Article

An Investigation Into the Culture and Social Actors Representation in Summit Series ELT Textbooks Within van Leeuwen’s 1996 Framework

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Abstract
The current study aims at identifying particular ways through which social actors are represented in Summit Series ELT textbooks. It examines cultural load in the textbooks within critical discourse analysis framework, in this case van Leeuwen’s framework. Particularly, the study attempts to explore if values, norms, and roles are culture/context-bound. Results of the analyses showed that among discursive features, Inclusion, Genericization, and Indetermination were used more than Exclusion, Specification, and Determination. Activation was more observed than Passivation, and Categorization had an important function in the representation of some of the social actors along with Assimilation and Impersonalization. The analysis also indicated the impartiality toward the representation of social actors. Moral, social, and personal values were the most disseminated values, while social morality and traditions had the highest occurrence. However, a few discriminative cases were found regarding gender roles. The researchers proposed that Summit Series were less grounded in cultural assumptions/biases. This impartiality eases language learning by keeping learners away from misunderstanding and incomprehensibility.

Keywords
van Leeuwen, social actors, culture, value, norm, role, cultural biases

Introduction and Literature Review

The proponents of critical discourse analysis (CDA) emphasize the critical effects of curriculums on learners (Frein, 1998; Hodge & Kress, 1993; Kress, 1996). They are in agreement with the notion that a curriculum can construct the “future social subject” (Kress, 1996, p. 16). That is to say, a curriculum is not merely designed to transfer knowledge but has certain effects on particular attitudes that learners take toward all social values and norms. Bourdieu described this as “habitus” or “a set of dispositions which incline agents to act and react in certain ways” (cited in Kress, 1996, p. 17). Thus, learners’ identity and subjectivity would be constructed by the curriculum (Best & Kellner, 1997; Boyce, 1996).

It is worthy of attention that this identity construction is not directly imposed on the learners but achieved indirectly through the concealed agenda existing in the curriculum. As social events, values, and norms presented in the subject matters are indirect and hidden, learners exposed to them take them as natural facts. These seemingly natural facts cause gradual change in learners’ attitudes and behaviors. Consequently, another crucial social effect of the curriculum could be preservation or challenge of the political and social structures, so there would be an urge for authorities of society to scrutinize the content of any curriculum.

Textbooks are the essential part of almost any curriculum and educational program. Selecting a particular textbook would be of great importance as its content is not a mere means to transfer knowledge and information, but it is a means to manifest ideologies and power relations in the society and is capable of pushing learners to develop certain attitudes/worldviews and take certain stances. The text, as such, not only affects learners but also society. Such impacts are considered hierarchical as Peskett (2001) points out, “the government . . . decides, and the school implements, and the students change accordingly” (p. 6).

In this regard, Moughrabi (2001) notes that the content of textbooks is always an issue of interest and concern to authorities; for instance, in the United States, political parties

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“have launched numerous campaigns against textbooks deemed ideologically offensive or antipatriotic” (p. 1). He also comments that the way in which knowledge is organized affects learners’ prospect through making ideologies seem normative. As from constructivism viewpoint which is a philosophy of education that stresses the ways the normative ideologies are constructed, there is no objective reality as knowledge, and whatever is considered as knowledge is manipulated to suit specific preplanned goals (McMahon, 1997). Thus, learners’ knowledge will be the result of the combination of the subject matter, the school organization, and the learners’ social experiences. Inspired by constructivism, social constructivism highlights the role of culture in the formation of learners’ attitude and identity. To emphasize the impact of context, McMahon (1997), first, points out that the mental status of the learner should be connected to the context, then learning happens. Also, he argues that reality (referred to as knowledge) is built through language accompanied by learners’ experiences in certain contexts. He concludes that learning should be regarded a social construct that is fulfilled through social discourse and mediated via language. Burr (1997 as cited in Amsaleh, 2004) pinpoints the relation between language and thinking. According to her, language is an active factor in constructing our experience, ideas, and concepts regarded as the preconditions for thinking that are accessible through language. As language is the main medium of learning and education, authorities tend to control the subject matters included in educational programs.

Accordingly, Fowler (1991) describes the function of language as “to continuously articulate ideology, to insist on system of beliefs that legitimate the institutions of power” (p. 64). By using subtle procedures of control, the authorities preserve the status quo and their dominant position.

Subject matter, in this sense, has the function of legitimizing cultural and ideological hegemony. These ideas lead us to recognize the relation between hegemony and discourse.

Fairclough (1995) states that discourse is “a sphere of cultural hegemony of a class or group over the whole society . . . is in part the matter of its capacity to shape discursive practice and order of discourse” (p. 95). The order of discourse is also of great importance. According to Fairclough, the order of discourse is considered as “domains of hegemony and hegemonic struggle, within institutions such as education . . . ” (p. 25). This is what critical discourse analysts are most worried about. They pay close attention to the forms by which certain beliefs and ideologies are organized within the discourse as it would be helpful in (de)constructing certain ideas and values.

The purpose of the proponents of CDA is to make learners, teachers, and members of educational institutions aware of how subject matter in curricula contribute to construct and internalize certain ideologies, leading to the hegemony of certain individuals, groups, or classes over the others. Such a deconstructive approach challenges the underlying ideology of the seemingly innocent assumptions in the seemingly neutral subject matters and curricula. In sum, their ultimate goal is to challenge social injustice and step to the fore to establish a more democratic society.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English as a Second Language (ESL) textbooks, as the main focus of this study, are considered the main sources through which learners get familiar with the culture of the target language. Culture has been viewed as an established way of social behavior bonded with language in a totally mutual and complementary relation. It fulfills biological and psychological needs in people (Brown, 2007). Mental semantic networks, as Halliday (1978) explains, have sociological basis which can be realized by means of language. Therefore, language can be regarded as social semiotics that encodes the underlying cultural values. Researchers (Lakoff, 1973; Whorf, 1956) pinpoint the consolidation of culture and language in different areas, such as lexical, discourse, and textual; therefore, language cannot be separated from cultural elements. To McDevitt (2004) and Pulverness (2003), any linguistic exchange requires cultural literacy. This idea is related to the shift from linguistic competence to communicative competence. The communicative approaches toward language teaching prioritize target language culture and regard it as the key element of successful language learning. For some radical advocates of communicative approaches, foreign language learning is equal to enculturation that is conforming to the foreign language cultural norms (Bex, 1994; Schumann, 1976).

This camp also believes that language curriculum without culture elements cannot develop communicative competence. As a result, learners fail in learning a foreign language (Genc & Bada, 2005). However, there are a good number of researchers who do not follow such extreme stances regarding culture and language. They believe in culturally fair curriculums that provide cultural awareness (Alptekin, 2002) and provide learners with certain strategies to deal with cultural differences (Hyde, 1998).

Scholars in the field of CDA (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2001, 1998; van Leeuwen, 1996) assert that language in books, media, or even ordinary conversations does not simply convey the information that it overtly indicated. It can be used to shape the addressees’ feelings, thoughts, and modes of behavior. Language is seen as an instrument capable of shaping people’s ideologies as well as social realities. Such potentials can make language a suitable device for detecting ideologies intended to shape culture and social realities because as Kress (1985) indicates, “… ideologies find their clearest articulation in language” (p. 29) at different levels, namely, lexical, grammatical, or discoursal.

Regarding the effects of society on discourse, van Leeuwen (1996) agrees with other scholars in the field of CDA; however, he uses different strategies in examining texts. He has taken a “sociosemantic approach” in which visual semiotics are studied in addition to verbal ones.
Unlike many other researchers who use linguistic factors in analyzing discourse, van Leeuwen (1996) utilizes sociological factors such as nomination and agency. He tries to determine how social actors are expressed in discourse. In this regard, he explains,

The network brings together what linguists tend to keep separate: it involves a number of distinct lexicogrammatical and discourse-level linguistic system, transitivity, reference, the nominal group, rhetorical figures and so on, because all these systems are involved in the realization of representations of social actors. (van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 67)

This network includes three types of transformation: deletion (exclusion and inclusion), rearrangement and role allocation (activation, passivation, etc.), and substitution ((im)personalization, (in)determination, etc.).

To name a study within van Leeuwen’s model, Amalsaleh (2004) has conducted a CDA on three different English textbooks taught at Iranian guidance school, high school, and university level. She has tried to find whether the authors of the textbooks have given more credit to one gender or specific social class compared with others. Results of her study reveal different images of social actors. Woman, for example, is depicted as domesticated actor with limited professional opportunities whereas middle-class urban man is stereotyped as an ideal norm.

The present study aimed at reconsidering the socialization and culture factors in Summit series of textbook based on the CDA perspective to identify the values, the norms, and the roles that might be overtly found in the discourse or covertly implied and unbeknownst to the learners. In addition, as there has been a curiosity about the relation between ideology and language, this study was carried out to identify the particular ways by which social actors have been represented in the English textbooks being studied. To sum, this study was carried out to find the answers to the following questions:

1. What are the particular ideological structures representing social actors in Summit series?
2. What are the particular norms, values, and roles representing cultural facets manipulated in Summit series?

Method

Model of Analysis

This study is theoretically grounded in the framework proposed by van Leeuwen (1996). The chart illustrating the features appears in Appendix A. He attempts to focus on sociosemantic categories rather than just linguistic ones in analyzing discourse critically because, in his view, the former can represent the discourse much better.

The most important assumption of van Leeuwen is that meaning belongs to culture rather than language. In addition to scrutinizing the ways social actors are represented in the selected materials, the study aims to investigate cultural density of the selected English learning textbooks. If the aim is to investigate the cultural features in textbooks, this model cannot be directly used in analyzing such features; therefore, it has to be modified to some extent to fulfill this goal. To this end, the researcher adapted the modified version of van Leeuwen’s framework from a PhD dissertation by Shahsani (2007) in that culture bound features in primary school textbooks are examined critically. Her modification is to add socialization features, namely values, norms, and roles to the original model. Through a comprehensive examination of given definitions for roles, norms, and values, as well as an extensive body of the related literature on these factors, Shahsani could examine the cultural and ideological load of textbooks in addition to the representation of the social actors. Having analyzed the data, she proposed a comprehensive taxonomy for the values, norms, and roles. The taxonomy appears in Appendix B.

For the current study, the content of the books is examined to trace the subcomponents of values, norms, and roles according to Shahsani’s taxonomy; however, during analyzing the texts, the researcher faced some data that did not correspond with the classifications. For instance, some conveyed ideas seemed conventional, but they might not have much generality or fundamentality to be considered as essential norms or values in the society. Among these ideas, pet-keeping and following fashion comprise two instances. To tackle this problem, the researcher defined another category named Institution and added it to values, norms, and roles proposed by Shahsani. Institution refers to some structures in society by which values and norms can be delivered; hence, the practices or the ideas that do not correspond with the definitions of values and norms rather seem to be derived from a culture’s values and norms that are classified under the heading of Institution. Another subcategory of Institution is recognized as entertainment. What comes under the category Institution is the interplay of values and norms of the society. Therefore, the subcomponent entertainment would show that what sort of practices, values, and norms permit to be as entertainment. Examples for this subcategory include human activities with joy such as leisure time activities, taking R and R, different games, and so on. In sum, the addition of feature Institution helped the reader to have a broader outlook of cultural load in the books.

Other additions to Shahsani’s taxonomy include concepts that were near to norms or values in definition but were not mentioned by Shahsani (2007). For example, in one conversation, two colleagues of different sexes are socializing freely. It is understood that to hang out is a conventional practice for male and female members of society. Having
speculated on the reference list, the researcher added this idea as a subcategory to social customs that is a norm.

Data Collection and Data Analysis Procedures

The materials analyzed in the study were the two-level high-intermediate books of Summit series which are the final step for learners who have completed a beginning to intermediate-level course with Top Notch series. Among the different books for different levels, Summit series were chosen for the analysis. The first criterion for this selection was that they are internationally distributed and have been published by an internationally popular and leading publisher, Pearson Longman. The second criterion was that they aim to develop all four skills in advanced learners; the passages are longer and the conversations are more authentic than those in lower levels, and therefore, more suitable for the analysis. The third reason for selecting these books pertains to what the authors have claimed about them. According to these authors, there is an emphasis on cultural fluency in these books that enable learners to navigate the social, travel, and business situations that they will encounter in their lives. This characteristic could reassure the researcher that Summit series are the appropriate materials for investigating their cultural load and ideological backgrounds.

All the sentences of conversations and reading passages—virtually 1,022 lines and 632 sentences—were analyzed according to the features presented by van Leeuwen (1996) to investigate the ways social actors are represented. At the same time, they were analyzed according to the modified version of van Leeuwen model suggested by Shahsani (2007) to find the particular norms, values, and roles representing cultural facets manipulated in Summit series. These features were transmitted in one sentence, one paragraph, or in one unit covertly. The data have been analyzed qualitatively and analytically. All the conversations of the four books have been analyzed within van Leeuwen’s framework. In some cases, Shahsani’s framework was also used in the analysis of the data. The conversations were so short that there were not enough necessary explicit social interactions for social actors to be identified and assessed. There was very little evidence in these conversations for the discursive features introduced by van Leeuwen. However, Shahsani’s modifications regarding values, norms, and roles suited the conversations totally and gave a chance for the researcher to entirely extract the cultural facets and ideological backgrounds.

Result and Discussion

In every passage, there are social actors no matter what the topic is; however, the ways they are represented are different. Psychological traits and personality characteristics are discussed generally through discursive features like Genericization and Indetermination; that is, to introduce such characteristics of social actors who possess any particular quality are referred to generically or impartially. In other words, such issues are discussed impartially because the writer has not attributed them to any specific social actor or group of social actors from a specific gender, age, social class, race, and so on. Such impartiality is observable in all reading passages that discuss psychological properties and individual values. For example, in the passage about phobias (Saslow & Ascher, 2011c, p. 56), to address people who struggle with phobias, the writer uses generic reference such as generic pronouns “you” and “we” and also mass noun “people” (feature of Genericization). They are also unspecified (feature of Indetermination), as in line 9, “for some, being in social situations fills them with dread . . .”

Social actors exist in scientific texts as well. One example is in Book 2B, Unit 8, p. 92, in which an article presents three scientific theories that explain why people laugh. The important point related to Summit series is that in the texts with scientific topics—similar to psychological topics—social actors are referred to generically. They are also represented unspecified. Such features, Genericization and Indetermination, lend an impartiality to what the writer states because the writer does not ascribe any quality to any specific social actor or groups of social actors. Consequently, the topic is introduced and discussed without impacts of bias. Undoubtedly, such impartiality is one of the strongest points of Summit series.

There is also a general procedure in writing biographies. First, all the biographies introduce and admire famous influential characters who had significant personal achievements in their lives or who had significant contribution to their community, to science, and so on. Thus, a general tendency toward appreciation of goodness, moral excellence, and usefulness is observable. It is noteworthy that all the characters in biographies come from Western world and Western culture. There is no instance from other parts of the world like Asia or Africa. The ideological background would seem to represent certain social and moral values as parts of the culture associated with the target language that shows bias in favor of the target language and the target culture. Second, it might be done with the purpose of inspiring and building them up them in the learners who would learn not only the knowledge of the target language but also its culture that would be a merit of the books. The state of being important and influential is represented by certain discursive features, namely Inclusion, Activation, and Functionalization. Inclusion and Activation give the character a sense of power and authority to direct the actions or even thoughts of the others as in the passage about Paul Newman from Book 1A, p. 34. Functionalization helps the writer highlight the state of being professional. For example, in the biography of Beethoven in Book 1A, p. 20, he is referred to as a gifted pianist and an imaginative composer. It is worth noting that in Summit series when the writers aim to admire or to
show a favorable bias for a character, they mainly use these features.

Throughout Summit series, the writers tend to exclude social actors who are officials and authorities. In this way, it would be possible for the writer to avoid raising controversy or conflict with high-status social actors. As a result, the focus of the passage would be solely on a sort of consciousness-raising about the topic itself. For instance, in Book 1B, Unit 8, p. 94, the government or its agents that legitimized the one-child policy are excluded: “Due to the strict policy introduced in 1979 . . . ” In another example from Book 1A, p. 58, the leaders of the megacities are covered up (suppression): leaders of megacities are suppressed in four cases: “collaboration,” “cooperation,” “decentralized planning,” and “urban planning.” In this way, the writer sets them free from probable deficiency or unsatisfactory circumstances of megacities. Such exclusion prevents the texts from being politically disputative, instead draws readers’ attention to the main topic and not the individuals behind it.

According to van Leeuwen (1996), “given the great value which is placed on individuality in many spheres of our society and the value placed on conformity in others, these categories [Assimilation and Individualization] would have to be of primary significance in Critical Discourse Analysis” (p. 48). Two kinds of Assimilation, Aggregation and Collectivization, have been used in the passages to serve certain discursive purposes. Aggregation that is realized by quantifiers first adds to the credibility of what the writers claim. By providing information and statistics on the topic, the writer tries to be more accurate and reliable. Second, in Summit series, it magnifies the bulk of the evidence for an argument. For example, in Book 1B, p. 94, the elderly is aggregated in two cases (para. 1, line 11, 15). It attracts the attention of the reader more to the growth of aging population that is growing at a high rate. Another example is from 2B, p. 106:

“... it is reduced by 60-70% . . . ”

The reduction of energy consumption is aggregated that helps magnify the effectiveness of using green technology. In short, the range or the effectiveness of a matter has been highlighted by means of Aggregation. Collectivization, however, represents social actors as a homogeneous and consensual group. It gives homogeneity to social actors in relation to the activity they do. In most cases, the use of first person plural “we,” the reference by the word “surveys” or “studies,” the representation of social actors through the word “organization” represents social actors as a homogeneous group with concurrence in attitude toward the issue discussed in the passage. To name one example, in Book 1B, p. 70, social actors living on earth who will bear the loss of species extinction are represented as a united whole and referred to as the first person plural “we.” In addition, members of organizations who work to conserve the natural inheritance are referred to as “organization” that is recognized as Collectivization. In this example, Collectivization magnifies the number of social actors who are concerned about protecting ecosystems and highlights the consensus opinion about the conservation of natural inheritance.

To take side with and to speak in favor of or against an issue indirectly, writers can represent social actors as impersonal ones by means of Abstraction and Objectivation. Abstraction helps writers represent social actors by means of a “quality” assigned to them; thus, the idea is transferred indirectly under the description of a quality. There are some examples in the data. For example, in Book 1B, p. 94, as the elderly have always been honored and respected in Chinese tradition, the writers show a respectful attitude toward the problems related to them and discuss the state of being problematic indirectly, in that it stays in a respectful way, by means of the feature “Abstraction.” In para. 3, line 5, the sentence “... an increasing number of young adults face the difficult situation of caring for their parents and grandparents” shows they are being assigned the quality of being problematic and troublesome, but it is not done directly.

Several types of Objectivation realized by metonymical reference are detected in the data. One type is utterance Autonomization by which social actors are represented by means of reference to their utterance. For example, in 1B, p. 116, para. 1, line 1, the sentence “New surveys suggest that . . . ” signals a kind of impersonal authority to the utterances or the claims; therefore, the writer seems to be impartial by means of this feature. Spatialization, another type of Objectivation, represents social actors by means of reference to a place with which they are closely associated. In 1A, p. 58, the leaders of megacities (high-status people) are covered up by means of this feature. Para. 4, line 1, the sentence “All megacities share the problems of providing jobs . . . ” shows that the leaders are represented by means of reference to where they live or where they are assigned as leaders. In other words, they are covered up so that their responsibilities appear less crucial and less evident in providing jobs, dealing with crimes, and so on.

Although social actors have been represented through Indetermination in most cases, there is also evidence for Differentiation. This feature serves a particular ideological purpose. In Book 1B, p. 82, para. 1, the writer differentiates between “us” in the present time among whom compulsive shopping has become common and “our grandparents and parents” for whom buying meant provisions to satisfy physical needs. Differentiation explains a kind of generation gap and changes of value in the world today. In fact, the writers ascribe consumerism to modern life. Since the writer takes a negative stance toward consumerism and changes of values in the life today, it can be inferred that the writer does not favor modern changes and have a critical viewpoint toward them. It is noteworthy that in Summit 1B, criticizing aspects
of modern life is a dominant idea. In another passage, 1B, p. 116, the writer differentiates between people (we) using technology today and people in the old days who used it less (para. 4, line 1) and discusses how easy the lives of the latter group were and how useful their leisure time had been. The differentiation suggests that there is a generation gap regarding using technology. When the writer criticizes the increase in using technology—that is, a characteristic of modern era—he or she would indirectly criticize modern life and modern lifestyle.

Similar to the results of the study by Shahsani (2007), the frequency of Exclusion is less than Inclusion. Passivation feature is also less used than Activation in both studies. But unlike Shahsani’s results, Genericization and Indetermination are more observed than Specification and Determination. This fact implies that social actors are mostly referred to generically and non-specifically, thus, there is less bias found in favor of or against specific social actors. This impartiality is applied to both genders as well and contradicts the results of some other studies from among which one can name Kavkani (1997) who analyzed children and young adult books. The results showed that female social actors were less included and less activated than male social actors. In the books under study, discursive features were less used for the purpose of concealment, and similar to the study by Ghanbari (2004), they were mostly used to reveal and emphasize the reality. However, regarding power relations in Summit series, discursive features have been used to conceal the utterances or actions of high-status social actors and officials. This finding contradicts Khosravi-Nik (2000) who has found out that more powerful social actors have been represented more explicitly. Such Suppression of authorities in Summit series prevents the texts from being politically disputative; instead, it draws readers’ attention to the main topic and not the individuals behind it.

Considering values, norms, and roles, the analysis of passages shows there is a significant emphasis on personal values. The texts on psychological issues, biographies, scientific theories about human behavior, and even the recommendations to produce one’s best works (2B, Unit 7, p.80) emphasize individual characteristics recognition. This value has the highest frequency among other values. Exposure to such value persuades learners to recognize their own individual values and the effects of their individuality in their real lives. Social values are ranked in the second place after personal values. The emphasis in social values is on social responsibilities, cooperation in social practices, having empathy toward fellowmen, and so on. The third place belongs to moral values that include respecting moral characteristics like justice, virtue, bailment, self-sacrifice, and so on.

Familial, Theoretical-Scientific-Technical, Environmental, Globalization, and Commercial values are other outstanding values with similar frequencies. There is one instance of Art values as well (Book 1A, p. 16, getting acquaintance with music genres, discussing the benefits of music shows aesthetic and art values). No instance of Political, Religious, and National values was detected in the material. This result is in contrast with the analysis of values for primary school textbooks in Iran by Shahsani. Although these three types of values are frequently used in Iranian textbooks, there is not even one instance in English learning textbooks named Summit.

Besides, in Iranian textbooks, religious values rank first among other values, but in the Summit series, personal and individual values have been placed in the first rank. A good example, Behnam and Mozahheb (2013) examine the relationship between religion and EFL textbooks in Iran. They found that religion is an integral part of Iranian EFL textbooks, which is taught indirectly. In this study, there is no reference to ethnic minorities, their values, and their norms, whereas in Summit series there is an emphasis on globalization values. This fact is in contrast with the findings of Khajavi and Abbasian (2011) that showed national identity and international issues constituted less than 7% of the English learning textbooks; therefore, the books were not suitable for educating students at the age of globalization. The attention to globalization issues in Summit series might refer to the fact that they are internationally distributed textbooks; therefore, introducing ethnic values and norms might raise conflict in more prejudiced communities. To ignore national and ethnic features, and instead to emphasize globalization values results in ignoring differences of different nations that, as we have seen through years, have been the source of immense hostilities and big wars among nations. The researcher believes that Exclusion of ethnic issues in Iranian textbooks would be a serious shortcoming because Iran is a multi-ethnicity, multilanguage, and multi-culture society. Therefore, to exclude them signals a kind of discrimination toward vast groups of social actors. However, in the case of summit series, it would be considered a strong point for the reason mentioned.

Regarding norms, social morals and social manners are of equal importance. One case of social laws and social ceremonies is also detected. The result is consistent with the similar study of norms by Shahsani (2007) in that social morality and social manners have the most frequencies.

The roles allocated to men and women in the passages are a bit different from those in conversations. First, the analysis of roles in the passages is represented. In two cases (1A, Unit 4, and 2B, Unit 6), women are depicted as passive social actors who are easily affected by ads and media. Subjection is also demonstrated when the role of handling financial issues in the family is given to the man in Unit 6. Such Subjection pertains to the dominant patriarchal views. In two other cases, uneven gender roles are observable; for example, in 2A, Unit 2, she is placed in old traditional roles of women who sacrifice their interests and desires for the good of another, that is, a male one or their family. In another example from 2A, Unit 4, the passage contains gender roles. It is a “female” subject who, as the mother, is described as
involved in family issues like taking care of children and their schooling problems, dealing with house-hold stuff, and so on. It is not the husband who is to take time and have fun with kids, to cook at home instead of eating dinners out to have more family time, and so on. The male actor is only referred to in terms of his occupation, away from home (a busy professional). The woman is given the traditional roles of mother and wife. It is also “she,” and not he, who sacrifices her job opportunities to take time with her community and children.

It is similar to role allocations in some other studies on textbooks in Persian language. For example, Bahman and Rahimi (2010) investigate gender representations in Iranian high school textbooks. They report that “Concerning reading passages too there was the supremacy of males over females, i.e., they occupied the titles and the topics of most passages and women were almost neglected” (Bahman & Rahimi, 2010, p. 275). In 2A, Unit 4, although the woman shows self-sacrifice for the good of her family, she already had a high-status job; therefore, gender bias is not as absolute as it is in Amalsaleh (2004) in that women are depicted as domesticated actors with limited or no professional opportunities in English textbooks taught at Iranian guidance school, high school, and university level. To put it briefly, the analysis of gender role allocations in the passage is consistent with some other studies like Afshar-Naderi (1999) that reflects the cliché patterns and a patriarch tendency in cultural atmosphere of the textbooks.

Interestingly, the conversations follow a trend in gender role allocation that is a bit different from what has been observed in passages. There is much less discrimination and devaluation based on sex, and in most cases (except two cases), men and women are treated equally in terms of gender roles. Describing one’s shortcomings and arguing about suspicious claims are two examples of this type in the conversations about giving shopping advice.

Only in one case women are in traditional role of housekeeping, caring for children, dealing with children’s moral and social problems (1B, p. 90). In another case, the women are pictured talking about their feelings, expressing their frustrations, even crying, and also sympathizing with each other. Assigning typical roles to different genders, like being emotional and talking about their feelings that are assigned to women, results from a patriarch ideology. But being free from or unaffected by emotion is assigned to men (2A, p. 30). As it is seen, to assign unequal roles to women or to depict them just in familial roles in conversations is not as much significant as it is in other studies such as Afshar-Naderi (1999), Sedaghat and Zahed (1999), and Baghdadi (2012). The results of the analysis of passages are more consistent with these studies. In one case, in the conversation of 1A, p. 46, women are portrayed in high positions, as here the position of the chief is given to a female.

In the conversations, moral values have the highest occurrence. Social values and personal values with the same amount of occurrence rank after moral values. There are instances of aesthetic and art, commercial, theoretical, technical, and scientific, globalization, and familial values with the same frequency (for each one two instances). Regarding norms, social morality and social custom have the highest frequency (four instances for each one), and there is one instance of social tradition. In the case of institution, four subcategories are identified: music, pet-keeping, fashion, and entertainment.

On balance, the overall data from both passages and conversations suggest that the tendency is toward transferring first “moral values,” second “social values,” and then “personal values.” Regarding norms, the data also show a trend toward magnifying first “social morals” with highest occurrence, then “social custom,” and finally “social manners.”

**Conclusion**

Having used van Leeuwen’s (1996) model with sociosemantic orientations, along with a taxonomy of cultural facets by Shahsani (2007), this study attempted to reveal cultural load and the particular ways by which social actors have been represented in the English Language Training (ELT) textbooks of Summit series.

Among discursive features, Inclusion, Genericization, and Indetermination are more used than Exclusion, Specification, and Determination. Activation is more observed than Passivation. Categorization also has an important function in the representation of some of the social actors in these textbooks. Assimilation and Impersonalization are the other outstanding features found in this study. In sum, the analysis shows impartiality toward the representation of social actors. Regarding values, moral, social, and personal are the most disseminated ones and among norms, social morality and social traditions have the highest occurrence. In comparison with the results of other similar studies much less discriminative cases have been found regarding gender roles. Overall, we can conclude that Summit series are less grounded in cultural assumptions and biases. The impartial representation of social actors and the avoidance of culturally discrepant issues keep learners away from misunderstanding and incomprehensibility and ease the process of language learning.
Appendix A

Van Leeuwen’s (1996) framework features

Appendix B

A brief explanation on the components of socialization patterns follows:

Students should be familiarized with the values, norms, and social roles of agents.

1. Values including the following:

A. Theoretical Values (scientific and technological): Students must learn to be curious and thoughtful. They should have a passion for revealing the truth and learning science. They should know about inventors, explorers, and famous people and know the dangers of illiteracy; be familiar with industrial products and mass media (radio, TV, the Internet, and satellites) and know how to use them; know about means of transportation and become familiar with the information about mills and factories.

B. Economic Values (financial): Students must know different jobs, become familiar with the ways to earn money, and compete in their work to get more profits.

C. Aesthetic Values (Arts): Students should be familiar with the beauty of the nature, gain information in the fields of art (poetry, music, etc.), learn artistic skills, and find information about exhibitions and artworks.

D. Social Values: Students should learn to be cooperative in their tasks, be interested in improving the community, helping others learn to be kind and sympathetic.

E. Political Values: Students should know about the politicians and leaders of their own countries, learn to respect them, know about the responsibilities of the government, and learn to be obedient toward their government.
F. Religious Values (ethics): Students should know God and worship him. They should know the Prophet, the innocent Imams and their followers, and religious cities, and be familiar with the stories of the Quran. They should know desirable traits such as selflessness, sympathy, and trustworthiness, and learn piety, justice, and courage; they should learn to keep their bodies and minds clean; and they should not harm their bodies and souls.

G. National Values: Students must be familiar with their country’s archaeological and cultural heritage, know the importance of preserving cultural heritage and learn to be patriots, love their homeland and sacrifice themselves for their countries, and be familiar with their national figures.

H. Individual Values: Students must be familiar with people’s personalities and moods.

I. Familial Values: Students should know about belonging and loyalty to their families and be aware of their families’ security and protection.

J. Environmental Values: Students must know the environment and learn to protect it. They should become familiar with natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes and know how to deal with them.

K. Values of Globalization: Students should be familiar with international organizations such as the Red Cross, the United Nations, and so on, and have an attitude toward world peace, universal health care, and universal education.

3. Roles include the following:

A. The roles of different age groups: Students should know the roles of children, adolescents, young adults, adults, and the elderly. Children’s roles include playing and doing recreational activities, curiosity, and obedience. The roles of teenagers include curiosity and religious ceremonies; the youth need to explore, continue their education, and practice their religion; adults need to work and earn a living, raise children, and fulfill religious obligations; and the elders should be advisors and help with house-hold chores.

B. Gender roles: Students should know the traditional and new gender roles. Men function as fathers, guardians, and breadwinners of families, workers, academics, doctors, engineers, employees; and women function as mothers, homemakers, academics, doctors, engineers, industrialists, workers, and so on.

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