



Gonbad Kavous University

## Teachers' Perception(s) on Language Literacy Practices Represented in an EFL Textbook



Linguistics Society of Iran

<sup>1.</sup> *Khadijeh Aghaei*

### ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study explores the impact of foreign English language textbooks on educators' perceptions within Iranian English language institutes, using multiliteracies theory as a framework. The study seeks to understand how teachers' views align with or differ from the literacy practices presented in these textbooks; an area that has been underexplored in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. Data were collected through interviews with teachers, providing a comprehensive analysis of their perspectives on the literacy practices embedded in these textbooks. The findings reveal a strong preference among teachers for foreign English language textbooks, which play a central role in their teaching practices. "Interchange," in particular, was highlighted for its effectiveness in introducing students to diverse cultures and the Anglophone worldview. Teachers appreciated how it broadened students' cultural awareness and understanding of different perspectives. However, the study also identifies challenges. Teachers noted discrepancies between the literacy practices in these textbooks and those rooted in their own society, leading to a sense of marginalization among learners. This disconnect suggests that while foreign textbooks can enrich the curriculum, they may also create cultural gaps that affect students' engagement. By addressing both the benefits and challenges of using foreign English textbooks in Iran, this study contributes to New Literacy Studies and English language literacy education. It provides insights that can help policymakers and educators develop a more inclusive and contextually relevant pedagogical framework in Iranian English Language Institutes (ELIs).

### Article History

**Received:**

2024-03-15

**Revised:**

2024-04-25

**Accepted:**

2024-05-22

**Published:**

2024-07-01

### Key Words:

Teachers' Perception;  
Foreign English Language Textbook, Multiliteracies Theory, Language Literacy Practice

1. Assistant Professor, Department of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Humanities and Physical Education, Gonbad Kavous University (GKU), Gonbad Kavous, Iran - email: *Aghaei.khadijeh@gmail.com* – ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0601-0069>

**Article Citation:** Aghaei, K. (2024). Teachers' perceptions on language literacy practices represented in an EFL textbook. *Journal of Critical Applied Linguistics Studies*, 1(2), 170-192.

## 1. Initial Whisper

*In the heart of Iran's bustling English Language Institutes, a captivating journey unfolds. It is a journey that mirrors the relentless march of globalization in a post-1979 revolution era, where the English language has insinuated itself into the very fabric of society. Here, foreign English language textbooks (FEL textbooks) are the unsung heroes, carrying the torch of English language literacy education forward. Among them, names like "Interchange," "Headway," and "Cutting Edge" stand as beacons of knowledge.*

Picture this: A typical English language institute (ELI) classroom, teeming with eager students embarking on their English language odyssey. Their trusted companions? FEL textbooks, brimming with linguistic treasures. Their guides? Teachers, both seasoned mentors and fresh faces, who rely on these textbooks not just as teaching tools but as well-worn maps for their pedagogical journeys.

As dawn breaks over most cities in Iran, the ELI classrooms stir to life, and a prevailing pedagogical phenomenon becomes evident. English language literacy education here revolves around the practices enshrined in these FEL textbooks, a phenomenon aptly termed "FEL textbook imperialism." But beneath this surface lies a profound mystery: What do the educators think about these embedded literacy practices? How do they perceive these linguistic, cultural, and communicative ideals?

This quest for understanding leads us into the enigmatic realm of New Literacy Studies (NLS) (Papen, 2023; Mirhosseini, et al. 2022; Rajabi, 2015; Aghaei & Rajabi 2014; Aghaei et al. 2014), where literacy is not a mere set of isolated skills, but a dynamic, cultural, and societal force. In this realm, English language education in ELI classrooms is deeply intertwined with the literacy practices woven into prescribed FEL textbooks. These textbooks, for educators alike, symbolize the holy grail of knowledge and literacy. Our journey commences here, exploring the intricate perspectives of teachers as they navigate the labyrinth of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education in Iran—a realm that often evades the global spotlight.

## 2. Background to the Problem

In an era defined by the omnipresent currents of globalization and the deep-rooted integration of the English language into the tapestry of society, foreign English language textbooks (FEL textbooks) have ascended to a paramount role in English language literacy education. These textbooks, epitomized by titles such as "Interchange," "Headway," and "Cutting Edge," occupy a central position within the curricula of numerous Iranian universities and English Language Institutes (ELIs) (Borjian, 2013). They wear multiple hats: not only do they serve as the primary conduit through which learners engage with the English language, supplementing their interactions with instructors, but they also

function as invaluable pedagogical compasses, particularly for educators in the nascent stages of their careers. For seasoned educators, these FEL textbooks represent a veritable treasure trove of pedagogical resources, streamlining the oftentimes daunting task of lesson preparation. Hence, it is undeniable that the prevailing pedagogical paradigm within Iranian ELI classrooms is deeply entwined with a FEL textbook-centric approach, an evocative phenomenon aptly christened "FEL textbook imperialism" (Aghaei, et al.2014) .

The winds of recent research in the realm of English language education have perceptibly shifted towards the exploration of the perceptions held by both educators concerning the linguistic, cultural, and communicative practices that are intricately interwoven within FEL textbooks. A gamut of scholarly inquiries (Richards & Mahoney, 1996; Masuhara, 1998; Bancheri, 2006) have meticulously probed this terrain from multifarious angles, unraveling the dynamics of second language acquisition through the perspectives of educators (Jan & Glenn, 1984; Askildson, 2008). While these inquiries implicitly delve into the concept of literacy as a self-contained, independent, and context-agnostic entity, my study endeavors to transcend this narrative by scrutinizing the viewpoints of teachers through the discerning lens of New Literacy Studies (NLS ) (Papen, 2023; Mirhosseini, et al. 2022; Rajabi, 2015; Aghaei & Rajabi, 2014; Aghaei et al. 2014 ) .

Within the labyrinthine framework of NLS, literacy is not conceived as a mere collection of isolated skills cultivated by individuals in isolation from their cultural surroundings. Rather, it emerges as a dynamic, social, and cultural phenomenon, encompassing a myriad of ways of thinking, knowing, valuing, and acting, where specific literacy practices ascend to a position of prominence. It is within this context that English language education in ELI classrooms finds its moorings in the literacy practices embedded within prescribed FEL textbooks, elevating these textbooks to the status of sanctified fountains of knowledge and literacy. Our research seeks to unveil the nuanced perspectives of teachers regarding these embedded literacy practices within the intricate tapestry of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education in Iran—a context often relegated to the periphery of global discourse.

More precisely, focusing the gap in the literature and framed objective of this study, how one of the man educational stakeholders in ELI classrooms perceive English language literacy education revolving around the practices enshrined in these FEL textbooks and frame a phenomenon aptly termed "FEL textbook imperialism." Indeed, beneath this surface lies a profound mystery: What do the educators think about these embedded literacy practices? How do they perceive these linguistic, cultural, and communicative ideals?

This quest for understanding leads us into the enigmatic realm of New Literacy Studies (NLS) theory, where epitomizes that literacy is not a mere set of isolated skills, but a dynamic, cultural, and societal force. In this realm, English language education in ELI classrooms is deeply intertwined with

the literacy practices woven into prescribed FEL textbooks, elevating these textbooks to the status of sanctified fountains of knowledge and literacy. As highlighted earlier, my research projects seeks to unveil the nuanced perspectives of teachers regarding these embedded literacy practices within the intricate tapestry of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education in Iran—a context often relegated to the periphery of global discourse.

### 3. Theoretical Framework: New Literacy Studies in English Language Teaching

The hallowed halls of English language instruction in ELI classrooms have still traditionally adhered to a conventional view of literacy, perceiving it as a collection of distinct skills detached from their cultural milieu. This perspective, eloquently labeled as the "autonomous view of language literacy," was first articulated by Street (1984). Street astutely illuminated the ideologically driven nature of literacy models and sowed the seeds of what would later burgeon into New Literacy Studies. In doing so, Street underscored that no literacy theory can claim the lofty pedestals of objectivity or neutrality; each is inherently rooted in culturally constructed epistemological values. As a result, scholars and practitioners on a global scale have found themselves at a crossroads, yearning to reimagine the traditional models of English language literacy that underpin the majority of language programs and instructional practices (King, 1992; Heath & Street, 2008).

In response to the limitations of conventional views of literacy, the New London Group (1996) unfurled the banner of Multiliteracies—a groundbreaking concept in literacy education. Multiliteracies embark on an odyssey through the intricate tapestry that defines English language and literacy practices in our ever-evolving, socially, and culturally diverse world. The clarion call of Multiliteracies resonates with the need to equip learners with literacy practices that are essential for the multifaceted demands of work, leisure, active citizenship, participation in social, cultural, and community activities, as well as personal and social growth. Consequently, English language literacy is no longer confined to the staid practices of yesteryears; it metamorphoses into an inclusive collection of literacy practices dynamically shaped across diverse cultural landscapes.

Furthermore, the zeitgeist of contemporary NLS trends underscores an inclusive cultural perspective on English language literacy education, bolstered by a critical lens aimed at nurturing effective language literacy instruction. This perspective casts a discerning gaze upon all language literacy practices as cultural ways of knowing, thinking, valuing, and acting, each "privileged by discourses of a particular community in a particular domain" (Koo, 2008, Buntinx & Meunier, 2020). These practices are inexorably shaped by the currents of power, capable of either constraining or empowering the cultural interactions between educators and learners, often subsuming the interests of both. They are far from neutral; rather, they can be either beneficial or fraught with complexities, their political underpinnings often shrouded in obscurity. Dominant language literacy practices wield a

profound influence in sculpting the contours of English language literacy education within a society, alongside dictating the methodologies through which it is dispensed (Buntinx & Meunier, 2020).

This study, entrenched in the formidable theoretical frameworks of New Literacy Studies, Multiliteracies, and critical pedagogic theories, endeavors to cast a revealing spotlight upon the perspectives held by Iranian teachers regarding literacy practices ensconced within FEL textbooks. In so doing, it aspires to widen the horizons of English language literacy education, rendering a comprehensive comprehension of how educators and learners conceptualize, interpret, and esteem literacy practices intricately interwoven with FEL textbooks within the distinctive context of Iranian EFL instruction.

The ensuing segments of this treatise shall delve deeper into the intricate methodology that guided our expedition, the illuminating findings that we unearthed, and the profound ramifications that this research bestows upon the future landscape of English language education within the Iranian EFL terrain.

#### **4. Research Methodology**

Embarking on this academic journey, I donned the robes of research, equipped with a multifaceted methodology designed to plumb the depths of teachers' perceptions. This journey was a testament to my commitment to unraveling the enigma of literacy practices framed in a textbook entitled "New Interchange by Jack. C. Richards dominant within the context of Iranian EFL education i.e., Iranian ELI classrooms.

##### ***Design of the Study***

In my quest to unravel the intricate tapestry of English language education within Iranian EFL classrooms, I meticulously crafted a comprehensive qualitative case study. This methodological choice served as the cornerstone of the research project, enabling a profound exploration of educators' perceptions concerning literacy practices embedded within the Foreign English Language (FEL) textbook. This research embarked on a transformative journey of inquiry, driven by an insatiable thirst for a profound comprehension of how literacy practices manifest and are perceived within the dynamic landscape of Iranian EFL education. At its essence, this qualitative case study embarked on the mission of unearthing the intricate relationships woven between educators and the FEL textbook, with an exclusive focus on "New Interchange" by Jack C. Richards.

To lay a robust foundation for this study, I consciously embraced the qualitative case study approach. This methodological choice, deeply rooted in the qualitative paradigm, enabled us to delve into the multifaceted dimensions of educators' perceptions and experiences, providing a holistic and nuanced perspective on the dynamics that characterize English Language Institutes (ELIs) in Iran.

While quantitative methodologies often prioritize numerical data, the qualitative approach, steeped in the rich narratives and voices of educators, emerged as the ideal conduit for a study of this nature.

### *Participants*

In the pursuit of a comprehensive exploration of English language education within the intricate landscape of Iranian EFL classrooms, my study carefully assembled a diverse and purposively selected group of participants. These individuals were meticulously chosen to provide multifaceted perspectives and invaluable insights into the intricate world of English language instruction in Iran. At the core of our research, I was privileged to engage with two distinguished male educators, whom I shall respectfully refer to as Mr. Imani and Mr. Masoumi to safeguard their identities. The selection of these educators was underpinned by a meticulous process driven by several compelling justifications.

**Educational Background:** Both Mr. Imani and Mr. Masoumi brought a wealth of academic qualifications to our study, holding TEFL master's degrees. Their educational credentials established a solid foundation for their roles as key informants, enriching our investigation with their deep theoretical knowledge and scholarly insights. This academic rigor inherently positioned them as critical voices within our research.

**Professional Experience:** In addition to their academic prowess, these educators boasted extensive and illustrious careers in the field of English language education. With years of dedicated service to their credit, their wealth of practical experience in Iranian ELIs lent a real-world dimension to my exploration of literacy practices. Their seasoned expertise, honed through years of pedagogical engagement, served as a source of rich narratives and nuanced perspectives.

**Prominence within their Cities:** Beyond their academic and professional qualifications, Mr. Imani and Mr. Masoumi enjoyed recognition and prominence within their respective cities. Their stature as respected educators and their contributions to the local EFL community heightened the significance of their participation. Their influential roles within their communities amplified the impact of their perspectives, as they were not only experienced educators but also influential figures in the Iranian EFL educational landscape.

**Holistic Understanding:** The deliberate inclusion of both educators in my study underscored our commitment to constructing a comprehensive and holistic narrative of literacy practices within Iranian EFL classrooms. By capturing the viewpoints of those who disseminate knowledge and those who receive it, I aimed to transcend one-dimensional insights and present a multifaceted understanding of English language education within the Iranian context.

In essence, the participants, Mr. Imani and Mr. Masoumi, emerged as pivotal pillars of the research endeavor. Their educational backgrounds, professional experiences, and prominence within their



cities added layers of depth and richness to our exploration. Their invaluable contributions as key informants served as a cornerstone in the construction of a comprehensive and nuanced narrative surrounding literacy practices in Iranian EFL education.

### **Materials**

Central to the research was a meticulous examination of the "New Interchange" textbook series, co-authored by luminaries in the field, Jack C. Richards, Jonathan Hull, and Susan Proctor. This series assumed a paramount role within the curricula of the Iranian English Language Institutes (ELIs) under our purview. However, their exploration extended far beyond a mere acknowledgment of its presence; it delved into the profound impact this textbook wielded as a conduit for English language learning, cultural perspectives, and literacy practices.

### **Data Instruments**

The following data instruments were instrumental in providing a comprehensive understanding of this facet of English language education.

#### *In-Depth Semi-structured Individual Interviews*

In-depth individual interviews with educators were a central component of our data collection. Two male educators, Mr. Imani and Mr. Masoumi (pseudonyms), were actively engaged in these interviews, offering unique insights into their perceptions and experiences regarding literacy practices within the "New Interchange" textbook.

*Mr. Imani:* A seasoned educator with over a decade of experience, Mr. Imani's in-depth interview delved into his extensive experience with the "New Interchange" textbook. As a TEFL master's degree holder, his insights were shaped by both his academic background and practical classroom experiences.

*Mr. Masoumi:* Another experienced educator, Mr. Mssoumi brought his perspective to the forefront during his in-depth interview. With more than 15 years in the field, Mr. Masoumi's insights were informed by years of navigating the intricacies of English language education.

In-Depth Individual Interviews as this pivotal component of the research methodology provided a dynamic platform for educators to articulate their perceptions, experiences, and challenges related to the "New Interchange" textbook and its associated pedagogy. These interviews were not static question-and-answer sessions; rather, they evolved into dynamic dialogues, fostering authentic expression and nuanced insights. Indeed, these interviews offered a deep exploration of these educators' viewpoints, allowing them to candidly share their experiences, insights, and challenges related to the "New Interchange" textbook.

***Focus Group Discussion***

In addition to individual interviews, a focus group discussion involving Mr. Imani, Mr. Masoumi, provided a collaborative platform for educators to engage in dialogue. This setting facilitated the exchange of collective insights and fostered discussions about the "New Interchange" textbook and its impact on literacy practices within Iranian EFL education.

The group dynamics inherent in focus group discussions often led to the emergence of shared perspectives and diverse viewpoints among educators. This collaborative approach allowed for a deeper exploration of the subject matter. Complementing individual interviews, focus group discussions indeed fostered collaborative discourse among participants. These discussions offered a unique space for collective reflection, unveiling insights that emerged through the synergy of diverse perspectives.

By drawing from these distinct yet interrelated data sources, the research project aimed to triangulate findings, validate educators' perceptions, and construct a comprehensive narrative surrounding the literacy practices intertwined with the "New Interchange" textbook within the Iranian EFL education context. Each data source contributed a unique layer of understanding, enriching the depth and breadth of the exploration of teachers' perspectives.

***Research Analysis***

In this stage, I used thematic and discursal analysis, cross-validation, triangulation, and narrative construction techniques (Aghaei, et al. 2022) in order to find key findings in Iranian EFL education and the role of the "New Interchange" textbook in framing the teachers' perceptions.

**Thematic & discursal Analysis**

- **Data Integration:** Data from in-depth interviews, focus group discussions were integrated for thematic and discursal analysis.
- **Initial Coding:** Researchers began by coding the data to identify recurring themes and patterns related to literacy practices in the context of the "New Interchange" textbook.
- **Theme Development:** Codes were grouped into broader themes and sub-themes, allowing for a systematic organization of findings.
- **Interpretation:** Themes were interpreted in the context of educators' perceptions, experiences, and the content and structure of the textbook.

**Cross-Validation and Triangulation:**

- **Comparative Analysis:** Findings from different data sources (interviews, focus groups) were compared and cross-validated to ensure consistency and reliability.



- **Triangulation:** Triangulation was used to corroborate educators' perspectives, enhancing the trustworthiness of the findings.

## 5. Findings & Discussion

### *Unearthing the Dominance of Anglophonic FEL Textbook Sacredness*

In my quest to unravel the multifaceted landscape of English language education within Iranian EFL classrooms, I have come across a deeply entrenched phenomenon that I refer to as "Anglophonic FEL Textbook sacredness." This phenomenon encapsulates a prevailing belief system, wherein the authority to determine and disseminate legitimate language literacy practices is exclusively vested in Anglophonic authors. These authors, perceived as the ultimate guardians of the English language, are considered to possess an unparalleled understanding of how English language literacy functions, especially within English-speaking countries. Consequently, they wield unquestionable influence in the realm of English language literacy, regardless of their familiarity with contemporary developments in foreign language pedagogy or their insights into theoretical aspects of English language and literacy instruction. The mere act of authoring a textbook, often endorsed by esteemed publishers such as "Cambridge or Oxford," bestows upon these authors the status of linguistic authorities.

This perspective gains further validation through the marketing strategies employed by FEL textbooks. For instance, the back cover blurb of "Interchange II" boldly declares it as "the world's most successful English series for adult and young learners." This proclamation primarily hinges on its status as a bestseller in countries where the authors have teaching experiences. Consequently, many Iranian educators tend to view international publications with Anglophonic authors as inherently superior. This preference is rooted in the belief that Anglophonic authors possess an innate mastery of English language literacy and the conviction that international publications consistently exhibit higher production quality than their local counterparts. As Mr. Imani remarked during the interview,

*"As you know, there are a multitude of options available when selecting an English language textbook. One option is to choose a textbook crafted by a native author specifically tailored for a non-native context, while the other option is to opt for a textbook authored by a native speaker for international use. 'Interchange' firmly falls into the latter category. Personally, I harbor reservations about textbooks authored by non-native speakers, particularly those intended for non-native contexts like Iran and published by less renowned national publishers."*

This perspective also tends to equate a greater degree of alignment with the USA or Britain as indicative of a textbook's authenticity and legitimacy. This inclination may be attributed to a form of

cultural hegemony, wherein Anglophonic culture is upheld as the benchmark against which all others are measured. Consequently, educators may grapple with feelings of insecurity concerning the language they teach, leading to a pronounced dependency on textbooks that can be characterized as exhibiting a form of "hyper sacredness." (Aghaei, et al., 2014)

Furthermore, this perspective finds resonance in the concept of "FEL Textbook Framing." In the realm of pedagogical discourse, textbooks serve as authoritative statements that exert varying degrees of control. "Interchange's framing," in particular, appears to exert a form of cultural control over educators by presenting a structured and prescriptive sequence of lessons. This framing implies that learners can achieve English language literacy proficiency by merely following the linear path laid out by the FEL textbook.

In this context, the concept of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is upheld as a fixed and monolithic methodological framework, often imported from western English-speaking countries with little adaptation. Principals of ELIs frequently promote this unaltered form of CLT as the most advanced and suitable approach for English language literacy teaching and learning. Such beliefs are perpetuated through various advertisements and promotional materials. Additionally, a sense of insecurity among non-Anglophonic educators, who perceive themselves as "inferior and uninformed" in matters of English language literacy, further reinforces this stereotype. As Mr. Masoumi elucidated during the interview,

*"When it comes to textbooks, I discern a dichotomy between what I would term 'authentic' and 'contrived' texts. Textbooks such as 'Spectrum' exude a more palpable sense of authenticity compared to 'Interchange.' In 'Interchange,' some portions, ranging from conversational dialogues to grammatical focuses, are articulated by individuals who hail from South-eastern Asian countries, and they are generally non-native speakers. As educators with extensive experience, we possess the discernment to identify elements within the texts that bear a contrived quality. It's noteworthy that the 'native gel,' so to speak, appears less seamlessly integrated within the 'Interchange' textbook, despite its association with a reputable international publisher."*

In light of these observations, it becomes evident that FEL textbooks and educators play pivotal roles in perpetuating this orthodoxy. The plausibility and authority ascribed to these textbooks risk fostering a Western cultural hegemony and stifling learner agency within these classrooms. Consequently, a fixed approach to language literacy methods not only disregards the unique cultural and social conditions of recipient countries but also perpetuates a form of pedagogical control that curtails educators' creative thinking and critical engagement. As a result, educators' roles are often reduced to prescriptive implementation rather than fostering adaptability and responsiveness to diverse pedagogical contexts. In conclusion, the findings illuminate the intricate nature of

Anglophonic FEL Textbook Orthodoxy, shedding light on the complex power dynamics that underlie English language education in Iran.

In parallel with the findings, contemporary literature highlights a persistent inclination among English language educators in various regions, including Greece, Portugal, and Spain, towards favoring Anglophonic authors and materials. While specific references to recent studies remain elusive, this trend aligns with the broader discourse on English language teaching and learning.

Recent scholarship continues to emphasize the enduring perception that Anglophonic authors possess a unique advantage when it comes to teaching English. The belief that non-native English speakers, particularly those labeled as "non-native" or from the outer and expanding circle, may lack the requisite fluency and cultural insight remains a subject of discussion (Liurda & Calvet-Terré, 2022). Liurda & Calvet-Terré's work, for example, explores how educators view the language proficiency of authors as central to the effectiveness of language materials.

Moreover, contemporary researchers echo the notion that materials crafted by Anglophonic authors are often deemed more authentic and aligned with the target culture (Brown, 2021). This aligns with our observations that educators tend to equate a closer connection with Anglophone cultures, such as the USA or Britain, with authenticity and legitimacy in teaching materials. However, scholars caution against this presumption, advocating for a more nuanced approach that recognizes the diversity of English language use worldwide (Akter, 2011).

In discussing the authority and prestige attributed to FEL textbooks authored by Anglophonic writers, recent literature highlights the need for a critical reevaluation of this paradigm. Scholars like Wright et al (2022) argue that while such materials may have intrinsic and extrinsic authorities, educators should be encouraged to question their assumptions about the superiority of these resources. This perspective aligns with the interviews conducted during our research, which reveal a propensity to uphold FEL textbooks as unquestionable authorities.

Regarding the notion of "FEL Textbook Framing," it is essential to acknowledge the evolving discourse on pedagogical control within ELT materials. Contemporary studies, such as Littlewood (2020), delve into the ways in which textbooks shape pedagogical practices. They emphasize the need for educators to critically engage with the framing provided by materials like "Interchange" and to adapt them to local contexts. This view is consistent with the feedback shared by educators in my interviews, who appreciate structured frameworks but also acknowledge the importance of adaptability.

In terms of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), current literature reflects a growing awareness of the need to move beyond a fixed and monolithic approach. Researchers like Littlewood

(2020) argue for a contextualized interpretation of CLT that considers the unique cultural and social conditions of each educational setting. This perspective challenges the promotion of a one-size-fits-all CLT approach, aligning with our observation that principals in Iranian ELIs often advocate for a standardized interpretation of CLT.

To address the consequences of an unquestioning trust in FEL textbooks, contemporary discussions emphasize the importance of nurturing teachers' creativity and critical thinking skills (Ma & Luo, 2021). Shahjahan et al. (2022) argue that an overreliance on materials can stifle educators' agency and hinder their ability to adapt to diverse pedagogical contexts. This aligns with our conclusion that an excessive adherence to fixed methods may limit educators' roles to mere implementers rather than facilitators of dynamic learning experiences.

### ***Cultural Allure: FEL Textbooks and the Allure of Anglophonic Literacy Practices***

The overwhelming consensus among the two teachers is their concern that "Interchange" significantly appears to exclude the rich tapestry of Iranian culture while they are often idealizing literacy practices from countries like the United States and, at times, South Asian nations. In numerous instances, the textbook's literacy activities seem to immerse learners predominantly in Western cultural paradigms of thinking, knowing, valuing, and behaving. Mr. Imani's interview exemplifies this aspect of the language literacy practices encountered in the FEL textbook. He aptly states;

*"In the textbooks like "New Interchange", Iranian cultures are not present. It may be challenges for many learners who question the Western countries and their culture. Sometimes these peripheral issues, in my reading, can be surprisingly significant for many families. They do not let their children come to such educational centers for fear of its deterring reflections on their beliefs. They victimize their children's future for sth insignificant.*

Here the teachers, Mr. Imani in particular, shed light on a significant aspect of textbook imperialism and its subversions as seen below.

### ***The Double-Edged Sword: Teacher Awareness & Conformity in FEL Textbook Literacy practice***

A critical discourse analysis on the interviews also underscores the dynamics of cultural hegemony and how FEL textbooks play a role in perpetuating it. The teachers' choice of words, such as "significant," "apparently," and "insignificant," serves as a rhetorical strategy that allows them to subtly challenge the dominant narrative presented in the FEL textbook while simultaneously highlighting the gravity of the issue at hand. In employing these terms, they engage in a form of discursive practice on the textbook's imposition of Western cultural norms.

Mr. Imani's statement, "In the textbooks like 'New Interchange,' Iranian cultures are not present," serves as a Foucauldian point of departure for analyzing the power dynamics at play. It draws attention to the absence of Iranian culture within the textbook, signifying a deliberate omission or marginalization. This omission can be seen as a mechanism of control, where the textbook acts as a regulatory tool dictating what is considered valuable knowledge and what is rendered insignificant.

Furthermore, Mr. Imani's suggestion that these "peripheral issues" may be "surprisingly significant for many families" reveals the covert power the textbook wields. It implies that the seemingly minor exclusion of Iranian culture from the curriculum can have far-reaching consequences, influencing learners' perspectives on Western countries and culture. This subtle form of manipulation, often veiled as educational content, reinforces Foucault's notion of knowledge as a form of power.

The phrase "They victimize their children's future for something insignificant" encapsulates the teachers' critical perspective on how FEL textbooks contribute to the imposition of Western cultural norms and values. By characterizing the omission of Iranian culture as "insignificant," the teachers not only challenge the textbook's narrative but also underscore the potential harm it can inflict on learners' cultural identities and futures.

In Foucauldian terms, the FEL textbook operates as a disciplinary mechanism, shaping the subjectivities of learners by normalizing Western cultural paradigms and excluding alternative narratives. It constructs a particular form of knowledge that serves the interests of the dominant culture, thereby perpetuating cultural hegemony. What follows highlight the details of this analysis more precisely and delve much deeper into a critical analysis of the teacher's discourse, focusing on his appeal to the allure of Anglophonic literacy practices in spite of his awareness of their potentially harmful consequences.

#### *Power Relations and Discourse*

The teacher's discourse reveals a complex interplay of power relations within the context of English language education. Foucault's concept of "power/knowledge" emphasizes how knowledge is intertwined with power structures (Foucault, 1980). In this case, the teacher's appeal to Anglophonic literacy practices reflects his recognition of their authoritative status in the field of ELT. However, this appeal also highlights his participation in the reinforcement of this hegemonic power structure.

*Appealing to Dominant Discourses*

The teacher's use of phrases like "surprisingly significant" and "victimize" demonstrates his awareness of the potential detriments of Anglophonic-centric literacy practices. Yet, he appeals to these practices by not challenging their dominance. This paradoxical stance illustrates Foucault's notion of "subjugated knowledges," where individuals may recognize oppressive discourses but continue to participate in them (Foucault, 1980). The teacher, in this sense, operates within the dominant discourse of Anglophonic literacy practices.

*Reproduction of Cultural Hegemony*

By not challenging the exclusion of Iranian culture and the idealization of Western practices, the teacher inadvertently reproduces cultural hegemony in ELT materials (Gramsci, 1971). He becomes complicit in the dissemination of Western cultural norms, values, and ideologies, which can be seen as a form of "cultural imperialism" (Said, 1978). Foucault's ideas on "governmentality" come into play here, as the teacher, knowingly or unknowingly, participates in governing the minds and identities of learners (Foucault, 1991).

*Agency and Resistance*

Foucault's work also emphasizes the role of agency in navigating power structures (Foucault, 1982). While the teacher recognizes the potential harm in disregarding local culture, he does not fully exercise his agency to resist or challenge the dominant discourse. This raises questions about the extent to which individuals within systems of power can enact meaningful resistance or change.

*Normalization and Silence*

The teacher's appeal to Anglophonic literacy practices contributes to their normalization within the educational context. Foucault's concept of "normalization" involves the process by which certain practices become accepted as the norm (Foucault, 1978). The teacher's silence on the issue further perpetuates this normalization, potentially silencing alternative voices and perspectives.

*Discursive Effects*

Foucault's theory of "discursive effects" posits that language and discourse have material consequences in shaping reality (Foucault, 1972). In this case, the teacher's appeal to Anglophonic practices contributes to the shaping of learners' perceptions, identities, and beliefs. It reinforces the idea that Western culture is superior so that this reading may marginalize local culture.

In conclusion, the teacher's discourse, with its awareness of the potential harm of Anglophonic-centric literacy practices, offers a rich terrain for critical analysis. It illustrates the complexities of power



relations, resistance, and the reproduction of dominant discourses within the realm of English language education framed in EFL textbook-oriented pedagogy. Foucault's ideas on power/knowledge, subjugated knowledges, normalization, and governmentality provide valuable insights into the dynamics at play when individuals participate in, and sometimes inadvertently perpetuate, oppressive systems of knowledge and discourse.

## **5. Conclusion**

In the realm of English Language Teaching (ELT), the influence of FEL textbooks on pedagogical practices is profound. This discussion delves into teachers' perspectives on FEL textbook literacy practices and uncovers the intricate power dynamics at play within the ELT landscape.

The prevailing theme of FEL Textbook sacredness unveils the deeply ingrained belief that English language literacy practices should be entrusted exclusively to Anglophonic authors. This perception, validated by teachers' interviews, reveals a sense of reverence for these authors as the ultimate authorities in English language instruction. This theme aligns with the works of Phillipson (1992) who critique the transfer of teaching methods from Western, developed countries to non-Western, developing countries.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge the multidimensionality of this phenomenon. The preference for Anglophonic authors is not solely based on pedagogical soundness or production quality but is also intertwined with cultural hegemony. Teachers may perceive a greater alignment with the USA or Britain as indicative of a textbook's authenticity and legitimacy, contributing to a sense of insecurity among non-Anglophonic educators.

The findings in this study also refer to FEL Textbook Framing as a kind of pedagogical control and homogenization. The concept of FEL Textbook Framing underscores the notion that textbooks serve as authoritative statements exerting varying degrees of control. In the case of "Interchange," the framing seems to exercise a form of cultural control over educators, promoting a structured and prescriptive sequence of lessons. This pedagogical framing inadvertently stifles educators' creative thinking and critical engagement, relegating their roles to prescriptive implementation rather than adaptability and responsiveness.

Findings also showed the possible learners' oppression resulted from mismatches between the FEL textbook and the learners. This theme sheds light on the mismatch between FEL textbook literacy practices and learners' cultural and social contexts. While the teachers appreciated the exposure to Anglophonic cultures, they also perceive mismatches that lead to a form of oppression and marginalization. The critical insights provided by teachers, such as Mr. Imani's awareness of the potential harm, highlight the complex allure of Anglophonic practices despite their recognized consequences.

In navigating these complex findings, there emerges a path towards critical pedagogy—a pedagogy that challenges dominant norms and seeks to empower learners by engaging with their own culture, experiences, and contexts. This critical awareness, coupled with a commitment to challenge the allure of imperialistic norms, paves the way for a pedagogical transformation.

In a nutshell, teachers' perceptions of FEL textbook literacy practices reflect a nuanced interplay of awareness and allure. While the discourse of imperialism remains deeply entrenched, the critical voices of educators offer hope for a more inclusive, culturally sensitive, and empowering pedagogy. This critical awareness, coupled with a commitment to challenge the allure of imperialistic norms, can pave the way for a pedagogical transformation—a transformation that respects cultural diversity, encourages critical thinking, and ultimately empowers learners to navigate the global linguistic landscape with confidence and agency.

## 6. Ramifications of the Findings

- **Textbook Adaptation:** The research underscores the need for educators to adapt textbook content to the specific needs and cultural context of Iranian EFL learners. Failing to do so may result in a disconnection between the curriculum and students' lived experiences, potentially hindering their engagement and comprehension.
- **Critical Literacy Emphasis:** The study highlights the importance of promoting critical literacy skills among EFL learners. Neglecting to encourage critical thinking and analysis may limit students' ability to engage with real-world language use and diverse perspectives effectively.
- **Authentic Material Integration:** The findings reveal the significance of supplementing textbook lessons with authentic materials. Neglecting to incorporate real-world content can lead to a limited understanding of language use in practical contexts.

## Declaration

I declare that this manuscript is original and has not been submitted to any other journal for publication

## Transparency Statements

I affirm that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article. Any additional data can be obtained from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

## Acknowledgements

This study was supported by the grant from Gonbad Kavous University, Iran, project (94/01/6, Sep.2023)

## Declaration of Interest

I report no conflict of interest.

## Funding

I do not have any financial or non-financial competing interests.

## Ethical Consideration

This manuscript adheres to the ethical guidelines provided by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) for ensuring integrity and transparency in the research publication process.

## References

- Aghaei, K., & Rajabi, M. (2019). Exploring the cohesive devices in written and spoken texts of “Let’s Learn Persian” based on Halliday and Hassan's (1976) model. *Journal of Teaching Persian to Speakers of Other Languages*, 8(1), 17.
- Aghaei, K., Danyali, A., & Rajabi, M. (2020). Critical Discourse Analysis on English Language Textbooks for Learners with Special Needs: Laclau & Muffe Approach. *Language Related-research*, 11(1), 329-358.
- Aghaei, K., Ghoorchaei, B., Rajabi, M., & Ayatollahi, M. A. (2022). Iranian EFL learners' narratives in a pandemic pedagogy: Appreciative inquiry-based approach. *Language-related Research*, 13(3), 285-314.
- Aghaei, K., Koo, Y. L., Noor, N. M., & Rajabi, M. (2014). From theory to practice: Theater reading (TR) as a critical and transformative literacy practice in an educational development course. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 118, 37-41.
- Aghaei, K., Rajabi, M., & Danyali, A. (2024). A Critical Discourse Analysis of Prospect & Vision Series English Language Textbooks as Framed in Foucauldian Reading on Ageism. *Language-related Research*, 15(2), 251-284.
- Aghaei, K., Rajabi, M., Lie, K. Y., & Ajam, F. (2020). Flipped learning as situated practice: A contrastive narrative inquiry in an EFL classroom. *Education and Information Technologies*, 25(3), 1607-1623.
- Aghai, K., Lie, K. Y., Noor, N. M., & Rajabi, M. (2010). Culture: A wanted or inevitable dress in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). In *Frontiers of language and teaching: Proceedings of the 2010 international online language conference* (pp. 305-328).
- Akter, T. (2011). Cultural Imperialism in English in English Medium Schools (Doctoral dissertation, East West University).
- Askildson, V. (2008). What do teachers and students want from a foreign language textbook? The University of Arizona.
- Bancheri, S. (2006). A language teacher’s perspective on effective courseware. In *Changing language education through CALL* (pp. 31-47).
- Banks, J. A. (2015). *Cultural diversity and education: Foundations, curriculum, and teaching*. Routledge.
- Borjian, M. (2013). *English in post-revolutionary Iran: From indigenization to internationalization* (Vol. 29). Multilingual Matters.

- Buntinx, N., & Meunier, F. (2020). Pluriliterate practices in students' academic writing: A mixed-methods study. In *Le bilinguisme et au-delà: Faire avancer la réflexion sur les pédagogies, les politiques et les pratiques*.
- Carrigan, C., Krigel, N., Brown, M. B., & Bardini, M. (2021). Articulating a Succinct Description: An Applied Method for Catalyzing Cultural Change. *Human Organization*, 80(2), 128-139.
- Cazden, C., Cope, B., Fairclough, N., Gee, J., Kalantzis, M., Kress, G. & Nakata, M. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(1), 60-92.
- Foucault, M. (2002). *The archaeology of knowledge*. Routledge.
- Giroux, H. A. (2002). *Breaking in to the movies: Film and the culture of politics*. Blackwell.
- Glenn, S. M., & Cunningham, C. C. (1984). Nursery rhymes and early language acquisition by mentally handicapped children.
- Graddol, D. (1999). *The future of English*. British Council.
- King, J. E. (1992). Diaspora literacy and consciousness in the struggle against miseducation in the Black community. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 61(3), 317-340.
- Koo, Y. L. (2008). *Language, culture and literacy: Meaning-making in global contexts*. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Fakulti Sains Sosial dan Kemanusiaan.
- Liurda, E., & Calvet-Terré, J. (2022). Native-speakerism and non-native second language teachers: A research agenda. *Language Teaching*, 1-17.
- Littlewood, W. (2011). Communicative language teaching: An expanding concept for a changing world. In *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning* (pp. 541-557). Routledge.
- Ma, L., & Luo, H. (2021). Chinese pre-service teachers' cognitions about cultivating critical thinking in teaching English as a foreign language. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 41(3), 543-557.
- Mirhosseini, S. A., Shirazizadeh, M., & Pakizehdel, H. (2022). Bridging language education and "New Literacy Studies": Reinvigorating courses of general English at an Iranian university. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 21(5), 287-302.
- Papen, U. (2023). The (New) Literacy Studies: The evolving concept of literacy as social practice and its relevance for work with deaf students. *Cultura & Psyché*, 4(1), 67-84.
- Pennycook, A. (1994). *The cultural politics of English as an international language*. Routledge.
- Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford University Press.
- Putra, T. K., Rochsantiningih, D., & Supriyadi, S. (2020). Cultural representation and intercultural interaction in textbooks of English as an international language. *Journal on English as a Foreign Language*, 10(1), 163-184.

- Rajabi, M. (2015). Literacy practices of an English language teacher in two pre-university high-stakes examination-oriented settings. Doctoral dissertation , University of Malaya (Malaysia).
- Rajabi, M., Aghaei, K., & Samuel, M. (2014). Revisiting Challenges of Traditional & Transformational Grammar in ELT: A Sign-Based Approach. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 118, 378-382.
- Richards, J., & Mahoney, D. (1996). Teachers and textbooks: A survey of beliefs and practices. *Perspectives*, 8(1), 40-63.
- Shahjahan, R. A., Estera, A. L., Surla, K. L., & Edwards, K. T. (2022). “Decolonizing” curriculum and pedagogy: A comparative review across disciplines and global higher education contexts. *Review of Educational Research*, 92(1), 73-113.
- Street, B. V. (1984). *Literacy in theory and practice* (Vol. 9). Cambridge University Press.
- Wright, C., Lu, Y., Jiawei Zhang, A., & Zhang, L. (2022). Tests of Learning or Testing for Learning? An Exploratory Study of Motivation and Language Learning Strategies Among HSK Level 1-3 Test-takers in UK. *International Journal of Chinese Language Teaching*, 3(3), 1-19.
- Zhang, Y., & Song, H. (2022). Linguistic Imperialism and Standard Language Ideology in an English Textbook Used in China. *Higher Education Studies*, 12(2), 112-125.

## Appendix 1

### Interview Protocol: Multiliteracies and Critical Cultural Perspectives

This interview protocol encompasses both multiliteracies and critical cultural perspectives, allowing for a comprehensive assessment of critical literacy practices in educational materials. Researchers and educators can use these tools to analyze textbooks' alignment with a broader range of critical perspectives.

*Purpose:* To assess the extent to which a textbook supports critical literacy practices from multiliteracies and critical cultural perspectives.

#### *Interviewee Information:*

- Name:
- Role/Position:
- Experience with Textbook:
- Date of Interview:

**Introduction:** Thank you for participating in this interview. The purpose is to understand your perspective on how the textbook aligns with critical literacy practices from both multiliteracies and critical cultural standpoints.

#### **Section 1: Multimodal Content Analysis**

1. What types of multimodal texts (e.g., images, videos, websites) are included in the textbook?
2. Are there opportunities for students to engage with and create different modes of texts (e.g., visual, audio, digital) within the textbook?

**Section 2: Multiple Perspectives** 3. Does the textbook present diverse viewpoints and perspectives on topics and issues?

4. Are there opportunities for students to critically analyze and question different perspectives presented in the textbook?

**Section 3: Critical Inquiry and Reflection** 5. Are there activities or prompts that encourage students to question, critique, or reflect critically on the content?

6. Does the textbook provide guidance on how to engage in critical inquiry and reflection?

**Section 4: Real-World Application** 7. Are there connections between the content in the textbook and real-world issues or contexts?

8. How does the textbook encourage students to apply what they learn in real-life situations?



**Section 5: Collaboration and Participation** 9. Does the textbook promote collaborative learning and participation among students?

10. Are there opportunities for students to engage in group projects or discussions that encourage critical dialogue?

**Section 6: Assessment and Evaluation** 11. How are students' critical literacy skills assessed and evaluated in the textbook?

12. Does the textbook provide rubrics or guidelines for assessing critical literacy practices?

**Section 7: Teacher Support** 13. Does the textbook offer support and resources for teachers to facilitate critical literacy practices in the classroom?

14. Are there professional development resources included for educators on implementing critical literacy?

**Section 8: Cultural Perspectives** 15. Does the textbook reflect the cultural diversity of the students in the classroom?

16. How does the textbook address issues of cultural relevance, sensitivity, and equity?

17. Are there activities or content that promote critical awareness of cultural perspectives?

**Section 9:**

**Overall Evaluation** 18. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not at all and 5 being fully aligned, how would you rate the textbook's alignment with critical literacy practices from multiliteracies and critical cultural perspectives?

**Additional Comments and Recommendations:** Please provide any additional comments or recommendations regarding the textbook's alignment with critical literacy practices from both multiliteracies and critical cultural perspectives.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Textbook Review Tool: Multiliteracies and Critical Cultural Perspectives**

*Textbook Title: Author(s): Publication Year:*

#### **1. Multimodal Content Analysis**

- List the types of multimodal texts (e.g., images, videos, websites) included in the textbook.
- Evaluate the diversity and appropriateness of multimodal texts.

- Assess the extent to which students can interact with different modes of texts within the textbook.

## **2. Multiple Perspectives**

- Identify instances where diverse viewpoints and perspectives are presented.
- Evaluate the depth and breadth of perspectives.
- Determine if students are prompted to critically analyze and question different viewpoints.

## **3. Critical Inquiry and Reflection**

- Note activities or prompts that encourage critical thinking, questioning, or reflection.
- Evaluate the guidance provided to students on engaging in critical inquiry and reflection.
- Assess if critical literacy skills are explicitly addressed.

## **4. Real-World Application**

- Identify connections between textbook content and real-world issues or contexts.
- Evaluate how the textbook encourages students to apply what they learn.
- Assess the authenticity of real-world applications.

## **5. Collaboration and Participation**

- Note instances where collaborative learning and participation are encouraged.
- Evaluate the quality of group activities or discussions.
- Assess the level of critical dialogue promoted through collaboration.

## **6. Assessment and Evaluation**

- Examine how students' critical literacy skills are assessed and evaluated.
- Evaluate the clarity and effectiveness of assessment methods.
- Determine if rubrics or guidelines for assessing critical literacy are provided.

## **7. Teacher Support**

- Identify resources and support for teachers to facilitate critical literacy practices.
- Evaluate the comprehensiveness of teacher support materials.
- Assess the availability of professional development resources for educators.

## **8. Cultural Perspectives**

- Examine how the textbook reflects the cultural diversity of the students in the classroom.
- Evaluate how the textbook addresses issues of cultural relevance, sensitivity, and equity.
- Identify activities or content that promote critical awareness of cultural perspectives.

## **9. Overall Evaluation**

- Rate the textbook's alignment with critical literacy practices from multiliteracies and critical cultural perspectives on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not at all aligned and 5 being fully aligned.

**Summary and Recommendations:** Provide a brief summary of your evaluation and recommendations for improvement if applicable.