

Global Coursebooks in the Course of Time: The Case of Interchange Level 2

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Abstract

Although global English Language Teaching (ELT) coursebooks have been subject to numerous (critical) analyses, the changes occurring to their contents over different editions have received scarce attention. In this study, the researchers examined the transformations over different editions of the Interchange series (level 2) regarding some selected aspects of their textual contents. Seeking experienced English teachers' views of the global coursebooks' transformations over the past decade was another aim of the study. The analysis and comparison of the included topics and titles, characters, sites, and contexts in the Interchange series as well as interviews with 12 English teachers revealed that the content-based changes of different editions of this coursebook are superficial and cosmetic-like and despite the claims for globality, fallacies such as real-life-ness, representation and globality are still evident. We hope the findings of the study would aid curriculum and policymakers, institute managers, and language teachers to reconsider the functioning and value of current global ELT coursebooks.

Keywords: ELT coursebooks, Interchange, content analysis, changes, fallacies

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INTRODUCTION

Over the last few decades, the exponential rise in the number of non-native English learners has made English Language Teaching (ELT) publishers develop coursebooks for the global market claiming that the designed materials cater to the needs of all learners around the world. Regarding them as standard and quality-controlled products, many English language centers around the globe develop their curriculum based on these coursebooks, train their teachers accordingly, impart their contents with language learners, employ them as a yardstick of progress, and change their educational system by the time they fall from grace and are replaced by more charming “new” printings or rival products. In other words, to stay ahead of the competition, the institutes keep a watch out for the latest, rival-defeating versions of ELT global coursebooks to arrive. Consistent with such replacements, teachers are trained on how to teach newly-arrived coursebook series; classroom activities and tests’ contents undergo changes; learners and families are induced to purchase the newest versions and the ancillary materials that come with them.

Nonetheless, despite their fame and popularity, English global coursebooks have been criticized for pursuing purposes more than merely teaching the language (Amrani, 2011; Copley, 2018; Gray, 2010a, 2010b; Gray, 2016). Tomlinson (2008) argues that ELT global coursebook publishing has changed to a fiercely competitive industry in which pedagogic materials, also called “commercial materials”, are mostly designed based on the interest of a gainful target market rather than learners’ benefit and hence they chiefly fulfill the publishers’ main objective which is “to make money” (p. 7). In addition to that, the extensive deployment of such commercial materials has spawned discussions among researchers and has consequently made them subject to various types of critical investigations including gender discrimination and sexism (e.g., Gray, 2010a; Liddicoat, 2009); ethics, culture, and identity representation (e.g., Dahmardeh et al., 2014; Kullman, 2013; Shin et al., 2011); race and

ethnicity (e.g., Bori & Petanovic, 2017; Gulliver, 2010); and social class (e.g., Cook, 2003; Copley, 2018; Gray & Block, 2014); to mention a few research strands.

Notwithstanding the abundance of such critical studies, the topic that has been regarded less than others is the way global coursebooks, particularly the ones with a wide readership, have evolved and changed in the course of time. The extent to which ELT coursebooks have reacted to the appraisals and have changed their content, methods, and approaches in various editions during their lifetime is not very clear. Publishers launch new editions regularly and they claim that these new editions are quite different from the previous ones and encourage learners and teachers to purchase the latest editions if they desire to make the most of the language learning process. However, as put by Littlejohn (2011), “As the claims the publishers and authors now make for their materials have extended with the increase in their provisions, we additionally need to be able to test claims against what is offered” (p. 181).

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the wake of critical approaches to ELT, commercial materials used extensively by language teachers and learners across the globe have become the target of criticism. Such coursebooks have been criticized for conforming to the expectations of stakeholders and meeting the requirements of the markets. Building on the works of critical applied linguists, Gray (2002) explains that commercial concerns make global coursebook publishers avoid a number of “taboo topics” remembered through the acronym “PARSNIP (politics, alcohol, religion, sex, narcotics, ism, and pork)” (p. 166) which might put their profits at stake. In other words, the topics which might challenge readers (customers), arouse their sensitivities, or lead to serious conflicts among them and thus affect the readership of the coursebooks or sales figures should be crossed out (Harwood, 2014).

Drawing on this proposition, Block (2002) argues that the principles of McDonald's fast-food restaurants, namely "efficiency, calculability, predictability, control and standardization" (p. 119), are coming to dominate or "McDonaldize" modern social, educational, and institutional communications and interactions. Furthering the issue, Littlejohn (2012) traces the footprints of McDonaldization in the design of language teaching materials as manifested in routinized exercises and task types. He argues that such "McDonaldized scripts" aim at enhancing the efficiency, predictability, and standardization of the products.

Another compelling line of argument raised by critical theorists is that global language teaching coursebooks are not ideologically neutral as they strive to endorse, legitimize, and reproduce certain power relations, cultural beliefs, ideas, norms, values, voices, or social classes (Block & Gray, 2018; Bori, 2018, 2020). This might be analogous to what Giroux (1978) calls "hidden curriculum" which "refers to those unstated norms, values, and beliefs that are transmitted to students through the underlying structure of a given class" (p. 51). This has made researchers from around the world unveil hidden agendas within coursebooks; a number of which are referred to here.

To uncover the possible overt and covert intentions behind the choices made by global coursebook writers, Melliti (2013), a Tunisian researcher, analyzed the content of *Headway Intermediate* in terms of its inclusivity, inappropriacy, and connectedness. This was followed by seeking the perceptions of a population of English learners about these themes through a designed questionnaire. High depiction of Western—as opposed to non-Western—women; racial biases in favor of whiteness; partial avoidance of controversial topics and deliberate attempts for inclusion of safe topics like leisure activities, travel, and hobbies; and dominance of Western settings and locations were among the detected issues. In another attempt, Abdollahzadeh and Baniasad (2010) through studying ideologies in two imported English coursebooks, *Spectrum* and *True to Life*, reported that ideologies such as the hegemony of English language and superiority given

to English-speaking countries and their cultural values or living standards like “consumerism” (presented through topics such as entertainment, fashion, shopping, and the like) were strongly at work.

Adding to the debate, Gray (2012) refers to the pervasive presence of real-life and fictional celebrities and personalities in the bestselling published ELT materials mainly epitomized by their spectacular wealth, success, and business achievements. To him, the phenomenon parallels the rise of “neoliberal” thinking; an ideology that puts primacy on marketization, interest-based competitiveness, consumption, and individualism. Given that, such ideologically-laden contents cannot be seen as merely biographical or informational but rather promotional as they keep advertising the products of certain markets and “branding” individuals. In other words, “celebrity and business success are shown to come together in the lives of those profiled...[and] students are encouraged to think about their own lives and career paths in the light of celebrity success” (p. 103). Similarly, Babaii and Sheikhi (2017) tried to critically analyze popular ELT coursebooks in Iranian context to find the footprints of “neoliberalism” in the coursebooks. The results showed that the selection of content is on purpose and the materials are meant to advertise “neoliberal, market-led” lifestyle. Drawing on critical discourse analysis, Xiong and Yuan (2018) and Bori (2020) also displayed the ways by which global ELT coursebooks promote capitalism, individualism, and free-market values.

To a much lesser extent, there are studies that trace the historical evolution of generations of the same or different global coursebooks. For example, Kullman (2013) examined discourses of identity in UK-published English language coursebooks by exploring the ways young adult learners are asked to talk about themselves. Analyzing the opening units of the six bestselling global intermediate-level coursebooks, published during different periods since the late 1970s to 2011, he observed that interrogating learners’ lifestyles, personal qualities, and life experiences have gradually become more noticeable in more recently published books. He argued that this attention to learner-centeredness has its roots in the changes in language

teaching and learning approaches and methodologies as well as the palpable penetration of Western individualism.

In yet another historical investigation, Copley (2018) compared a commercially successful series of global ELT coursebooks published between the periods of 1975 to 1982 and 1998 to 2014. More particularly, he explored the ways the coursebooks' modes of representation reinforced neoliberalism. Her findings revealed that while in the earlier coursebooks, controversial issues related to working-class life and their occupation hardships had been portrayed more realistically and "solutions could most effectively be sought collectively" (p. 11), there is an ascent of neoliberal ideology in recently published books in which individuals are unrealistically depicted to be less concerned with economic or social constraints and hardships. She contended that "in the neoliberal coursebook there is virtually no regard paid to even the possibility that working-class occupations might involve economic hardship, physical or emotional stress, unfair treatment, or even mild dissatisfaction" (p. 13) and the subjects related to those at the bottom of the economic hierarchy are not "problematized or investigated in any serious fashion" (p. 14).

Pursuing a similar line of inquiry, the present study is an attempt to trace the changes made to selected textual contents of a well-known global coursebook, *Interchange* series, level 2.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The present study aimed to explore a well-known coursebook's possible transformations over different editions regarding some selected aspects of its textual contents. With that in mind, the textual content of three alternate editions of *Interchange* student's books, level 2 (the first, third, and fifth editions published in 1991, 2005, and 2017 respectively) was analyzed in terms of changes to *topics and titles*, *characters* populating the coursebooks and the mentioned *contexts*. In addition, in order to seek language teachers' perceptions of transformations they have witnessed

occurring to the content of global coursebooks over time, interviews were conducted with a number of experienced Iranian English teachers. The following questions guided the study:

1. How have *Interchange* coursebooks (level 2) evolved regarding their content through successive editions?
2. What are the experienced EFL teachers' perceptions of changes to successive editions of ELT global coursebooks commonly used in Iranian ELT education?

METHOD

Corpus and Participants

The first (1991), third (2005), and fifth (2017) editions of *Interchange* series, level two, student's books, authored by Jack C. Richards, Jonathan Hull, and Susan Proctor and published by Cambridge University Press were chosen to be analyzed and compared. The reasons for the selection of the coursebook series were its popularity and readership in the world (used by "over 50 million students worldwide" according to Cambridge website) and in Iran, stimulated sales rate, and lifetime covering a span of around 30 years.

Twelve experienced male and female English language teachers in their mid-thirties who had at least 10 years of experience in teaching various global English coursebooks and their editions in English language institutes in Tehran were selected, based on convenient sampling, to take part in an oral semi-structured interview. The teachers' extended experience of teaching different editions of the global coursebooks was the main criterion in their selection.

Instrumentation

Content analysis was adopted for analyzing and comparing three alternate

editions of the *Interchange* series, level 2. To this end, various frameworks including Gray's (2010b) descriptive framework, consisting of language features like "contexts and the representation of gender, age, and race" (p. 48), were consulted and the frequency of different elements in various editions was calculated and compared. Accordingly, three big categories of *topics and titles*, *characters*, and *contexts and sites*; each containing several sub-categories were considered for analyzing *Interchange* textual contents. It should be noted that the present study is delimited to textual analysis of three student's books and other ancillary materials like workbooks, audio CDs, DVDs, teacher guide; though consulted, were not the focus of analysis. Furthermore, being part of a larger study, only the findings of analyses related to textual content are contained in the article, and analyses related to the coursebooks' methodology and visual contents are not part of the current study.

In addition to content analysis, oral face-to-face interviews, each lasting around 40 minutes, were conducted with twelve experienced English language teachers to seek their perspectives concerning the institutes' policies for changing coursebooks from time to time; teachers' and learners' reactions to such replacements, and the changes they have observed occurring to common global coursebooks over the past decade or so.

Data Analysis

Having consulted various frameworks, particularly Gray (2010b), three major categories, namely *topics and titles*, *characters* (gender, race, and occupation), *contexts and sites* (languages, nationalities, locations, institutes and buildings, and occasions) were applied to analyze the textual content of three alternate editions of *Interchange* student's books, level 2. All the selected editions' contents were meticulously studied and instances belonging to each sub-category were counted and illustrated in tables for comparing and interpreting the possible transformations in the coursebooks in the course of time.

Besides, the transcriptions of interviews with experienced teachers were coded, recoded, and juxtaposed by the two researchers of the study, and similar codes were categorized under relevant themes. At the next level, the findings of both sources of the study (content analysis and interviews) were taken into consideration to have a profound understanding of the coursebooks' observed transformations. Such a detailed content analysis helped to see whether or not, or how, the ideological perspectives, already proposed in the existing body of literature, have been revisited in the latest editions.

RESULTS

Content Analysis

Topics and Titles

The tabulation and comparison of all topics, titles, and subtitles in the different editions of the *Interchange* series showed that although the wording of the titles and topics have changed in different editions, the topics and themes are generally the same. The topics fall under six categories of travel, celebrations, entertainment, food, shopping, job, technology, and people's lives and opinions in all the three studied editions, and there seem to be minute omissions or additions through the different editions. For example, the topics "directions, furniture, experiences, and buildings" included in the first edition have been omitted from the third and fifth editions and replaced by "household chores, and requests". Accordingly, it seems that the authors and publishers have made some changes in the successive editions; however, they might not be significant to affect the syllabus and teaching.

Characters

Gender, race, and age: As one of the outstanding features, the textual content of each coursebook was meticulously studied to find out the number

and qualities of the characters peopling the coursebooks and to compare the changes in the successive editions considering their “gender”, “race”, “age range”, and “occupation”. It could be observed that there are 85 male and 71 female characters in the first edition; 93 male and 76 female characters in the third edition; and 87 male and 80 female characters in the fifth edition; which is the *least difference* between genders among the different editions.

Furthermore, as Table 1 shows, the number of white characters, mentioned verbally or depicted visually, are more than nonwhite characters in all the editions. Significantly enough, there are a good number of unspecified characters whose race has not been specified or was not identifiable through either textual or visual data. This possibly suggests that despite the anti-racist movements and ELT critical studies warning against racism in the books, the writers and publishers do not still consider colored-skin human beings as a major part of society. They prefer to have unspecified characters rather than specified ones who are nonwhite.

Furthermore, considering the age range of the people included in the books, it could be observed that they are mostly teenagers or young adults in all three editions and the elderly have been minimally represented in the society depicted in the coursebooks (not more than a handful in all three editions understudy). To sum, women, colored skin, and elderly people are still *underrepresented* in the coursebooks.

Table 1: Non/White characters (based on the texts and photos)

Book	<i>Interchange 1st</i>	<i>Interchange 3rd</i>	<i>Interchange 5th</i>
White	93	67	68
Nonwhite	27	31	38
Not specified	36	69	59

Occupations and celebrities: The occupations that have been named in different parts of the textual content of *Interchange* coursebooks fall under six categories of arts and entertainment, service providing, education and

science, business, politics, and sports (Appendix A). In the first edition, there are 45 job titles or people that have been mentioned because of their occupations. There are some jobs like “waitress, server, shop assistant, hairstylist, and factory worker” that have been mentioned for female characters. There are two jobs related to sport; “manager of a bodybuilding club” and “footballer”, both taken on by male characters. It seems that jobs were presented stereotypically in the first edition. Moreover, the job title “actor or actress” has been mentioned five times.

In the third edition, there are 81 job titles which show a significant *increase*. The jobs related to sports are “soccer player, basketball player, and athlete” who are all male. “Hairdresser and salesperson” in the third edition are females and “server” is a male character in this book. The job “actor or actress” has been mentioned six times. There is a scientist who is a female and a founder of a company who is a male.

Jobs and occupations have been referred to 65 times in the fifth edition which indicates a *decrease*. The job “actor or actress” has been mentioned five times. The only sport-related job is “basketball player” who is a man. In this edition, there are two servants, one is a male and the other is a female but there is another character who works at a restaurant and it’s a female. There are two inventors and both of them are male. Besides gender discrimination which can be seen in all three editions considering sports and politics-related jobs, jobs related to arts and entertainment form the *biggest category* in all the three editions. This made us count the number of “celebrities”, or those individuals who enjoy worldwide fame, in different editions.

It could be observed that there are 69 celebrities in *Interchange* first edition including 16 singers or musicians, 17 actors and actresses, eight directors, nine writers, six politicians, seven painters, one sculptor, three scientists, and one astronaut. As it is obvious, *singers* and *actors* form the *majority* of celebrities in the first edition coursebook.

In *Interchange's* third edition, there are 32 celebrities that consist of six singers or musicians, nine actors or actresses, two directors, six writers, two

painters, one sculptor, one scientist, one inventor, one basketball player, one world record holder in education, and the founder of Microsoft. Although the number of celebrities has *decreased* compared to the first edition (18 fewer than the first edition), singers and actors are the biggest categories mentioned in this book. Basketball players, world record holders, and inventors are the celebrities that have been added to the third edition.

The fifth edition of *Interchange* has 44 celebrity names; which shows an *increase*. These are nine singers and musicians (six musicians and three singers), 16 actors and actresses, five directors, five writers, two politicians, three painters, one sculptor, an architect, an inventor, and the founder of Facebook. Actors and actresses in the first place and singers and musicians in the second place are *the most mentioned celebrities*. The number of celebrities has *decreased* in the third and fifth editions compared to the first edition. However, singers and actors form the majority of the characters in the fifth edition (58% of all celebrities). Moreover, in all three editions, the number of *male* celebrities outnumbers the number of females and is twice as big as female celebrities. In addition, 38 of the celebrities in the first edition (55%), 13 in the third edition (40%), and 19 in the fifth edition (43%) are *American*, and the number of celebrities from other nationalities is considerably lower.

Contexts and Sites

In this section, the socio-cultural contexts and geographical locations mentioned in the coursebooks were analyzed. Four sub-categories of “languages and nationalities”, “geographical locations” including the names of continents, countries, and cities, “public places” including the names of buildings, institutes, companies, stores, etc., and “occasions or ceremonies” were spotted, tabulated, and compared.

Languages and nationalities: The languages that have been mentioned in the first edition are 14 (Spanish (2 times), Portuguese (2times), Chinese,

English, Hindi, Arabic, Bengali, Russian, Japanese, and German). The languages that have been mentioned in the third edition are two (French and English), and in the third edition are four (French (2 times), Flemish, and German). In other words, there is a noticeable *decrease* in the number of languages mentioned in *Interchange* coursebooks in the succeeding editions.

However, as Table 2 shows, the number of nationalities has *increased* considerably in the fifth edition (24) compared to the first and third editions, 14 and 9 respectively. Furthermore, in the fifth edition, the frequency of using “American” as a nationality has *increased* profoundly; more European countries have been mentioned and there is a mentioning of Morocco and Africa. In other words, the increase in the number of nationalities does not mean the inclusion of various nationalities, and “American” is still the most used nationality in the fifth edition.

Table 2: Nationalities

Nationality	<i>Interchange</i> 1st	<i>Interchange</i> 3rd	<i>Interchange</i> 5th
American	American (2), Mexican, Brazilians	North American, Mexican (2), Brazilians	American (6), Mexican (2), Brazilians
European	French (2), Russian, Irish	French	Portuguese, Spanish, Germans, Romanians, French, Bulgarian, Irish, English
Asian	Japanese (2), Chinese, Vietnamese	Vietnamese, Chinese, Japanese, Koreans	Chinese, Japanese, Asian
African	-	-	Moroccan, African
Australian	Australians	-	Australian (2)
Canadian	Canadians	-	-
Total	14	9	24

Geographical locations: Considering the second category, geographical locations, it could be seen that in the first edition of *Interchange*, 197 locations, in the third edition 62 locations, and in the fifth edition 134 geographical locations have been mentioned. In the first edition, the most

frequent locations are American and European ones (41 locations for each); in the third edition, American locations are the most frequent (16 times); and in the fifth edition, European locations are the most used (31 times). Standing on the third level, Asia and Asian countries have been mentioned 28, 15, and 27 in the first, third, and fifth editions, respectively, and African locations are the least mentioned ones appearing only 3, 1, and 4 times in the first, third, and fifth editions, respectively. Accordingly, it seems that the abundance of American and European locations in a so-called “global coursebook” is not aimless. Locations and countries in all the studied editions have been included in a highly selective way and many countries have been excluded.

Public places: Considering the third category, public places, it could be seen that in the first edition the places ranged from public places like banks, post offices, dry cleaners, supermarkets, coffee shops, libraries, and public places usually found in Western and European societies like bars, to brands like McDonald’s, Burger King, the American Express office, and Universal Studios, and buildings like the IBM building, Harvard University, Empire state building, Statue of Liberty, and the White House, which are chiefly American brands and buildings.

When it comes to institutes and buildings, *Interchange* third edition has surprisingly got the least number of them and only mall and jail have been included. In the fifth edition, the authors have tried to use *fictional* names for brands and buildings except for “Disneyland”. In other words, the brands have been omitted from the third and fifth editions. There are also some new concepts like “capsule hotel” and “organic food company” in the fifth edition that cannot be seen in the previous editions. Comparing the first and fifth editions, the number of educational places has decreased in the fifth edition, and instead the variety of entertainment locations has increased. “Hotel” and “museum” have been mentioned 6 times (3 times each) only in the fifth edition which may lead us to assume that there is more focus on entertainment, consumerism, and travelization (Appendix B).

Occasions: Occasions and celebrations include all of the special days that have been included in the textual content of the book. In the first edition, 13 occasions and celebrations, in the third edition 16, and the fifth edition 17 have been used that could be grouped into three categories of western, eastern and global occasions. In the first edition, 9 of the occasions, in the third edition 9, and in the fifth edition, 9 are related to American or western culture. In other words, the number of western celebrations and occasions has remained the same in all three editions. St. Patrick's Day has been mentioned in both first and fifth editions and Valentine's Day, thanksgiving, and Brazil carnival in the third and fifth editions; which probably points to their enduring presence. In the first edition "Ramadan" and "lent" have been mentioned which are similar occasions in Islam and Christianity. These two occasions have been omitted in the following editions.

The number of eastern celebrations is the highest in the third edition (6 times). However, the eastern occasions are chiefly related to China, Japan, Taiwan, Korea, and India and other eastern countries have no saying. The only global celebration mentioned in the first and third editions is "wedding"; however, more universal celebrations like mother's day, birthdays, and children's day have been mentioned in the fifth edition. So, it seems that the focus on western celebrations has decreased, and universal celebrations have gained more importance over time (Appendix C).

Interview Analysis

Market Is a Change Determiner

One of the issues discussed in the interviews was the institutes' policy for replacing or not replacing coursebooks from time to time. Studying and analyzing the data collected through interviews revealed various reasons behind changing or replacing the coursebooks in the institutes including "being up to date", "keeping up with other rival institutes", "attracting learners" by not "going through the monotonous way of teaching or the

same coursebook” “motivating learners”, “putting up with pedagogy and methods”, and choosing the materials that “cover international exams”. Besides, some of the teachers referred to market-related issues that drive the institutes to change or replace their coursebooks. For example, one of the teachers with 10 years of teaching experience said institutes try to change coursebooks “for commercializing the institute” because “market and business are more important than learning” and “the institutes change the books and the methods just based on the market to attract students”, as another teacher pointed out. However, a couple of other teachers believed that changing the coursebooks is a big “challenge” for the institutes as they have to go through many difficulties like enduring decrease in the number of students and changes in the pedagogy, syllabus, exams, teacher training, and the like when they change the books. They claimed that the institute managers try to change the books only if the change would bring “financial benefits” for the institute. For example, one of the teachers asserted that “as a teacher, I do not see pedagogical reasons behind these changes; it seems that the changes may be due to management policies or other reasons”.

A (un)welcomed Change

The information provided by the teachers also revealed that teachers, learners, or their parents reacted variedly to the coursebooks' replacement by either a new one or a new edition of the former book. It seems that while the institutes chiefly welcomed the change, teachers did not welcome the idea very much due to some reasons like having to update their lesson plans, increase in workload, financial dissatisfaction, and their preference to stick to old books and accustomed ways of teaching. Generally, the interviewed teachers thought that their colleagues do not like changing the coursebooks and they “feel confused” when the institutes change them. For example, one of the teachers stated that “since the financial aspect of teaching is not satisfying for most of the teachers, they prefer to work on a book that needs less preparation at home and they are familiar with”. However, three of the

teachers thought teachers' "flexibility" and "creativity", on the one hand, and the "theoretical base" and scientific status of the authors, on the other hand, can impact teachers' reactions. With this regard, one of the teachers with over 20 years of teaching experience said, "I really like it. Because I'm sure that there is a theoretical base behind this (the new book)... of course I am looking for some prominent authors or materials developers in them ...not any person who comes and writes something...".

As stated by the majority of the teachers, parents, on the other hand, mostly "do not notice" the coursebook change unless there are financial issues like "replacing the books before finishing the previous one" which causes a financial burden for learners and their families. As one of the teachers said, when the book changes in an institute, "parents ask about the price only". Another teacher added that "parents react in case they have TEFL-related knowledge", which happens rarely. However, three of the teachers thought that students, especially younger ones, welcome changing coursebooks because "they see the superficial aspects of the books like glossy papers and a bunch of photos".

Chiefly Decorative Changes

Concerning the changes to the coursebooks, the majority of the interviewees stated that they had not noticed any major changes in the newer editions of globally-disseminated coursebooks compared to the older ones with regard to their content and nearly all of them mentioned that they had chiefly seen changes in "topics and information about the topics", "visuals", and "design and layout". They said that the coursebook writers have tried to include more current and "up to date" topics or terms, like "new technologies", characters from different nationalities "that the teenagers are familiar with" plus using "more vibrant" and "real-life pictures and images"; nonetheless, "the general contents of the units are still the same and the changes look decorative". In other words, although the book developers often claim that the latest editions contain fundamental changes, the interviews showed that

the teachers had not noticed outstanding differences considering the content of the coursebooks in the course of time except for topics and visuals. One of the teachers stated that “the producers try to change the design and layout of the books to show that they have done something and made the book updated”. However, rejecting that such changes are just for monetary reasons, one of the teachers was of the opinion that “it is not a haphazard change only for business. It is a new revision and they try to have a better kind of book”.

Considering the methodology of the books, the majority of the interviewed teachers stated that they had not noticed outstanding changes considering methodological issues except for the inclusion of more “speaking oriented exercises”, and an increase in the number of “examples and activities”. For example, with explicit reference to grammar, one of the teachers stated that “grammar is being presented in the same way. First, there is a conversation that exposes the learners to the grammar, and then there is a grammar box. Here the teacher determines to choose for example deductive or inductive methodology”. Two other teachers mentioned that “the method has remained the same”, and “the only changes are adding extra examples, exercises, or explanations”. Proposing that the mainstream materials are lagging behind the theoretical and research-based advancements, one of the experienced teachers posited that “although there are many research studies conducted in ELT, the changes in the books are not considerable...and the books do not keep up with research results”.

The teachers held mixed opinions considering the socio-cultural and ideological changes in the coursebooks. While three of the teachers maintained that they had noticed “positive” changes in the coursebooks with regard to socio-cultural issues as they are representing “different cultures” instead of merely focusing on American or western culture and are hence becoming “more international and global than previous ones”, other teachers stated that either they have not seen any changes or the changes are in a way that still conveys American or western cultures and values. Using the term “hidden curriculum”, one of the teachers stated that that “they have changed

the ideological matters from overt to covert mode” but one can still see “English colonization in the books that tries to possess people’s mind by exposing them only to American or English culture, country, or people”. Seeing it as American hegemony, another teacher said that “you can see Western/Eastern views in the coursebooks that show the priority of west and downgrade east. There is still English imperialism in the books”. Besides, some of the teachers pointed to “neglecting the students’ needs” and “irrelevance to their lives” as the persistent demerits that have long been among the shortcomings of the global coursebooks.

But They Are Still Preferable

Despite not observing remarkable changes to the coursebooks in the course of time and pinpointing to their demerits, it could be seen that the majority of the interviewed still preferred them to home-made or localized materials produced in Iran due to various reasons like not finding the local materials as “efficient” or “qualified” or “expertise” as foreign products. One of the teachers while questioning the authenticity and novelty of the local materials said “they are some imitations or copying from the global materials”. In addition, the cultural contrast between the culture in Iranian local books and learners’ real life was mentioned by a couple of teachers who thought that “they show a kind of culture and values that are ideal for an Iranian-Islamic culture but the majority of the society do not like or accept such things, as a result, the students face a duality in the books and real-world”. As a result, the teachers preferred to modify and change the existing commercial coursebooks in order to fit their learner’s needs.

DISCUSSION

Despite the publishers’ and authors’ claims such as deploying completely updated content, the analysis of *Interchange* textual content and interviews with experienced teachers revealed a number of fallacies between what is often being claimed and what has actually changed in the coursebook.

One of the obvious fallacies is the *real-life-ness* fallacy. Although it has been repeatedly claimed that the newer editions cover “contemporary, real-world” topics which are relevant to student’s lives, the analysis of the included topics in the different editions of *Interchange* showed that the topics have changed slightly and they fall under the old categories of travel, celebrations, entertainment, shopping, and job. This similarity made the newly-published edition less different from previously published ones; as if life concerns have remained the same over the last 30 years. The recurrence of “trivial”, socially and politically “safe” and “harmless” topics can be seen to be a deliberate attempt on the part of the publishers to “sanitize” (Gray, 2002) the contents through avoiding “controversial” or “problematic” subjects. Put it another way, the deliberate replication of mundane topics like what to wear and what to eat, where to go, how to entertain ourselves or spend leisure time, and what to buy has led to editing out or superficial representation of a good number of real-life, significant issues and generative themes related to learners' social and cultural life-worlds including regional or world problems, spiritual matters, and the like (Ghahremani Ghajar & Poursadughi, 2017; Ota & Sanders, 2019). The result is that the world reflected in the coursebooks appears to be too “safe, clean, harmonious, benevolent, undisturbed” (Wajjnryb, 1996, p. 291) and hence unrealistic. To be more critical in this regard, it can be seen that, the ideas are seemingly taken from the same stock or mine source and then embellished and embroidered to disguise their sameness. As argued by Maley and Kiss (2018, p. 78), “the same pot is being stirred with few, if any, nourishing new ingredients”. Gray’s (2010a) findings are in line with the present study. He concluded that the generations of ELT coursebooks are similar to each other in terms of content.

In addition, the increased number of entertainment locations over time may reiterate the lasting presence of consumerism in the studied coursebook. It seems that the authors do not consider the fact that people in real life do not normally just go to entertainment locations. Furthermore, mentioning more jobs may indicate the increasing importance attributed to

the market-oriented issues. Similar conclusions were reached by Abdollahzadeh and Baniasad (2010), Baleghizadeh and Motahed (2012), Babaii and Sheikhi (2017), Bori (2020), Chun (2000), and Xiong and Yuan (2018) who focused on neoliberalism and found that ELT coursebooks via focusing on topics like business, fashion, beauty, celebrity, and the like are meant to advertise “neoliberal” and “market-led” lifestyle. Similarly, Bori (2018) argues that global coursebooks show “an idealized neoliberal world” that is in contrast with the life of the majority of the people in the society. The fact that this has been a continuous, enduring trend in the production of the studied coursebooks over the last three decades should give us a pause for thought.

Representation fallacy also appears to be at work in this so-called global coursebook. Analyzing different components of character category revealed that women, colored skin, disabled, and elderly people; though having a more highlighted presence, are still underrepresented in the coursebooks which are directly in line with previous findings like Porreca (1984), Sahragard and Davatgarzadeh (2010), Abdollahzadeh and Baniasad (2010), Bakhtari and Saadat (2015), Roohani and Molana (2013), and Roohani and Heidari (2012). The characters are mostly young, male, and white people who are completely healthy. The majority of characters are American or European, and people from other nationalities are underrepresented. Although the number of celebrities has decreased throughout time, American celebrities, and more frequently singers and actors, still have a persisting role in the studied coursebook. Criticizing the over presence of “western celebrities, mostly actors and actresses, [who] are virtually infamous concerning ethics” in the global coursebooks, Dahmardeh et al., (2014) raised this matter: “What should we expect when in books scientists have been replaced by western celebrities? The students will follow whoever they see in books; unfortunately (2014, p. 121). This led us to the next fallacy, named the *globality* fallacy.

The content analysis revealed that there is a noticeable decrease in the number of languages mentioned in *Interchange* coursebooks in succeeding

editions. However, the number of nationalities has increased considerably in the fifth edition compared to the first and third editions; with “American” receiving the highest frequency. English-speaking countries, particularly America are still among the most frequent locations and according to the interviews ideological issues have almost remained the same and the authors are still “pushing their culture”. It seems that the abundance of American and European locations in so-called “global coursebooks” is not aimless. They have mentioned locations and countries in highly selective ways and many countries have been excluded. These findings are consistent with what has been found in previous studies like Ndura (2004), Ota and Sanders (2019), Shin et al., (2011), Rashidi and Meihami (2016), Gharemani Ghajar and Poursadughi (2017), Zarei et al., (2019), which all showed that global coursebooks do not show the global cultures and do not fit the needs of learners around the world. Risager (2020) who reached the same results in analyzing an English textbook, *A Piece of Cake*, argues that “the point is not that the textbook should cover still more countries, but that it is relevant and important to be aware of the selection of countries and take up discussions of what constitutes a fair selection if one is interested in the image of the world as a whole” (p. 5). In case of *Interchange* series, Ota and Sanders (2019, p. 8) also acknowledge that the included themes and topics “appear to be imposing Anglo-American ideology and culture on the audience” and present an “American World”.

Besides, the interviews with experienced teachers revealed interesting information about the status of global coursebooks in the country. As stated by the teachers, language institutes change the coursebooks for “chiefly market-driven” reasons like being up to date, keeping up with other institutes, attracting learners, and covering international exams to increase their financial benefits. Similarly, Mirhosseini and Khodakarami (2016), in their exploration of covert policies of the Iranian private language institutes, discovered financial concerns or “business success” as “one of the most important over-arching aims” of the authorities (p. 289).

The interviewed teachers also stated that they often do not see

remarkable changes in the different editions of global coursebooks. In the same vein, Tomlinson and Masuhara (2018) argue that “the coursebook might have new buzzwords on the blurb but the way that the teacher uses it does not differ much from the way they used their previous textbook and all the ones before that too” (p. 4).

However, despite acknowledging stagnations, the majority of the interviewed teachers showed a predilection for using the latest editions of imported coursebooks mentioning several factors like the quality and sophistication in the organization of such coursebooks, their appealing format (like layout, graphics, pictures), and availability of ancillary materials and annexed multimedia. This bears resemblance to Bori’s (2020) investigation in which the Serbian language learners stated that they were “against locally produced textbooks, biased by the powerful propaganda of the global ELT industry, which favors native speakers and UK/US produced textbooks as the major authority in language education”. As also argued by Gray (2010b, p. 716), global ELT textbooks “are frequently introduced in many countries with aggressive marketing campaigns to compete with locally produced materials”.

This may lead us toward the fact that local Iranian ELT experts have not worked on producing decent coursebooks or the valuable developed materials have not been sufficiently publicized. All these have paved the way for the current dominance of foreign educational products in Iranian ELT education.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The present study was an attempt to trace the changes *Interchange* coursebooks, level 2, student’s book, have experienced over their lifespan of 30 years in terms of inclusion of topics and titles, characters and contexts, and sites. The analysis showed the content of the coursebooks has not gone through major changes and fallacies like real-life-ness, representation and globality persist. In view of that, it seems that despite

the long-standing tradition of critical literacy, critical pedagogy, and critical applied linguistics all critiquing the stultified and standardized mainstream curricula and inviting materials developers to take action responses by designing classroom materials that act as a platform for deep reflection and true intellectual, aesthetic, and emotional challenges, such orientations have not made many inroads into the large international commercial publishers that dominate TESOL. In other words, commercially developed global materials appear to be lagging behind the advances already made in applied linguistics. As put by Gray (2010a), “when it comes to the production of ELT coursebooks, commercial considerations—rather than ethical or educational concerns—are seen to be paramount” (p. 175).

The observed stagnation in the global coursebooks, on the one hand, and the teachers’ dissatisfaction with locally-developed materials, on the one hand, suggests that we need to take stock of our Iranian-Islamic heritage, values, and identity in designing local materials instead of digging deeper into our current consumption, copy and paste culture. For that to happen, Iranian materials developers are demanded to create artistically designed, research-informed materials (not only in print but also in form of digital materials or software) that can keep abreast of the foreign products, furnish the needs of Iranian language learners, and prepare them to articulate their presence in this global area in a more pronounced way.

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Appendix A

Occupations

Book	Categories	Jobs	Frequencies	Gender
<i>Interchange</i> 1st	Education and science	Astronaut, law student, teacher	3	Male: 0 Female: 3
	Business	Realty, shop assistant, sales manager, factory worker, banker, salesperson, mining, manufacturing, agriculture, gas station attendant	10	Male: 3 Female: 2 Not specified: 5
	Arts and entertainment	Singer, writer, painter, artist, cellist, actor,	16	Male: 12 Female: 4

		composer, director, actress		
	Politics	President, prince, princess	3	Male: 2 Female: 1
	Sport	Footballer, manager of a bodybuilding club	2	Male: 2 Female: 0
	Service providing	Reporter, officer, travel agent, server, tour guide, hairstylist, doctor, waitress, counselor	11	Male: 2 Female: 7 Not specified: 2
<i>Interchange</i> 3 rd	Education and science	Computer specialist, teacher, student, marine biologist, school counselor, tutor, English teacher, inventor, scientist	14	Male: 7 Female: 6 Not specified: 1
	Business	Software developer, clerk, boss, personnel director, stockbroker, salesperson, accountant, businessman, cashier	10	Male: 5 Female: 2 Not specified: 3
	Art and entertainment	Actor, actress, singer, songwriter, model, architect, journalist, children's TV show producer, assistant entertainment director, novelist, composer, painter, director, designer, writer, violinist, artist, TV sports announcer, backpacker	30	Male: 18 Female: 10 Not specified: 2
	Politics	Spokeswoman, emperor, princess	3	Male: 1 Female: 2
	Sport	Basketball player, soccer player, athlete	3	Male: 3 Female: 0
	Service provider	Police officer, server, flight attendant, psychologist, lawyer, bookkeeper, doctor, career counselor, nurse, waiter, travel agent, hairdresser, secretary, counselor	21	Male: 8 Female: 9 Not specified: 4

Interchange 5th	Education and science	Student, teacher, inventor, engineer, marine biologist	8	Male: 4 Female: 2 Not specified: 2
	Business	Clerk, manager, accountant, stockbroker, financial advisor, banker	7	Male: 4 Female: 1 Not specified: 2
	Art and entertainment	Painter, video game tester, architect, songwriter, journalist, news reporter, artist, sculptor, actor, writer, actress, musician, novelist, director, cameraman, singer, producer	25	Male: 15 Female: 8 Not specified: 2
	Politics	Queen, spokeswoman, mayor, diplomat	4	Male: 1 Female: 2 Not specified: 1
	Sport	Working at Lakewood Recreation Center, basketball player	2	Male: 2 Female: 0
	Service provider	Work at Lancaster Medical Center, server, baker, receptionist, chef, police, doctor, flight attendant, a job at a restaurant, lawyer, physical therapist, librarian, veterinarian, tourism-related jobs, counselor	19	Male: 4 Female: 5 Not specified: 10

Appendix B*Public places*

Categories	<i>Interchange 1st</i>	<i>Interchange 3rd</i>	<i>Interchange 5th</i>
Entertainment	Disneyland San Diego Zoo Smithsonian Museum Stadium Regency Towers	-	Hotel Airport Capsule hotel Hotel Disneyland Sulabh International Museum of Toilets Underwater museum Microminiature museum
Education	Harvard University Harvard Medical School Library US Air Force Academy UC Berkeley	-	Public schools
Media	World News Universal studios	-	-
Shops	Dry cleaner's Supermarket Coffee shop Bar McDonald's Burger King Hair salon	Mall	Hamburger Heaven Shopping mall Supermarkets
Business	Ripley's Realty Factory	-	Organic food company Office tower Companies
Governmental buildings	Empire State Building Statue of Liberty The White House The American Express office The City Hall The IBM building The immigration department The main post office Bank Post office	Jail	Lancaster Medical Center Lakewood Recreation Center

Appendix C

Occasions

Units and books	<i>Interchange 1st</i>	<i>Interchange 3rd</i>	<i>Interchange 5th</i>
Western	Halloween	Valentine's day	Thanksgiving
	Christmas	Thanksgiving	New Year's Eve
	April Fool's Day	New Year's Eve	April Fool's Day
	Mayday	New Year's Day	Valentine's Day
	New Year's Eve	April Fool's Day	Labor Day
	Day of the Dead (Mexico)	Labor Day	Independence Day
	St. Patrick's Day (Ireland)	Day of the Dead (Mexico)	Saint Patrick's Day (Ireland)
	Lent (Christian)	Brazil Carnival	Day of the Dead (Mexico)
	St. Anthony's Day (Mexico)	St. Anthony's Day (Mexico)	Carnival in Brazil
	Eastern	Chinese New Year	Chinese New Year
Children's Day (Japan)		Children's Day (Japan)	Obon (Japanese commemorate their ancestors)
Ramadan (Muslim)		Fireworks festival in Taiwan	
		Chusok (Korean thanksgiving) Rakhi festival in India Japanese beginning of spring celebration	
Global	Wedding	Wedding	Mother's Day
			Mother's Day
			Birthdays
			Wedding anniversary
			Wedding
Total	13	16	Children's Day 17