Donalized materials such as 'Headway', 'Topnotch', 'Interchange' series etc., as value-laden products, which might be delivered to language learners as consumers of western ideologies propagating some specific social and political values such as individualism, sexism, racism, egalitarianism among many other topics.

Research studies by Iranian scholars on cultural strands in teaching materials

In Iranian contexts, the number of research studies in which culture has specifically been focused is rare. Abdi and Asadi, (2013), Khoshmanesh, (2012), MohajjelKafshdouz, (2008),andSahragard and Davatgarzadeh, (2010) are among the recently published ones.

In an analytic research review, MohajjelKafshdouz (2008) discussed the type of culture that EFL teaching materials might offer and concluded if authentic materials are used effectively they can introduce the necessary knowledge they need in learning another language. On the positive side, by efficiency, the author meant that 1) cultural differences should be brought to the learners' consciousness since the main aim behind learning another language is not just vocabulary, pronunciation, and structure, 2) this set of information must begin from the familiar (local culture) to unfamiliar (target culture), 3) interest should be triggered in knowing other cultures, and 4 diverse sources should be brought by language teachers for this purpose such as newspapers, TVs and videos, talks and discussions, role plays etc.

In a similar attempt, Abdi and Asadi (2013) explored the advantages and disadvantages involved in teaching authentic materials within Iranian high schools and emphasized 'reciprocal teaching' as a crucial technique by a language teacher to elaborate the cultural information in a text. They explained how through this technique an English teacher could deal with probable misunderstandings that may occur to learners in the process of reading the passages in their English books. In addition, they valued 'metacognitive awareness' that is achieved through this technique.

Regarding epidemiological approaches towards hidden ideologies in English textbooks, which are currently used in Iranian contexts specifically in private language institutes, Sahragard and Davatgarzadeh, (2010), via a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach, considered the renowned role of gender realization in 'Interchange' Series.

Khoshmanesh, (2012) verified the applicability of Hafez works as authentic sources for language education, which have been drawn mainly from our holy book Quran. His rationale was that since the religion of Islam is language-based if people learn this language, their thought and culture may form around divinevalues and ideals (Khoshmanesh, 2008).

In another study by Cheng and Beighi (2012), EFL textbooks utilized in the Iranian Ministry Of Education (MOE) were entirely surveyed in the light of the interconnectedness of religion with language education. In the end, they noted that in Iranian contexts, textbooks could be mainly endowed with a covert approach towards presenting religion as a subject. This could indicate that in

our Iranian context, a major concern is and has always been to safeguard the public community of learners from any possible threats against mainstream McDonaldization' and 'Neo-Liberalism.

Hedayatkhah, (1995) specified the systematized cultural invasion of the west to our local Islamic norms as having the following features:

A) It is invisible and hard to discover.

B) It is long-lasting.

C) It is deep.

D) It is a full-fledged and a multi-aspect problem.

E) It is Pre-planned with lots of wide spread facilities.

F) Their victims are usually the youth.

G) It is prone with danger and

H) Its effects can be immense.

In line with the purposes of the present research, this study investigated a recently publicized teaching material in order to evaluate its content in terms of cultural authenticity. In so doing, the author specifically posed the following two questions:

1. What hidden cultural components have been incorporated into selected reading texts of 'Cover to Cover' series?

2. To what extent are the built-in cultural components in the reading passages in 'Cover to Cover' reader series compatible with Iranian students' Islamic perspectives on various subjects?

Method

The main purpose behind the present research was to extract in/compatible hidden cultural norms in a bestseller reading material titled 'Cover to Cover' reading series. To reiterate, this was to authenticate compatibility of CTC hidden cultural components for Iranian contexts.

Documentation

A qualitative survey was undertaken on the text content of three-volume CTC reading series by Richard R. Day and Junko Yamanaka (2007). This reading series is currently taught in some Iranian language institutes as a supplementary offset learning material and even in some universities as the

main textbook for the three-credit General English (GE) courses for non-English major university students.

CTC series has been mainly developed for satisfying the needs of a group of language learners who want to learn strategies for improving their reading skills. It helps students to get an overall picture of strategic reading in a context that has been designed chiefly through authentic intensive and extensive reading texts and exercises. Many structured reading texts have been sequentially ordered in which various reading skills like 'predicting the topic', 'skimming for the main idea', 'scanning' and 'recognizing points of views' among many others have predominantly been offered by its editors/authors. Timed reading exercises have also been included in this book series for improving the FL learners' fluency as well as their comprehension skills in reading English texts. A variety of authentic genres have been opted for the texts including magazine and newspaper articles, short excerpts of English literary texts, short stories and online ads along with websites.

Fit for purpose check; trustworthiness inspection

In this research study, content analysis techniques were used for surveying the reading texts in CTC since, to the researcher's view, text writers' hidden epistemological views as well as cultural patterns might be revealed on the authors' not only ways of organizing ideas but their extending various values in their selected texts. Following such route through knowing epistemological views of the material developers as such was not an easy task since there were some hazards in misinterpreting some ideologies. The present author tried to analyze the texts cited in this series in terms of the suitability of text contents with regard to explicit cultural issues for Iranian contexts in terms of their aptness regarding local Islamic norms.

Data collection procedures

Each of the three volumes of CTC series involved twelve units whose texts constituted article genres along with a final text usually with a narrative genre for further studies in each unit. Overall, there were thirty-six units in which two passages had been incorporated along with a third one for further studies. In order to make sure that in the sampling stage, a representative and equal-sized units in each volume of the book were chosen for enquiry, '*Stratified Random Sampling'* techniques were considered in which case the unit themes in the whole series were extracted and modified from the table of contents in each volume as in the following.

In each case, topics assigned by the CTC authors as evident in the table of contents of each volume were first classified under various theme groups after an initial skimming over the text contents. Selection was made based on the verified themes since the title of each lesson within which book authors had included assigned themes could not exactly indicate what hidden ideas had been probably incorporated since in some cases only the same names as the text titles had been given by the CTC authors like "Lost at sea" {Unit five in the third volume}, for which assigned theme had been specified only as "The sea" or " the decay of the art of lying" { unit three of the same volume} as "Lying" which were not comprehensive in terms of theme assignment for the aims of this research. This was to ensure the selection was not based only on the unit lessons included, and to focus on an ample ideological notions having been represented by the authors in this reading series and finally to avoid any repetitive options probably made in the item pooling stages for data analyses. Reading texts in each consecutive theme groups were then displayed plus assigned theme groups for the purposes of this study in all three-volume series of CTC. Hence, in each case, those assigned topics by the authors of CTC for which similar themes were specified in this research, were closely observed so that for each theme, only one topic from each theme be included to avoid replication of some similar hidden ideas being included in the texts that could possibly lead to biased results and in effect ensure diversity in the stratified selection processes. Accordingly, if after random selection, it was observed that two topics from the same theme had been pooled, the process of random selection was repeated until satisfying this requirement so that two different themes could be nominated from each volume. Tables 1 to 3 below display the involved theme groups. Asterisks indicate units selected for interpretation and data analyses.

Table 1
Represented Themes in Vol.1 of CTC Reading Series

Reading texts (1st. passages)	Units	Assigned topics in the CTC	Assigned sub-Themes in this study
To marry or not to marry?	One	Marriage	Social Life
Getting enough sleep	Two	Sleep	Health
An extra sense	Three	The supernatural	Philosophy of life

Not all fun and games?	Four	Online	Technology
**Learning in America	**Five**	**Culture**	**Education**
The secrets to a long life	Six	Age	Health
Survival after eight days at sea	Seven	Survivors	Environment
The thin line between beauty and health	**Eight**	**Looking good**	**Health**
Understanding ourselves	Nine	Personality	Psychology
The camel library	Ten	Animals	Wild life
A lesson learned	Eleven	Challenges	Ethics
UFOs: Are they out there?	Twelve	Space	Environment

The same procedures were undertaken in the second and third volumes of CTC. Table 2 displays the involved theme groups for the second volume.

Table 2
Represented Themes in Vol. Two of CTC Reading Series

Reading texts (1st. passages)	Units	Assigned topics in the CTC	Assigned sub-Themes in this study
Living with stress	One	Health	Health
A woman who loves boxing	Two	Role reversal	Social life
Unusual festivals	**Three**	**Entertainment**	**Culture**
Stupid criminals	Four	Crime	Social life
Michelle Wie	Five	Sports	Health
Being cute to survive	Six	Science	Social life
What is intelligence?	Seven	Intelligence	Education
Stereotypes	Eight	Viewpoints	Social life
Falling out	Nine	Relationships	Social life
The wisdom of the world	Ten	Wise words	Social life
Creating your own luck	**Eleven**	**Luck**	**Philosophy of life**

A worldwide phenomenon	Twelve	Art	Art

Finally Table 3 below shows the same procedures for the third volume of CTC.

Table 3

Represented Themes in Vol. Three of CTC Reading Series

Reading texts (1st. passages)	Units	Assigned topics in the CTC	Assigned sub-Themes in this study
Beauty	One	Beauty	Culture
Travel mistakes and miscommunications	Two	Travel	Education
The decay of the art of lying	**Three**	**Lying**	**Ethics**
Hoaxes and April Fools's Day	Four	Hoaxes	Ethics
Lost at sea	Five	The sea	Environment
Learning through failure	Six	Learning	Education
Who is your role model?	Seven	Role models	Social life
Drugs that help mind	**Eight**	**The mind**	**Health**
Google it!	Nine	Entrepreneurs	Technology
Wired youth want face time	Ten	Technology	Social life
Job happiness	Eleven	Happiness	Social life
Cross-cultural communication	Twelve	Culture	Culture (L2)

As tables 1 to 3 indicated, random sampling from each volume was done separately to obtain equal-sized sections of each diverse theme in all three volumes of the book. Finally, six diverse themes were opted for including Education, Culture, philosophy of life, Social life, Ethics and Health within which the first reading passages of each unit were selected for data analyses. In

this research, the second reading passages and "Extensive reading" sections in each unit of CTC were not included in the sampling stages for brevity reasons.

Results

Overall, analyses on randomly chosen units of the sampled book were managed via two stages. The first stage involved qualitative content analysis techniques using inductive category formation, coding, classifying and interpretations. Quantitative content analysis of materials and textbooks which usually involves counting the number of citation and references of some topics, or particular content categories and estimating the tallied frequencies was not of concern here, since the researcher believed that investigating propositions, by nature, might require deeper analysis of the texts that cater for not considering linguistic but socio-pragmatic attempts for screening the text writers' ideologies. In this research, a qualitative content analysis was undertaken via text analysis approaches. In text analysis approaches, the texts, by definition, might involve menus, transcription notes, musical lyrics, speeches, posters, short stories, novels, popular magazines, articles and geographical layouts. In textual analysis approaches, various undertakings can be done over the texts involving pragmatic, socio-pragmatic, political as well as linguistics approaches (May, 2002; Yin, 2011). In this study, the researcher took a socio-pragmatic to highlight the ideologies and discourses of individuals that had come to enforce some English-speaking peoples' cultural perspectives on different subjects like marriage, stereotypes, extraordinary senses, aging, beauty, festivals, etc. through texts.

On dependability grounds, in line with the suggested research questions, some other five sub-questions framed as mini questions were in the author's mind to extract the intended hidden cultural norms in a more consistent way during various analyses on the chosen texts. This was to ensure determining consistently what the individuals in these incorporated articles were trying to communicate to the global community. These mini questions could possibly pave the way for the researcher to find suitable responses for the two main research questions in this research. The so-called five sub questions were:

A) What are the individuals featured in the texts communicating both directly and indirectly?

B) Who are the contributors to the texts?

C) How had the texts been framed and presented?

D) What terms and phrases had been used and what was their symbolic meaning? and finally,

E) What assumptions had been embedded in the texts about various phenomena?

The answers to such questions were used as evidences through inductive processing of the reading texts that followed 'Specific' to 'General' instantiation of the proposed ideologies communicated in the texts. This was to build arguments about the organizers and producers and material designers of this reading series concerning cultural conditions of Asian countries to which this book series are being distributed.

In line with the first and second proposed questions, the first reading parts of the sampled data were initially explored in terms of their content to seek the hidden meaning and culturally-concerned aspects of life presumably hidden between lines that might echo the authors' ideology regarding the incorporated texts.

In a second stage, to validate the researcher's self-made interpretations, focus groups re/check for confirming the interpretations of the reading texts was also used via written interview protocols (Pickering, 2008). Accordingly, the researcher sought help from some university teachers and language institute instructors who had been involved in reading the selected book on the covered topics.

In a larger scale research study from which this research was drawn, six selected texts including units (five and eight) from the first volume, units (three and eleven) from the second and units (three and eight) from the third volume had been selected. For brevity reasons, in this article, the first analyzed text from each volume has been brought as evidence for confirming the arguments made against the cultural in/compatibility of contents in this teaching series. Accordingly, in the following section units (five and three) from the first two volumes and unit three from the third volume were selected and went under close scrutiny.

Unit Five of 'CTC, Vol. I

The first reading passage of unit five presented multi-national perspectives towards culture. In fact, the text entitled "learning in America" is an article in a retelling experience of a Korean graduated student from an American university. The story begins when a Korean learner who has travelled to America gets acquainted with a new situation which is a little bit strange for

him. From the first lines of the text, the author of the article-the same Korean student narrator- describes the casual clothing of his psychology professor who had entered the class with a cup of coffee leaning back his seat and sporadically crossing his legs in his desk. The Korean author compares and contrasts this mannerism of the American professors with a group of typical Korean professors who had apparently tended to be more formal and imposed, harsh behavior compared with American professors. The author repeatedly brings a vivid memory of his own in class with this professor suggesting that for one thing American professors never get angry if you ask them, for instance, the same questions over and over again. Then he concludes:

> As I spent more time there, I began to learn that in the United States, education is more interactive and there is more room for discussion.

The text is persistently bombarded with words emphasizing that studying in American societies provides better learning opportunities. Think through the following lines as evidences:

1. Sixth paragraph, Line three: "*students are encouraged to learn from each other* as well as from the teacher." { in US educational centers, modern reflective methodologies are more current compared with those of Korea}

2. Ibid, line four: "*While I missed the respect shown to the teachers in my university in Korea, I enjoyed the freedom and the interactions between professors and students in the American university.*{A preference towards American universities compared with local universities in Korea as a member in lower-developing countries}"

If we take close heed of the two verbs used in the second evidence (*missed* vs. *enjoyed*), it might show the author's more inclination and a hidden urge towards studying in American universities which might denote 'brain escape' phenomenon among other things. The word "missed" shows that the author is internally connected to her home education for respect aims for professors, however he prefers other rights and priorities like 'freedom' and 'interactive pedagogy' that an American university can offer which had been missing in her own country. Presumably, this use of the two verbs above cannot be a neutral approach towards comparing and contrasting the two separate educational contexts of the US vs. Korea. In other words, the more emotional force behind the verb 'enjoyed' compared with 'missed' is a case in point.

Although the points mentioned above can not necessarily refer to the author's intention to give more prominence to current concerns in developing

countries like Iran and Korea (Northern one) which is usually termed as "brain escaping" movements in third-world countries, it can provoke some inner concepts as to the Better American life and Education compared with less recognized Asian modalities of life and education; North Korea is one example. This was quite conspicuous since in another part of text, author mentions that during the his stay at an American university, he has apparently got more than a degree; it has been nothing but a deep understanding that he has learnt about differences in values and diverse ways to consider things. At the surface, this nice ending to the text can be highly appreciated but it should have been done to the extent that both merits and demerits of the two Korean and American teaching mannerisms be explicitly stated in the text.

In all, there were seven paragraphs in this text with nearly twenty-five sentences out of which, most of the statements were indicating improper or apparently unjustified mannerisms of Korean professors. For instance, when the author was describing serenity of the professors in the two teaching contexts, he said:

> As days went by, I found more differences. I noticed that the students would often interrupt the professor to ask questions. The professor didn't seem frustrated by this. Each time a question was asked, he would answer it patiently (Par. 3. p. 58).

Again, using the adverb 'patiently' here could get the author's neutrality away from a sound comparison which was expected to be happening if the author of the this text wanted just to highlight differences rather than citing valued vs. devalued traits on the part of the professors. Is 'patiently' a neutral word here? Probably not!

Unit three of CTC, Vol. II

In the first passage of unit three in the second volume, three so-called 'Unusual festivals' are cited including 'Halloween', ' Festivals of Snakes' and *'La Tomatina'* or the 'tomato festival'. The interesting point in the whole passage has been explicitly mentioned in the first paragraph. Describing a historical account of the Halloween, the author explicitly states a high privileged standpoint towards this festival as the superior one compared with the other two unusual festivals:

> This festival started in Europe and has spread around the world. However, not all celebrations spread around the world. Every country has its own singular festivals(p. 30).

As clear, the author of this article is apparently propagating an inner desire towards Halloween compared with other feasts in the eyes of the reader by saying "*not all celebrations spread around the world*" except Halloween. It is good to note that Halloween, once used to designate the eve of the Feast of All Saints, has currently become a strictly secular holiday in the minds of most people. Here, it is pertinent to bring to mind some historical accounts pertained to Halloween that is worthy of mentioning as far as globally-known religious feasts are concerned. Horvat (2004) in an article on Christianity as faith under attack asserted that 'Samhein' has long been the Halloween's origin dating to the ancient Celtic festival.

> This was the wise way the missionary Church acted in face of this pagan feast that she transformed. She ordered the customs and habits that existed among a people to the Catholic Religion. A pagan society is wiping out the very memory of Catholic feasts. The Feast of all Souls is all but wiped out of the minds of society at large ([2]Posted by Dr. Marian T. Horvat, on October 26, 2004).

The interesting point here is that instead of the Church wisely instituting sound traditions to replace the pagan customs, a reverse process is being witnessed today. Now the question that might come to one's mind is that to what extent such propagation for Halloween as a festival compared with the other two unusual festivals can be accidental?

The discerned threats to EFL classrooms are at times discussed by the educational practitioners in terms of the scope of festive discussions for *'inspiring creativity, attracting large crowds, and generating emotional responses'* (Getz, 2010). In and of themselves, festivals designate community values, their ideologies, identity and continuity. The themes, which are hidden in festival discourses such as the one discussed in this unit might indicate among other things ignorance of the saints' souls, forgetting previous religious ideologies pertained to church principles and maintaining atheism. Many outcomes for cross-understanding of the silent learners cannot also be ignored by us as teachers when introducing the themes. The upshots as such must be viewed from many multi-perspective points. From cultural-religious point of

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[2]Retrieved from ' tradintioninaction.org.'

view, the writers' preference over one specific festival over the others engages the readers' mind as to the advantages of a taken festive to be broadcasted to the world. From political outlooks, festivals and rituals demonstrate binding on the part of the involved people in communities and cultures (Durkheim, 1976), they might also encourage disagreement and even disputation of the meanings and impacts of events on people. The contribution of these ideas to widening the class awareness of L2 culture can be appreciated to the extent that our learners bring vigilant eyes and ears to the class discussions. In the analyzed passage above, the ideas hidden behind Halloween notion enrich the discussions but get more important since this festival has recently taken an unreligious taint to it, whichmust not be easily overlooked by English teachers when introducing the themes in such authentic texts.

Unit three of CTC, Vol. III.

Entitled as "the decay of the art of lying", the third unit in this last volume is totally about recognizing some facts on how to deal with 'lying' as a vicious habit which is against ethical rules of conduct. The familiar 'Pinocchio face' with a long nose, which reminds all of us of a famous folktale of our childhood, starts the unit. This unit like the previous sampled units constitutes two reading sections including an essay on lying matters along with another reading extract, as further study, from "The Railway Children" book.

An initial dilemma in mind: One conspicuous point about the title of this lesson is using the word "art" with positive connotations for the disguised practice of 'lying', as an unethical conduct, with negative implications. Without any prejudging the author's intentions in using this word in the title, each line was explored in terms of the hidden epistemological views.

The first reading passage starts with mentioning Mark Twain-the famous American writer- as a humorist-journalist who had once given a persuasive but a humorous speech on the subject of lying. There are several remarks that show people in all decades, in general, have enjoyed and will continue to enjoy the act of lying to reach their purposes without any references to the specific situations where rare lying should be treated with care and managed cautiously according to our Islamic teachings. The following evidences are just some thought-provoking examples:

Par. two, Line three: Lying is something that humans have always done and will always do.It would be an impossible task to stop people from enjoying their favorite hobby of lying"

Par. three, Line one: "Most sensible people agree that lying is something that we cannot do without. To try to live without lying would be foolishness"

Par four, Line ten: "Can you imagine living with someone who spoke nothing but the truth from sunrise to sunset? How unbearable it would be

At first, one might think that the author of this text might be setting the stage for describing "white lie" as a universally known and recognized strategy by human beings for easing a harsh situation. In the concluding paragraphs, it has also been stated on behalf of some philosophers that lying is unavoidable but it should be used for the good purposes, not evil. An urgent call is also felt in the concluding paragraphs in that the act of lying is decaying and it should be taught for the good of both ourselves and the society in which one lives. This philosophy is, here, first explored in the light of our Islamic teachings to cast more light on the issue. According to Islamic teachings, lying is considered as one of the greatest sins. In Islam, in some particular instances and for specific reasons, lying is also practiced for the good of some target groups in some occasions like war, promising to a wife and peacemaking or creating reconciliation among people. Nonetheless, in this reading text, the practice of such lying for good rather than evils has been emphasized less as the above-cited evidences verified. As an example, the author has asserted that this conduct should apparently be a rule rather than an exception by saying: *'It would be an impossible task to stop people from enjoying their favorite hobby of lying'*. Using the word "hobby" by the author can be thought-provoking to a certain extent.

The vicious nature of lying in Islam has been verified in various sayings and also in Quran as 'Grave Sins'. In Quran, lying has been cursed on various other occasions and the cases where "white lie" is praised has been devoted to some scarce spells mentioned above not as 'hobby' to be practiced everyday: Another counter-practice local norm. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in *'Wasa'ilul-Shia'* has alleged:*"Beware! I inform you regarding the greatest of the mortal sins: Associating anything with Allah, disobeying parents and 'lying'!"*

Telling evidences in Quran are also numerous. Nahl Surah, verse: 105 reads: *"Only they forge the lie who do not believe in Allah's communications, and these are the liars"*.

Allah says in another surah:

"...there shall be no intercourse nor transgression nor quarreling amongst one another (during Hajj)" (Surah al-Baqarah 2:197).

In this surah, the liar has been assimilated to a transgressor. Such hidden ideologies must be brought to the surface when language instructors proceed to discussing messages of the texts to the students. There are times when some of these communications are taken for granted by some students, which should not be assumed that all the students can rightly judge the truth behind them. Here the argument is not to sit on the subject of how the act of lying is bad or disguised among Muslims but that the ideologies presented in the sampled text might be quite different from what is the norm in Islamic countries and this should be taken into close consideration while presenting such texts in language classes within Islamic communities, in particular.

In a similar trend, in part two of this unit another text on the subject of lying has been presented. Again, a fact has been taken for granted about the universality of the act of lying. In the beginning paragraphs, the author has emphasized that lying is a normal general practice among all and it is very frequently happening daily.This has been further focused on and highlighted when the writer of the text asserts that:

'we ALL lie at one point or another, even those "little white lies" count' (par.5: Lines two & three).

Par.2, Line 1: *'It seems that we're largely a nation of liars, with some estimates saying that most people lie to others once or twice a day and in about 30 percent to 38 percent of our interactions in all'.*

This assertion is continued by another section (paragraphs six to thirteen) that verifies some top seven signs that show a person is telling the truth or a lie, because it is a normal practice and one has to know some rules to detect when another person is lying.

Here, the critical moment for the reader might be when s/he faces the two succeeding paragraphs signifying the fact that we are all living in a world of distrust and must be aware not to be fooled:

'It's imperative to know the signs that someone may be lying to you' (ibid

On the face of it, this might be a normal reaction from a psychological stance. Nonetheless, this imperative nature of distrust has again some after-thoughts according to local norms in our Iranian settings.

In our country with prevalent Islamic configurations in different social structures, such distrust is not acceptable to this extent. In fact, in Islam, the central concept of social interactions and participation in social affairs is "trust", not "distrust" as the text simply implies. Trust-seeking culture is appraised in Islam. Nazarpour and Montazeri (2009) recalled us to the concept of "trust" as one of the social capitals of our Islamic world, which might be quite different from the capitalistic and western ideologies, which are hidden in the minds of

the writer(s) of this analyzed text. Nazarpour and Montazericited trusteeship among some other recommended social attributes that human beings must follow such as truthfulness and promise keeping.Another counter-local evidence.

Data drawn from focus groups

In the second round of the present project, the above interpretations were sent to some university teachers who had already taught CTC series and asked to give their views over both the proposed interpreted hidden meaning and major messages of the above chosen texts. This was done to bring the researcher a sound view that could ensure triangulation in reporting more credible results.

The target groups were chosen mainly from those colleagues in the field who had already taught CTC series. Also among this group were those colleagues who were interested to collaborate though they might not have taught such courses. They liked to join to this campaign due to their interest and curiosity in knowing the results. Ultimately, three teachers cooperated and sent their views. Below, a brief demographical description is given related to the participant teachers. For privacy reasons, teachers have all been categorized and ordered into alphabetical letters from A to C (Table 4).

Table 4
Demographic Representation of the Focus Group in the Interviews

Teacher	Teaching experiences at tertiary levels	Age range 1)25-30 2) 31-35 3) 36-40 4) 41-45 5) 46-50	Gender
A	10	2	Female
B	17	3	Male
C	25	5	Male

The participants as the focus group in this study were required to 1) fill in an questionnaire with two open questions, which verified their overall reaction and feedback towards using CTC series in teaching contexts at their own university settings, and 2) give their impressions over the given interpretations with regard to proposed questions in this study by the researcher of the present study. Below, each will be reported one by one, but for brevity reasons, the researcher included this

set of evidences within the main posed questions of this research. The interview questions are reiterated for a preview.

1. What propositional aspects related to topic selection have taken first priority in CTC series which might run counter to your local teaching contexts in Iran?

2. To what extent are the built-in cultural components in the reading passages in CTC reader series compatible with our Iranian students' Islamic perspectives on various subjects? Can you give some evidences?

In response to the two questions, the majority of the participants denoted that the chosen topics in CTC were all of general interest and universal in terms of scope and domain, which in itself denoted that specificity for some nations and local contexts had not been within the main intention of its contributors. In terms of topic appropriateness, overall views showed that although there had been some issues in CTC which must be noted by prospective teachers, most of the lessons in this series had been ok in this regard for example Teacher B said:

There are some cultural issues..most of the lessons are ok.. but in ourdepartment we are searching for a better option.

When he was asked to give specific reasons for this change in their department, he said:

For example in some texts there is a beauty contest for men..women can have more than one husband..

Likewise, Participant C mentioned the fact that in some texts of CTC, women suit the men to marry them. Such facts were also endorsed by teacher C as incompatible to local cultural norms, as he asserted below:

Cover to Cover is a three-volume reading comprehension textbook that is mainly concerned with teaching reading comprehension through literary passages. The focus in on literature and Western culture concepts. What might be considered as counter to local teaching contexts in Iran is the Western culture load of the book, which is not that much

familiar in Iranian contexts. The book adopts a western outlook toward language and literature which departs from Easter perspectives.

The assigned topics in CTC include social matters like traveling, hoaxes, culture, entertainment, relationships, Luck, happiness, crime, etc. Artistic matters are also included like beauty, role models. Scientific matters were among another line in this series like health and intelligence. Regarding any thematic relevance of the topics above, one might think that religion has not been specifically an issue in CTC as teacher C also verified:

Teacher C: Religion is not an issue in these series. The books seem to be neutral to religious issues.

Nevertheless, to the best knowledge of the researcher in this study, now and then specific references had been made to a variety of issues, which obviously ran counter to local religious norms. Teacher C, also continued in this regard that some topics associated with Christian concepts are "rather incompatible with Islamic perspectives'. He brought some examples as well; units like "To marry or not to marry?" etc.

In response to the second question, teacher B, however, claimed that generally all the topics in CTC were plausible and did not contain counter-productive materials. Even, when the clear evidences of discrepancies with the local norms were shown to him, in a conference setting, where initial findings of the present research were presented, again he insisted that the topics are not causing any problems in his teaching context at all.

Teacher A, who was a colleague in a university setting demanded for readjusting the assigned topics with local norms. As evidence, she brought some examples from the unit "Crime" in Unit 4, in the 2nd volume of CTC. She believed that there was nothing special about using 'crime' as a topic in itself but the ideas mentioned in the two texts in each unit may be interpreted in a wrong way by students:

Teacher A: "*To me, why a criminal should be called 'stupid' when s/he had not managed to escape from the police"* .

In the text on stupid criminals, all the cases mentioned were caught by the police because they had not been more intelligent to complete their illegal actions. Here, some points should be considered which odd

one another out, firstly, if they had not been intelligent to escape and it has been their fault, so this might corroborate in itself that fooling the police is a favorable act, and, secondly, if on the other hand, they had done something wrong, it is a recommended act to conceal their wrongdoing activity, or else they are not intelligent. In order to bring evidences where such a condition is prevailing, a sample excerpt of the text on 'Crime' cited by participant A above is brought below:

> A British man with an intense hatred of a particular American couple created a website announcing that he would pay a reward to have the couple murdered. The website was quite detailed, with photos of the American couple and specific information about where to find them. It also included the British man's contact information about where to find them. It also included the British man's contact information and instructions on how to collect the reward. The officers followed the instructions exactly, which made it easy for them to collect the man for attempted murder.

In order not to take this view of the author for granted, the introductory paragraph of the text, from which the above excerpt was taken, is cited here to know if contrary to the fact is found:

> Movies often portrait criminals as masterminds with complex plans and clever senses of humor. In reality, however, the opposite seems to be closer to the truth—many criminals are inconceivably stupid. Here are four stories of criminals who weren't as smart as the ones in the movies.

There were not any conclusive paragraphs in this passage, though. The assertion by the author of this text designated some probable, successive intentions:
1) Real criminals are different from those on TV and films.
2) The criminals are not that clever.
3) If they are clever, they must be able to trick the police.
4) In reality, the opposite is true.

These and other evidences might implicitly indicate that the author himself also has had the same view over the assertions above.

Discussion

In line with the posed two questions, some interpretations via some emerged themes could be argued in the light of analyzed data in the previous section. Generally speaking, the emerged themes which could be considered as some hidden cultural norms in the text indicated various arguments in favor of western ideologies which were not in line with local norms. Two main emerged themes could be brought up here, which might show incompatibility of the contents in CTC with local norms prevalent in Iranian context as residing in the data. Accordingly, the textual analyses over the selected reading tests along with the data gained through interview sessions with some focus groups as informants revealed that the contents in CTC were conspicuous for:

1. Focusing on worldly matters like outer appearance drawing on beauty among both gender, western better life including individualism and consumerism culture among other things.
2. Disregarding other communities' norms and local values esp. in Asian countries for which such reading books are sent from the western publishers like OUP. Values like counseling, solid structure of family in Islamic communities, local feasts in the target communities, religious perspectives, etc..

This line of research has been less the target of applied linguists to this date. Some pertinent questions in this status quo might be:

1) How far can we go ahead if we just use genuine texts?

2)To what extent can we gain success if and only if we make use of such so-called genuine texts for teaching purposes but not considering the hidden double swords of some improper existing materials that currently avail to the excess at the markets?

For sure, depending on the context of our teaching and having in mind the learners' own characteristics, we can choose to what extent, but we as teachers along material developers can surely make a great change since we have learnt via various cultural discussion to think global but act local. Now a crucial point to consider is whether we can ensure the same effect in our learners? Can we just put the seeds and predict positively that everything will follow its right route?

In the end, the following two suggestions maybe manageable in ensuring authentic uses of such texts on a sure and sound basis. Authenticity here intends the uses for which texts have been originally written: A) Constant training of teachers to be informed of the currently developed ideas and innovations in material development arenas and B) Promoting principles pertained to reflective methodologies such as Critical Pedagogy (CP) among language practitioners. In so doing, focusing on the current concerns pertained to here and now interests of students could surely give rise to more interesting topics to choose from compared with weaved syllabi as used in best seller international books.

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Biodata

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