



A Review of Materials Development in Multi-Cultural Developing World L2 contexts

Jayakaran Mukundan

Taylor's University

The journey of the English language textbook in Malaysia across the past seven decades has experienced numerous changes, partly due to the nation's status as newly independent nation. Malaysia has a multi-racial, multi-religious population and inherited the English language from its colonized past. The urban-rural divide and the multitude of school types which range from Malay-medium to vernacular (Mandarin and Tamil) on one hand and the private international schools where English is the medium of instruction (and the IGCSE curriculum is in use) on the other, makes materials-based investigation fascinating. The purpose of this chapter is to determine how the sociological concepts of representation, social re-engineering, and agendas of the state influence selection of content in textbooks; and how these intrusions affect the textbook as artifact in terms of situational and linguistic realism and in other aspects such as appropriateness in terms of the principles of language acquisition. What implications these intrusions have on learning-teaching will also be discussed. Experts wonder if decisions made with regards content selection only took into consideration social reengineering agendas. Many believed pedagogical considerations were side-stepped in the evolution of the state-sponsored textbook. This article will show how hybridization processes turned the Malaysian textbook into a unique localized artifact and how these motives were later abruptly abandoned to make way for the global textbook, mainly due to the sudden emergence and importance placed on the CEFR. Teachers could benefit from this awareness of how this extra agenda added to language textbooks can either have adverse effects on language learning and acquisition because of a lack of fit to young adult interests, or perhaps inadvertently, help make them more accessible to learners in terms of aspects of cultural familiarity.

Perjalanan buku teks bahasa Inggeris di Malaysia sepanjang tujuh dekad yang lalu telah mengalami banyak perubahan, sebahagiannya disebabkan oleh status negara sebagai negara yang baru merdeka. Malaysia mempunyai penduduk berbilang kaum, agama dan mewarisi bahasa Inggeris dari zaman penjajahan dahulu. Jurang bandar-luar bandar dan pelbagai jenis sekolah yang terdiri daripada bahasa pengantar Melayu hingga vernakular (Mandarin dan Tamil) di satu pihak dan sekolah antarabangsa swasta di mana bahasa Inggeris adalah bahasa pengantar (dan kurikulum IGCSE digunakan) pada lain, menjadikan penyiasatan berasaskan bahan menarik. Tujuan bab ini adalah untuk menentukan bagaimana konsep sosiologi perwakilan, kejuruteraan semula sosial, dan agenda negara mempengaruhi pemilihan kandungan dalam buku teks; dan bagaimana pencerobohan ini mempengaruhi buku teks sebagai artifak dari segi realisme situasi dan linguistik dan dalam aspek lain seperti kesesuaian dari segi prinsip pemerolehan bahasa. Apakah implikasi pencerobohan ini terhadap pembelajaran-pengajaran juga akan dibincangkan. Pakar tertanya-tanya sama ada keputusan yang dibuat berkaitan pemilihan kandungan hanya mengambil kira agenda kejuruteraan semula sosial. Ramai yang percaya pertimbangan pedagogi telah dipinggirkan dalam evolusi buku teks tajaan kerajaan. Artikel ini akan menunjukkan bagaimana proses hibridisasi menjadikan buku teks Malaysia sebagai artifak setempat yang unik dan bagaimana motif ini kemudiannya ditinggalkan secara tiba-tiba untuk memberi laluan kepada buku teks global, terutamanya disebabkan oleh kemunculan mendadak dan kepentingan diletakkan pada CEFR. Guru boleh mendapat manfaat daripada kesedaran ini tentang bagaimana agenda tambahan yang ditambahkan pada buku teks bahasa ini boleh memberi kesan buruk terhadap pembelajaran dan pemerolehan bahasa kerana kurang sesuai dengan minat dewasa muda, atau mungkin secara tidak sengaja, membantu menjadikannya lebih mudah diakses oleh pelajar dari segi aspek keakraban budaya.



Keywords: State-sponsored textbook global coursebook 3-decade review social re-engineering Agendas of State

Introduction

What is written, it seems, can never escape conflict. The English language textbook has had its fair share of controversy in the recent past with some experts referring to it as “masses of rubbish skilfully marketed” (Brumfit, 1979:30) or regarding it simply as “a necessary evil” (Sheldon, 1988:237). Aston-Warner (1963) declared that her teaching of Māori children became more energised and her learners more engaged in learning after she burnt her textbooks: “You should have heard the roaring in the chimney” (p.119), she said in jubilation. Most of the controversies regarding textbooks and their use have been confined to aspects connected to pedagogy, like the inability of textbooks to clearly reveal to the teacher what is expected of tasks and activities which are derived from notions perceived by teachers and teacher trainers. Pulverness (1999; 5-10) states texts in books are sometimes considered “dead on page” and “it takes all the teacher’s skills to reanimate them for the learner”. This he says stifles creativity and leads to energy and time-wasting. However, there is a lack of reports on empirical research illustrating this. Much of the problems with the lack of evidence on what goes on in classrooms when the textbook is used is because much research (like in Japan) focuses on content analysis (Ida and Matsuoka, 2023).

Culture-related textbook research has become more popular lately (Dabaggh and Atai, 2022; Song, 2019) and new research is beginning to expose the impending disaster of material developed in newly independent and developing countries like those in Malaysia, where ideologies have infiltrated school textbooks. Textbooks in Malaysia which are produced using large amounts of money from funding agencies like the World Bank were soon manipulated with (in terms of themes) to accommodate social re-engineering strategies. This, of course compounded the problems the textbook already had which were connected to their inability to contribute to effective teaching (Tomlinson, 2011).

The textbook, also known as the coursebook, is generally the core material for teaching English. Because the books are usually produced by commercial publishers whose intentions are to sell them in every place possible, they are commonly referred to as global textbooks or coursebooks (Tomlinson, 2011). They have themes for secondary school learners which usually focus on family, friendship and relationships, people’s pastimes, school trips, celebration of birthdays and about role models (usually celebrities who are considered icons among young people). The assumption is that by introducing young EFL learners to things or scenarios surrounding them, or which they commonly associate with, it may fulfil a crucial language learning need, which is, to provide the contexts (via themes) where the most common words and expressions used in the English language can be generated or exploited for learning. However, these common themes in global coursebooks are not taken into consideration entirely by textbook developers in developing countries. State-developed textbooks contain themes which are not regular, and which align closely to agendas of the state, like nationalism and civic consciousness.

The Malaysian Multi-Cultural Context after Independence from Britain

Newly independent states enjoy numerous privileges, which include access to development grants. As a result of this, the English language learning-teaching environments in many SL and FL contexts differ mainly because governments in developing countries like Malaysia, had access to massive grants from the World Bank. The government of Malaysia believes education is priority and that it must be made accessible to every child. Apart from free education at primary and secondary level, Malaysia also had a textbook loan scheme where students were loaned textbooks for free. The government took advantage as sponsor of these free books to propagate some ideologies they believed could promote core values to foster nation building. Thus, these free books apparently came with a cost (Mukundan, 2003) as various agendas of the state like nationalism, civic consciousness, and racial unity (which rarely feature in commercial/global coursebooks)

found their way plentifully as themes within the books. Experts wondered if this would have affected the quality of the books as resources for teaching and learning. (Mukundan, 2003)

Malaysia, a newly independent state, has undergone changes in terms of demographics. What used to be a homogenous population in pre-colonial Malaysia (then Malaya), where the indigenous Malays (also referred to as Bumiputra) were the dominant race, soon changed and became multi-cultural when the British, running the colonial administration, allowed Chinese immigrants to come and work the tin mines in the 19th century. Then, Indians were brought in to work the rubber plantations as tappers and as municipal workers in the Public Works Department. With the influx of Chinese and Indian immigrants, the British practised a divide and rule policy where all the different ethnic communities were segregated mainly in terms of jobs, thereby ensuring contact and integration among the races was minimal. This, the colonizers believed, was a convenient way to rule.

Financially, it worked very well for the Chinese, who worked on the lucrative tin trade. They used a lot of their new wealth to open provision shops and other retail outlets and went on to control the commerce of Malaysia. The Indians, while they were mostly labourers succeeded in getting their children into English medium schools and many went on to become professionals with considerable influence in the public and private sectors. The Malays, however, mostly remained farmers and fishermen and were almost completely ignored in their own country. While these short-term segregations of the races would be considered ill-conceived in terms of nation-building, independence in 1957 however, did not immediately lead to problems. It took slightly more than a decade for hostilities to simmer and in 1969, just after the national elections, race riots broke out in the Malaysian peninsula.

The segregation policies of the British colonial administration affected the education eco-system before and after independence. There were three periods (across seven decades) that defined Malaysian schools: the first period, pre-independence to newly independent, 1950 to 1969; the second, from 1970 to 2015; and finally, the third from 2016 to present day. The first period focused on pre-independence to newly independent Malaysia, a period where English-medium schools existed alongside the vernacular ones (Tamil, Chinese and Malay schools). The Malays predominantly went to Malay schools where Malay was the medium of instruction. Many Chinese and Indians sent the children to English schools while those who were poorer sent their children to the vernacular schools, Chinese and Tamil. The two early periods (1950-1969; 1970- 2015) were indicative of the play of sociological forces that would feature in newly independent countries. Education did not automatically promote nationhood.

The instability in politics and sociology which came from independence contributed to chaos. While the Malays were the majority race in the country, the combined immigrant population equalled them. The immigrant races compounded the problem by developing race-based political parties where they were dominant. In terms of the economy, the Malays who were mostly like the Indians, generally poor, suffered from the humiliation of being left out from mainstream commerce – they were mainly farmers in rural areas. The wealthy Chinese dominated businesses and lived in towns and cities. Soon after independence, the socio-economic gaps widened and in the 1969 general elections, the opposition parties in urban constituencies (of which the Chinese were dominant) had big wins. This was the start of race riots in the major towns which then led to the declaration of Emergency.

The first Prime Minister of independent Malaysia stepped down and the second, Tun Razak, began what came to be known as the New Economic Policy (NEP), which focused very much on social reengineering. This policy was to dismantle the divide-and-rule policy which segregated the races and to minimize the effects of the domination of non-Malays in mainstream commerce. The first step, however, was to make the Malays the dominant race in the Civil Service. To speed up the process of social reengineering, education was given focus with English schools phased out and the Malay language made the official language and the medium of instruction in schools. The Malay language became the unifying force of the younger population, and the curriculum was used to ensure there was no humiliation of any race that was left behind in the past. While English-medium schools were sacrificed, vernacular schools survived the conversion process as the Chinese and Indians were politically strong and argued that they wanted their children to keep their cultures and languages.

Materials Development in Pre- and Post-Independence Malaysia

The first period (1950-1969) featured in this study revealed the unpreparedness for independence and the hasty set-up of UK-based publisher offices in Malaysia. The early books in English were ones published in the UK, newer books were ones adapted and reproduced by the local offices of publishers like Oxford University Press, which was established in Malaysia in 1957. Adapted books developed by UK publishers and some new Malaysian publishing houses had local themes and settings. The English medium secondary schools used books that were pitched at a higher level and apart from the basic textbook for English, there were supplementary books (readers) used, like *The Prisoner of Zenda* (simplified and abridged version). Students who were in English medium schools were given materials which were more challenging as they sat for the GCE O levels at the end of secondary education.

The second period from 1970 to 2015 can be considered another paradigm shift in terms of the political/sociological influences within textbook development. It was during this time that more features of localization were apparent in books. As textbooks were state sponsored (loaned free to learners), thanks to access to huge amounts of funding from agencies like the World Bank, the government encouraged the development of local publishing houses, some of which were local partners of foreign publishing houses. Longman Malaysia soon followed Oxford University Press into the local market. These big foreign publishers had to adhere to local requirements set by the Ministry of Education. There was concerted effort to localize the books and content was heavily influenced by agendas of the state (obviously, as the sponsors were the government). The books had extremely long shelf-lives (sometimes exceeding fifteen years, because replacing them would cost the government many more billions of Ringgit). But they have been found to be very outdated (Mukundan, 2003) even after five years. Teachers have had to endure an agonizing wait before they are replaced, sometimes fifteen years after their first release (Mukundan, 2004).

In the third period (2016-present time), another paradigm shift in materials development took place when the awareness of the impact of CEFR on SL/FL worldwide moved textbook development away from the clutches of state-driven agendas. There seemed to be a sudden awareness among policy makers that they needed to arrest the rapid decline of English in the country first. Socialization agendas were then suddenly placed on the back burner and policy and decision makers decided on the adoption of CEFR compliant global textbooks. As there was little time for textbook development, CEFR-compliant global coursebooks were sourced mainly from European markets.

This review, while it looks at three periods will only provide illustrations from two sets of books (as the aim was to investigate the effects of the influences of agendas of the state); the first produced between 2002 and 2004 (in the 2nd period) and the second produced between 2017 and 2021 (and used at present in classrooms, within the 3rd period).

Do Free Books Come with a Cost?

The global, commercially produced textbook itself has been riddled with problems, despite its emphasis on universal values and neutrality. Publishers believe (Garton and Graves, 2014) that the extensive market research they have done considers these attributes to be important. Non-compatibility from the cultural perspective and learner-teacher sensitivities have been considered to be important considerations when selling books to unfamiliar markets (Garton and Graves, 2014; Maley, 2011). Views on global coursebooks however, “have become so polarized” (Norton and Buchanan, 2022; 50), that most teachers seem to be either belong to pro- (Hadley, 2014; Tomlinson and Masuhara, 2018) or anti textbook (Papalazarou, 2019; Underhill, 2019; Goh, 2019) camps. People in the middle are rare. Rixon (2019; 16) is one of the few rare ones and states that while she likes creating her own materials she is “a happy user of an appropriate and well-crafted textbook”.

The Developing World is where textbook users have the most problems. Teachers are burdened with large classes (Hashim, 1994) and heavy teaching loads and this probably meant they had very little time for DIY resources or adaptations of textbooks. But the most prominent of problems (Mukundan, 2008)

seems to be that which concerned themes. Unlike the regular themes in global commercial textbooks, which revolve around the language and discourse within common situations that learners would have to be exposed to so that they have the capability to communicate effectively, the developing world textbook (because it is funded by the state) is usually manipulated to include themes which help propagate the agendas of the state like nationalism and good citizenship. While this can be done, experts are unsure of the pedagogic value to this as one of the main principles of materials development states that textbooks have to be interesting (Tomlinson, 2011) to engage learners. Most teachers and learners would probably not consider agendas of the state to be of interest to them.

The initial focus of the discussion would be on the role of representation (Hall, 1997) in defining what priorities textbook developers look at in determining criterion for content selection. For example, themes in textbooks in the US and the UK featured the culture of the Middle or Upper Classes (Bori, 2022). Then the discussion would lead to universal agendas (which cut across borders) and agendas of the state (which are local and, in this chapter, focusing on post-colonial Malaysia). The discussion would then lead to the influences of psychology and sociology on textbooks and how both fields contributed to the manipulation of realities in them. Next, the implications will be discussed, chief amongst which would be the consequences of manipulations of reality on adolescents. Experts believe such manipulations of truth and reality would lead to materials becoming uninteresting and trivial and this goes against the principles of materials development (Tomlinson, 2011).

Realities in textbooks have been sometimes discussed (Mukundan 2003,2004; Wajnryb, 1996) and researchers have pointed out how textbooks are engineered for specific agendas which may result in negative consequences. The lack of realism is one. One aspect of the lack of realism that baffles teachers is why even on adopting the Functional-Notional Syllabus and having functions like ‘To convey condolences’, these functions and the forms they represent are never allowed into textbooks simply because decision makers hold to the belief that positivism must be the essence of everything about education. No one dies in textbooks, and I have often suggested during meetings with officers of the Curriculum Division Centre of the Ministry of Education Malaysia that someone has to die in textbooks (because death is real) before the appropriate forms and functions can be taught. So, I have jokingly suggested that someone’s great grandmother who is 105 years old has to die for the sake of English language learning. Otherwise, how will learners be exposed to these forms and functions (to convey condolences; to express regret, etc.)?

In the following sections, the theoretical underpinnings that influence content selection (representation), will be discussed followed by that of the influences of psychology and sociology, two fields that featured a lot in the manipulations of content to promote extreme positivity. The influences of two theories, accommodation and assimilation (Baldwin, 1906) will also be contextualized. Finally, the implications will be discussed, mainly about how manipulated materials may lead to triviality and possibly lead to the reduction in interest-value in these texts.

Promotion of Universal Agendas and Agendas of the State

This discussion starts on the premise that content in textbooks is dependent upon what society believes is essential and beneficial. Stake holders believe content that features themes like Conservation and Peace (which are now universal agendas) can be used to develop English language skills. This would then lead us to the concept of representation which began with Hall (1997), who referred to it as the reservoir of ideas, images and linguistic choices which are used in the creation of meaning and the “identifications that these seek in readers” (Gray, 2010: 715). Textbooks, likewise, through images and words, make specific constructions of reality with some critiques claiming that the “representations of reality are often partial, distorted, overly simplified and biased” (Bori, 2022, p. 124). Discussion on representation has in the past mainly looked at features of identity politics (recognition issues like race, gender, sexuality or nationality (Hooks, 2000). Later discussion suggests that identity politics, while it attracts a lot of attention, actually distracts people from more important issues in the realm of political economy (Bori, 2022). The dangers of this is that books may not consider the socio-economic status of their users such as the new immigrants

(Auerbach and Burgess, 1985) as they portray the culture of Middle-class America, ignoring such important issues as competition and discrimination and by preparing them for subordinate roles in their new country.

History has shown us that the knowledge that is featured in curriculums and textbooks can never be considered neutral (Bori, 2022), as it is the product of what Williams (1973) states is a selective tradition, inclusive of past and present and from the expanse of these periods certain practices are selected over others and emphasized while others neglected and excluded. In the past the ruling class dominated through influences of these inclusion-exclusion practices so that legitimacy and sustenance to existing social and economic structures are upheld and consolidated. Studies that focused on the examination of the content of textbooks in relation to the curriculum and pedagogy have been done in the past, but there is hardly any discussion on what influences selection of themes. There are however, new developments in research which show that the focus has moved from featuring textbooks as curriculum artefacts (which studies them from such issues connected to performance in relation to classroom teaching, or syllabus and curriculum compliance) to textbooks as cultural artefacts; the meanings that these artefacts would want to create for teachers and students, and of course “the conditions of their production, circulation and consumption” (Bori, 2022. p. 123). This study of the textbook as cultural artefact has shifted the focus away from the examination of it from merely pedagogical viewpoints and made the research more interdisciplinary (displacing what previously used to be the selective tradition) with incursions into feminism, race, media, environmentalism, sociology, and aspects of ideology like Marxism.

This article will examine representation from the perspective of identity or political economy as well as issues on culture and materials development (Risager, 2022), and the transitions across three decades in the postcolonial context which has mainly been discussed in the past by researchers such as Pennycook (1998) and Canagarajah, (1999) within their own specific contexts.

The Influence of Universal Agendas

The impact of sociology on textbook development however is rarely discussed in the literature, although it is the single most influential aspect of content development in textbooks. The idea that sociology can apply in learning-teaching is something borrowed from media – news and features have been manipulated to influence targeted audiences and fulfil the needs of the sponsors (a clear example would be how Fox News postured itself towards the Far Right in the US). Policy makers have always viewed learning-teaching materials as disseminators of agendas of the State, the sponsors of this pursuit being the government. It seemed a convenient way of doing many things all at once.

The extent to which values education is emphasized can be seen from the tremendous effort taken by the United Nations, in particular UNESCO, in harnessing the potential within Asia (probably suggesting that by harnessing the potential here, the rest of the world can perhaps be illuminated by this). Nanzhao and Teasdale (2004), in the book *Teaching Asia-Pacific core values of peace and harmony: A sourcebook for teachers* shows how important it is for education to be inclusive – that values are an integral part of it. So assertive has the United Nations been on promoting this agenda that several programs have been funded to propagate this at school level. And to sustain these initiatives, funding was also provided to help transform textbook evaluation checklists so that they align themselves to this agenda. de Matos (2000, p. 3) argued that “teachers must diversify their professional knowledge” and that textbook developers must do the same. Evaluation checklists, he continues in his argument, must have influences from fields like anthropology, arts, cross-cultural communication, conservation, peace education and politics. Hence, textbook evaluation checklists started incorporating items that evaluate the book on content areas such as peace initiatives or conservation. As a result of these developments within the United Nations, many developing countries adopted this within their curricula. Malaysia was no exception. Textbooks dedicated at least two units, one each to conservation and peace initiatives. In English Form 5 (Kaur et al., 2003), four chapters or units were dedicated to themes that focused on conservation: Poisons In the air (p. 33); Looming disasters (p. 99); What a Waste! (p. 131) and Green Solutions (p. 231). This showed very clearly that the country placed

emphasis on universal concerns, especially that which are current like that of climate change – a key agenda of agencies like the United Nations.

The Influence of Localized Agendas of the State in Textbooks

Textbooks have often been manipulated to meet the demands of policy and decision makers in developing countries. Even before the social reengineering narratives that came after the realization that nation building must be made a serious concern and must manifest itself in textbooks, there were in the past, manipulations but mainly in the form of censorship, much to do with accommodating cultural and religious taboo. Gray (2010) states that publishing houses know that they have to be aware of inclusivity and appropriateness as key conditions in publishing in order to sell books without courting controversy. In Malaysia, like in Saudi Arabia and most Middle Eastern countries (Gray, 2010; Norton and Buchanan, 2022) mention of pigs, for instance, is completely forbidden in textbooks, although in the period just after independence the big book *The three little pigs* was a hit in primary schools (Mukundan, 2019), even in classrooms with large numbers of Malay-Muslim learners. I still recall the time I spent in Primary 1 where we happily listened to the story and anxiously waited to see if the pigs could be saved from the big bad wolf.

But things have changed; especially in the second period (1970-2015) and the pig (at least in books, became extinct). Years later, when I was a schoolteacher in the 1980s, I was included into an evaluation panel by the Textbook Book Division of the Ministry of Education to select Class Readers for use in secondary schools. I found out, much to my disdain that pigs (as well as dogs) could not feature in books. Even a chance occurrence of the word pig would be debated at length by the selection panel and finally in some cases there would be a compromise – it had to be changed to boar (something they felt was not as offensive as the word pig, which unfortunately was a word that was also used to scold people as well!). I too felt the effects of this policy while teaching Civil Service Scholars bound for Purdue University in the US. As they had only six months before the TOEFL, the Intensive English Program included the reading of a wide range of texts. I introduced George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. The majority Malay learners in class reacted in horror and disgust as I distributed the new books, the cover of which had a pig in three-piece suit smoking a cigar. I was fortunate to have done courses on Islam as elective in my undergraduate years, so I asked these students in my pre-reading activity some very important questions: Is the pig Allah's creation? Are there conditions which state that something that is haram (forbidden) can be harus (obligatory)? My students found the answers for me after they said Yes, the pig is also Allah's creation and that in some circumstances if they had nothing else to eat (and they could starve to death in consequence), they had to slaughter the pig and eat it because not eating anything can lead to death (which is like suicide) and which is a bigger sin.

After censorship duties of evaluation panels, focus then moved onto to social-reengineering duties. Social re-engineering can have positive impact on countries that need to have their socio-economies fixed. If there are inequalities among the population and in Malaysia's case between ethnic groups, then this would need fixing so that harmony can be achieved. Bringing about equilibrium would require some form of manipulation to minimize the negatives and promote the positives. Malaysia after independence required socio-reengineering initiatives put in place to correct inequalities – the Malays and Indians were lagging the Chinese in almost every field and as such their earning power and morale was low. They needed motivation, which had to start while they were in school.

The first period (1950-1969) was crucial as textbook developers had to minimize the effects of negatives that would portray the non-Chinese as poor as well as address the gross inequalities among the races. In the second period (1970- 2015), a new agenda was in place elevating the roles of the non-Chinese in society; and moving on from nation-building motives to the newer agenda which was in line with the modernization of the country. This was the time when Malaysia started to become industrialized and the slogan on Malaysia achieving developed status in 2020 (Vision 2020) became the main propaganda. As a result of this, the embrace of Science and Technology and the exposure of it in content became another agenda for

curriculum and textbook developers. But while the country was prospering (especially in the second period), there was concern that moral values were dipping. As a result of this, another agenda in education was introduced. All content and language books had to include (in subtle or explicit ways) the inculcation of moral values.

Context, Curriculum and Educational Policies: Interventions of Psychology and Sociology into Nationalization Processes within English Language Textbooks

In order to illustrate some of the nuances of writers when adhering to Ministry guidelines (which take into consideration sociological aspects like accommodation and assimilation (Hanfstingl et al., 2021), references were made to books developed in the second period (1970-2015).

TABLE 1

Malaysian Secondary School Textbooks developed during 2002-2004 (the 2nd period)

No	Book and level	Authors	Publisher & Year
1	English Form 1	Tan Boon Kim, Bernadette Foo, Lim Siew Kim, Carol Ong, Anne Tan	Sasbadi, 2002
2	English Form 2	Kamariah Mohd Salim, Kang Suat Ling, Kok Ming Wai	Hypersurf Corporation, 2003
3	English Form 3	Tan Boon Kim, Ganakumaran Subramaniam	Ebiza, 2004
4	English Form 4	Pushpa Raghavan, Helena Cheah, Siva Prasanna Krishnan	Penerbit Maga Setia Emas, 2002
5	English Form 5	Matishwar Kaur, Kan Yuet Yee, Manjin Gill, Sim Mui Kheng	Tropical Press, 2003

While the context in this article is Malaysia, social reengineering that affects textbooks is probably evident in most developing countries. Content, in English textbooks was manipulated to promote agendas particularly that of patriotism and nationhood. Two major concepts developed by psychologists, in particular Baldwin (1906), which were accommodation and assimilation, were seen as integral within this socio reengineering processes to fast-track the process. Literature reviews (Hanfstingl et al., 2021) suggest that the largest occurrences of both terms are in the social context where articles discussed adaptation to new cultures. In layman's terms, assimilation would refer to the integration of environmental information into internal structures and schemas, while accommodation would mean changing internal structures to meet the demands of the environment. English language textbooks which were developed to promote accommodation and assimilation had several characteristics which were unique. Some of these characteristics will be discussed below.

The Textbook Offered the Positives that were Non-Existent in Reality

One of the main motives of policy makers to allow the state to dictate terms on content for English language textbooks is to allow for their agendas, which include fostering nationhood, to feature strongly as a propaganda resource. This was clear when the early books in the first period (1950-1969) featured this in a big way. While English names like Jack and John were removed from the pre-independence textbooks, names like Ali, Chong, and Ramasamy (Malay, Chinese and Indian names respectively) replaced them. While the first changes (replacing the British names with Malaysian ones) seemed successful in the beginning, there appeared other grievances. The seemingly innocent stereotypical images of Malays as farmers and Indians as rubber tappers and Chinese as owners of provision shops alarmed some people who found it not respectful although it seemed to generally portray the truth regarding the socio-economy of the country. To compound this stereotyping in textbooks, editors of textbooks made serious errors in judgment by having visuals of a brown-skinned Malay in very old clothes (patched up in parts) toiling on the paddy fields with his buffalo, a very dark-skinned Indian, in clothes stained with latex, tapping rubber trees and a

very fair wealthy bespectacled Chinese in clean clothes sitting in a provision shop with rows of shelves full of provisions and busy working on his abacus.

Control in plot development enabled textbook writers to seek equalization in the eco-system, so while the parents of Malays and Indians were poor and doing jobs which commanded little respect in the upper classes, their children (in textbook dialogues) were portrayed as intelligent and having ambitions such as doctors, lawyers, and engineers. In wanting to promote economic restructuring, textbook developers deployed what is known in the literature on materials development as the redistribution paradigm (Fraser, 1995). The second period (1970-2015) saw more aggression in the portrayal of race characters in textbooks with a further upgrade - Malays were portrayed as businessmen (in black suits), sometimes as managers while Indians were portrayed as doctors and Chinese as engineers. IT was beginning to become a popular field, with jobs such as systems analyst featured widely as professions in textbooks. In English Form 2 (Mohd Salim et al., 2003), Bakar (a Bumiputra/Malay) is portrayed as a systems analyst (most people working in the field were non-Malaya/Bumiputra at this stage of Malaysia's history), designing computer systems (p. 2). There was never a role for the labourer or the Municipal council worker or the rubber tapper and tin miner in the textbook. This resembled what Fraser (1995) states as the recognition paradigm which responds to social injustices by "positively valorising and recognising marginal groups" (Bori, 2022, p. 124). Extreme positivism, it seemed, had taken over from realities.

Manipulation of Truth into a Fictitious Engineered Reality

One argument for this is that the perfect, most harmonious eco-system can be developed with positivity. Seligman and Adler (2018) stated that positivity is infused into education so as to promote positive mental health among students and teachers. While infusion of positivity in education should be seen as something that is good, it must not, however, come at the expense of manipulating the truth and making teaching materials seem trivial (Tomlinson and Masuhara, 2018). The truth about Malaysia is that segregation among the races is serious. Politics is also defined by segregation. The political alignments of the Malays were with their nationalistic or Islamic party and the Chinese and Indians were in their own race-defined political parties and social organizations which led them into living separately and minding their own affairs. The textbook sought to correct this by sending make-belief messages of them being one. So, in the textbooks however, the opposite of reality was portrayed. Young adults from different ethnic groups in textbooks were seemingly neutral, always wanting participation involving all race types.

One way textbook developers provided a sense of togetherness was by portraying young people as one in their involvement in sports although the opposite was true. The Chinese played basketball, badminton and table tennis, the Indians played cricket and field hockey while the Malays mostly played football, rugby and sepak takraw. In textbooks where football was featured, all the different races were shown playing the game. Even in school, the different races (English Book 1) are always portrayed together (Tan et al., 2002). Osman (Malay/Bumiputra) is meeting Hock Kuan (Chinese Malaysian), both beginning secondary school, at the canteen (p. 1), while on the very next page, Neela (Indian Malaysian) is inviting Rohani (Malay/Bumiputra) to badminton with her other friends Jennifer (Eurasian) and Swee Chin (Chinese Malaysian). In the Form 3 book, (Tan and Subramaniam, 2004), friendship, which is a common theme in Secondary 1, 2, and 3, is revisited under the unit theme Making Friends. All the dialogues involve all the different races in Malaysia and not one has exchange which involves a single race.

The advantage Malaysia has is that different ethnic groups celebrate different festivals thereby providing more avenues for the togetherness and oneness theme to be exploited to the fullest by textbook developers. For example, Malays have the Eid, Chinese the Lunar New Year, Indians have Diwali and the Borneo ethnic groups have the Harvest Festivals. It was during the first and Second textbook period where this was full exploited, and people of different ethnic groups, at least in the textbooks were portrayed visiting each other during festivals. This seldom happened in real life and even if people went to each other's homes, only older people practised this. Young adults, even when they were very close to the other races rarely did

that. Young adult Malays in particular, chose not to visit their non-Muslim friends as they were not convinced of the food being *halal*.

The Promotion of New Values that Came from Modernization

During the Second period (1970-2015), textbooks had to incorporate the agendas of the state concerning the development of human capital to prepare the country for fully developed status. The number of agendas of state increased as the country got older. When Vision 2020 (Malaysia was targeted to achieve developed status by that year which it did) was launched, the population had to be psyched out for the mission (like how Mao in China began the Long March campaign). As it happens in the developing world, if textbooks could be mobilized to help achieve this, then they had to be involved. Another agenda of the state then found its way into textbooks. Sometimes an entire unit was based on a Science or Technology-based theme like IT (see Mohd Salim, 2003) or Conservation (Tan and Subramaniam, 2004). At other times the Science-based theme was embedded in another unit like for instance Family or Important Celebrations. In one Form Two Textbook (meant for fourteen-year-olds), the theme Let's Celebrate had in the introduction some types of celebration, like Teacher's Day and Mother's Day. Towards the end of the unit there was a small reading text where Johan, the fourteen-year-old describes a wonderful surprise birthday party which his parents organized at the National Science Centre! The entire family (including the extended family were there!). I remember observing one of my teacher trainees teach during teaching practice and the Form 4 students in the class laughed at the idea (although they did say that the National Science Centre had restaurants where birthdays could be celebrated). The trainee did ask the students why they found it ridiculous, and they claimed that as young adults they hardly do birthday celebrations in such elaborate manner. Some claimed it would just be a small family gathering (immediate family) or sometimes they would meet one or two of their best friends and eat somewhere, perhaps after watching a movie or playing video games (Mukundan, 2008).

Another agenda of the state is the inculcation of moral values which were introduced into the curriculum in 1989. Leaders of the country were appalled by the decline of moral values which came from rapid modernization and the adoption of alien culture (which was widely understood as Western). Value-based education, it was believed, would contribute to harmony and sustainability (Merritt, Hale & Archambault, 2018) and bring people back towards Eastern morals and values. Malaysia developed a comprehensive plan, suggesting "values across the school curriculum" (Sahari et al., 1999, p. 155) which made it compulsory for all the subjects in school to embed these values within content. The curriculum required teachers to instil within learners "16 categories of universally accepted values, the breakdown of which yields about 80 distinct values" (p. 156). Teacher Professional Development (TPD) was hastily organized to train teachers on how it could be done. Teachers, already burdened with the shortage of teaching time in classrooms (approximately 200 minutes in total – 5 forty-minute lessons), had to deal with something new. Hoon (2015), Piang et al. (2005) and Yusof et al. (2018) believe that while the burden increases on teachers, it is nevertheless necessary as teachers are supposed to be moral agents. Research reports do suggest however, that learners have suggested that teachers know how to make the teaching of moral values more interesting (Yusof et al., 2018) implying that content imbedded with values lacked learner-engagement. Learners considered content to be trivial. Yi and Abdul Samat (2020) claim that teachers seemed to want to explicitly state the values without a story (and being less expressive in delivery) and this made lessons less engaging to learners.

State-sponsored Values in Textbooks and their Implications on SLA and Materials Development

One of the major concerns of materials evaluators is in the way policy and decision makers believe that the capacities of textbooks are expandable without limits. Every time there is curriculum review there is bound to be an additional feature (usually an agenda of the state) added to the already agenda-laden

curriculum. Curriculum and textbook developers seem to have forgotten how important it is to be aware of the unique characteristics of young adults. In fact, in Malaysia there was no serious effort to look into the needs of young adult learners in secondary school textbooks. The views of teachers were also not considered, despite many voicing out their concerns about content not being interesting and being outdated.

Triviality is an issue with regards teaching materials for English language teaching and research has indicated that it would affect learner motivation (Listyani, 2022). Learner motivation is considered by teachers as one of the most important factors in language learning and materials must be able to engage learners. Original and innovative materials that excite learners through topics that include diverse locations and travel (Uenishi, 2019) can be more motivating than conventional topics found in global textbooks which include topics like Family and Hobbies. In the Malaysian English language textbook, context triviality could lead to weak motivation levels among learners. A typical unit in a textbook produced in the first period (like Welcoming New Students for the new term) will have young adults (each representing the major races (Malay, Chinese, Indian and Borneo native) pictured standing side by side on the page wearing the traditional dress of their respective communities, something a lot of learners (fourteen-year-old) in classrooms (through my observations) laugh about. Also, story plots in textbook units are also superficial in reinforcing the theme on harmony. There is always an excuse on the part of textbook developers to get a person of one race to help another and under the most ridiculous of circumstances. In one unit a person of one race who is on neighbourhood watch duty (late at night) spots a house (belonging to a person of another race) with lights on and decides to check on the occupants to see if everything was fine (Mukundan, 2003). In another instance, in English Form 5 (Kaur et al., 2003), there is a fire at Meng Seng textile factory and the Fire brigade (while it is usually manned by Malay/Bumiputra) is an unusual mix of different races with the Commander being Indian Malaysian (pp.21).

TESL undergraduates at my university (UPM) when asked to evaluate the textbook unit on Family (Mukundan, 2023), using Littlejohn's (2011) Textbook Analyses Framework found that the unit lacked Situational Realism (Madsen and Bowen, 1978). Mukundan (2023) states that families are depicted as perfect (again very much in line with the portrayal of harmony that is emphasized by textbook developers). The undergraduates in the Materials class (who were participants of a study as well) said that it was quite impossible for harmony such as this to be real especially since the unit featured family members who were young adult. The young adults were portrayed as non-rebellious, always agreeing to everything and were portrayed in that unit of learning to be helping their parents in the kitchen, then having their meal together, after which playing in the park together, then having dinner together then finally, watching television together. One would have at least, in my opinion seen a fight between the two young adults (one male, the other female) over the television remote as they (like typical young adults) would have their own preferences on television programmes. The undergraduates in the textbook analyses study agreed on one major implication. This manipulation of portrayal of young adults (YA) broke every observation about YA and whatever has been written about them. This would then be seen as non-compliance of the principles of materials development (Tomlinson, 2011) and of language acquisition (Krashen, 1985) which explicitly state that teaching materials must be interesting and must not be trivial. In that same paper (Mukundan, 2023) an alternative form of material (students' own resources) was tried for the unit Family. The undergraduates brought to class family photographs after being told that they would have to use 10 family photographs to tell a story for 3 minutes or less. Using their own resources meant a lot – they liked the bit about creating a family story (it was more specific – otherwise it may turn out to be another Show and Tell). As a result, their stories revealed crisis, breakups, disease, and death, all of which the participants admitted never happened in textbooks universally (Wajnryb, 1996).

Situational Realism also had consequences on Linguistic Realism (Madsen and Bowen, 1978; Mukundan, 2003) as the situations where young adults were featured (like in parks with their parents and other siblings playing with a frisbee (alien from the Malaysian context) and using very unnatural language (extremely polite) in dialogues without the slightest use of interjections or contractions seemed to reduce reality to triviality as well.

Was There a Pause in the Emphasis on Agendas of State in Textbooks?

The obsession in the manipulation of the textbook to accommodate agendas of the state suddenly ceased in the third period. In 2015, the Ministry of Education, Malaysia decided to use the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR) to review the English language curriculum in Malaysia. A revised curriculum, the Standards-Based English Language Curriculum (SBELC), was developed using descriptors found in the CEFR related documents so as to align national standards to an international one (Shak et al., 2021). This was to arrest the rapid decline in English among the school going population.

The decision to align English Language teaching and assessment to CEFR was sudden. There was no time to produce learning-teaching material that could be aligned to CEFR and as a result of this the Ministry of Education sourced for books elsewhere (there were a lot in Europe). One particular book was written for learners of English in Spain (Shak et al., 2021).

The books used in this newest cycle are listed below.

TABLE 2

The New Cycle of English Textbooks (Adopted Global Coursebooks), 2017-2021

No	Book and level	Authors	Publisher & Year
1	English Form 1 (PULSE 2)	Michele Crawford	Kumpulan Desa Fikir Sdn Bhd, 2017
2	English Form 2 (PULSE 2)	Michele Crawford	Kumpulan Desa Fikir Sdn Bhd, 2017
3	English Form 3 (Close-Up)	Angela Healan, Katrina Gormley, Karen Ludlow	National Geographic Learning 2016
4	English Form 4	H.Q. Mitchell, Marileni Malkogianni	MM Publications, 2018
5	English Form 5	Elizabeth Gordon, Liz Hammond, Philip James, Liz Stolls	Hamilton House Publishers Ltd, 2021

The new books (which are being currently used) are re-versioned books used in Europe and produced by commercial publishers (Macmillan, National Geographic Learning, Hamilton House Publishers) whose original intentions were to produce global textbooks (or coursebooks) which were to be sold in every possible market around the world. So, all the themes learners of English were exposed to were in language schools all over the world (Family, Likes and Dislikes, Cultural Awareness, etc.). As the books were produced, mostly in UK, most of the characters were White/ Caucasian and settings were UK/ European (See Crawford, 2017; Healan et al., 2016).

There was, however, mixed reaction to the use of re-versioned foreign English language books. Those who welcomed the idea thought that local publishers could not have produced them within a short period of time and even if they did there was no guarantee that the products would “ensure students achieve proficiency levels aligned to international standards” (Chin & Rajaendram, 2017, p. 2). Some others believed that these imported textbooks could promote acceptance of other cultures, religion, and lifestyle which could be a positive development (Ariz, 2017). Detractors on the other hand found issue with the lack of local content. The ‘PULSE 2’ textbook (written for the Spanish market) offered zero content that related to Malaysian culture unlike previous Malaysian textbooks where two thirds of content focused on Malaysian culture (Rahim and Daghig, 2019).

The discussion on this sudden change to move towards foreign textbooks could lead to several questions: 1) Would this be permanent and will Malaysian learners move away from reading only about themselves with excessive amount of Malaysian themes?; 2) Could this accidental intrusion of foreign culture lead to more Malaysian learners becoming more proficient in English as a result of content being more interesting and challenging (Hadi and Shah, 2020)?

Conclusion

Macro-level evaluations conducted on Malaysian textbooks (both at primary and secondary level) show that while the primary books (Standard One to six) were reported to be highly beneficial, the secondary school textbooks were only moderately useful (Mukundan and Kalajahi, 2013), indicating that much must be done to secondary school textbooks to make them effective in learning-teaching. Other studies which include corpus studies done on Malaysian textbooks (Mukundan 2007, Mukundan and Aziz, 2007, Mukundan and Aziz, 2009) have shown major pedagogic weaknesses in vocabulary loading and distribution patterns indicating that textbook development is not informed by work in corpus linguistics – vocabulary used does not take into consideration the high frequency words prescribed in international Wordlists (Mukundan, 2004). Also, important pedagogical concepts in vocabulary learning like repetition and recycling (Mukundan, J. and Aziz, A. 2007, Mukundan, J., and Aziz, A., 2009) were ignored. Experts, (Mukundan and Aziz, 2009) believe that focus on peripheral matters like themes depicting agendas of the state have distracted materials developers from more important aspects of textbook development.

Themes selected for textbooks can indicate the types of words that learners would be exposed to. It is assumed that the themes (from agendas of the state – like The Importance of the Internet, Pollution in the City, Togetherness among the races, Saving the trees, etc.) recommended by policy makers which are alien to those in global textbooks may not induce the essential vocabulary (the high frequency words found in Wordlists). Themes like the common ones in elementary global/commercial textbooks (Meeting People, My Neighbourhood, Occupations, Going on Holiday, etc.) will probably lead textbook developers to get the essential words (which comply with the recommendations of Wordlists) when developing texts.

The debate as to which should be primary and which secondary in priorities when developing textbooks must commence soon, as now, decisions are ad hoc and at the whims and fancies of policy and decision makers. Malaysian textbooks in the three periods mentioned in this chapter have been developed in ad hoc manner (Mukundan, 2003, 2004, 2008) and as a result found to have numerous weaknesses. The excessive slant towards the inclusion of agendas of the state within textbooks has led to criticisms of its functionality in learning-teaching as texts considered by learners and teachers as uninteresting will mean that the book has not fulfilled the requirements laid out by experts in language acquisition (Krashen, 1985) and in the principles of materials development (Tomlinson, 2011) which clearly state that materials must be interesting. Mukundan (2023) states that the weaknesses of textbooks as regards the selection of themes (which are boring and un-teachable) must lead teachers into using learners' own resources. The theme on Family for instance, which is common in most elementary-level textbooks can easily be omitted because the families depicted in both Malaysian and global textbooks are in fact engineered families that do not exist in the real world. Learners' own resources like photographs from their family album can work better as learning-teaching material as things not included in the textbook like divorce, disease and death (from within learner's photographs and stories) make lessons more engaging.

Can there be repercussions on the wide extent to which realities are omitted in learning-teaching? Wajnryb (1996) in 'Death, taxes, and jeopardy: systematic omissions in EFL texts, or life was never meant to be an adjacency pair' revealed how realities which are seen as negative are consciously and deliberately removed from the textbook, suggesting that materials development seemed to seek the path of defying logic. Is extreme positivism good for the intellect of young learners (especially those in their adolescence) or could triviality ridicule their intelligence? Taylor's (2013) study on Romanian teenagers reveal that these teenagers wanted to be treated as individuals (they are very strong-minded), wanted to express their own identity and wanted to be treated with respect and the publishing world must give them freedom to act as themselves without coercion (Legutke, 2012). Pinter (2016) argues that the cognitive achievements of teenagers, because they are in the formal operations period (Piaget and Inhelder, 1969) make them have a questioning attitude because they are "powerful thinkers" (Krantz, Norton and Buchanan, 2022: 371). The writers therefore list the topics that Spanish teenagers were interested in. Unfortunately there isn't anything like this needs analysis that was done in Spain, therefore I believe that teenagers in Malaysia who were exposed to textbooks laden with agendas of the state and where the portrayal of their own age group is

falsely represented would have been put off by this (does not fit into what interests them) and this would have seriously contributed to the lack of engagement in classrooms (Mukundan, 2023).

There are alternatives to learning English through textbooks which have themes which are considered restrictive in more ways than one (especially so in their inability to interest or engage learners). Underhill (2019) believes that entire lessons on English can be developed around the use of readers (stories). Maley (1989) and Torrano-Guillamón et al. (2019) unearthed a list of features that revealed how literature can be a powerful resource in the EFL classroom. They claimed that literary texts promote universality, non-triviality (because literary texts do not trivialise life as other kinds of traditional materials do); indicate personal relevance (because the learners may be able to relate its content to their own lives); and provide a variety of topics; interest; economy and suggestive power and ambiguity. This then started a whole new interest in the area of Literature in Language Teaching with books produced by Collie and Slater (1990), Carter and Long (1991) and Lazar (1993). While reading programmes for Malaysian secondary schools in the past fostered learner engagement with literature (Mukundan et al., 1998), the programmes were scrapped altogether (due to time constraints in classrooms) a few years ago and as a result the only source of non-trivial material which was universal with suggestive power and ambiguity was removed from learners' lives. Engineered reality had by then complete dominance.

The Author

Jayakaran Mukundan is Professor and Senior Research Fellow at Taylor's University Malaysia. His main research interest is in ELT and Literature Teaching Materials. He has successfully developed software for evaluating textbooks.

School of Education
Taylor's University of Malaysia
Lakeside Campus, 47500 Subang Jaya
Mobile: +60122099717
Email: jayakaran.mukundan@taylors.edu.my

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