



Representation of National Identity in English Vision Textbook Series for Iranian Senior High Schools

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Abstract: Textbooks in ELT perform different functions since their content can serve different purposes. Particularly, the content of textbooks can affect learners' views to a great deal. Accordingly, designing ELT textbooks can generate much disagreement. Thus, textbook content is considered important and demands critical evaluation. This study explored the representation of national identity in the *English Vision textbook series* for Iranian senior high schools. For this aim, corpus analysis and content analysis were carried out, respectively, aimed at providing a description of the terms associated with nationalities, and describing aspects of national identity represented in the textbooks. The data in the corpus analysis phase were collected through obtaining frequencies of reference to nations and in the content analysis phase by means of a researcher-made checklist. Results revealed that Iranian identity is the most frequent aspect, for which 13 categories of reference were observed. Similarly, six major themes were found regarding aspects of national identity. This study offers implications for Iranian education policy-makers, textbook designers, and education practitioners.

Keywords: ELT, English Textbooks, National Identity, Iranian Context, *Vision Textbooks*.

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Introduction

Textbooks in English Language Teaching (ELT) perform different functions. A textbook is potentially a teacher, a map, a resource, a trainer, an authority, a de-skinner, and an ideology (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999, cited in Aliakbari, 2004). Accordingly, developing ELT textbooks can generate much controversy. Fairclough (1992) pointed out that texts are always biased, and serve an ideological purpose, and are in the interests of particular social groups. Textbooks and materials used in language teaching normally present a certain type of worldview (Aliakbari, 2004). Bakhtin (1981, cited in Wang, 2016, p. 3) noted that learning a foreign language entails a process of “ideologically becoming”, which denotes experiencing a process of constructing and developing a new identity through studying the ideologically-loaded discourse. This is where major concerns arise in ELT. These concerns originate mostly from the so-called linguistic imperialism of English alongside cultural globalization (Kumaravadivelu, 2008, 2011, 2012) with a direction from the core English-speaking countries (also called the center or the inner circle) to the rest of the world which is called the periphery. According to Kumaravadivelu (2012):

The ongoing process of cultural globalization with its incessant and increased flow of peoples, goods, and ideas across the world is creating a novel “web of interlocution” that is effectively challenging the traditional notions of identity formation of an individual or of a nation (p. 9).

The impact of globalization on the shaping identities of learners, teachers, and teacher educators in ELT contexts around the world is undeniable (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). This impact has produced concerns around the world that the ELT textbooks and materials produced in the core English-speaking countries produce a threat to the national identity of language learners in the rest of the world. Thus, states, education ministries, and ELT policy-makers in the non-English-speaking (the periphery, or the third world countries) saw the solution in developing and using local materials and textbooks. Following a similar procedure, the Ministry of Education in Iran developed local English language textbooks for public secondary school students. The most recent books include the *Prospect series* for junior high school and the *Vision series* for senior high school, published by the office for planning and authoring textbooks, affiliated with the Ministry of Education.

Many studies have been carried out on Iranian national identity in previous ELT textbooks, however, little research has been focused on the representation of aspects of

national identity in the *Vision book series*. Owing to the important role of textbooks in ELT education, a study on the degree and the way of representing national identity in the textbooks was deemed necessary. Thus, this study aimed at filling this gap in English language teaching in the Iranian context and examined the representation of aspects of national identity. The following research questions were focused on in this study.

- 1- Which nations are more highlighted in the *English Vision textbook series*?
- 2- What aspects of national identity are represented in the *English Vision textbook series*?

Review of the Literature

In most countries, governments are concerned with shaping the national identity and educational policies often play very influential roles in this regard. Owing to the fact that textbooks are very influential in education, they definitely have a vital role in shaping national identities. Thus, control over educational programs and the content of textbooks can be determining factors in shaping national identities (Nasser & Nasser, 2008).

Smith (2001) defined a nation as “a named human community occupying a homeland, and having common myths and a shared history, a common public culture, a single economy and common rights and duties for all members” (p. 13). Also, he defines nationalism as “an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity, and identity for a population which some of its members deem to constitute an actual or potential nation” (p. 9).

According to Anderson (1999) and Smith (2001), even though nationalism, with its approval of nation as the end article of allegiance and national identity as the main criteria of human value, has produced an area for many conflicts, it protects minority cultures and resolves the identity crisis, legitimizes social unity, and encourages collective action.

National identity is defined as “the continuous reproduction and reinterpretation of the pattern of values, symbols, memories, myths and traditions that compose the distinctive heritage of nations, and the identifications of individuals with that pattern and heritage and with its cultural elements” (Soltan Zadeh, 2012, p. 38).

National identity thus denotes positive, subjective, and strong emotional bonds with a nation or individuals’ identifying with a nation (Blank & Schmidt, 2003; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In other words, national identity is built on a common history; and history is always

associated with common repertoire and shared memories (Smith, 1991, Wang, 2016), which means a common heritage.

As Anderson (1991) argued, what binds modern nation-states together as imagined communities is the language because the people of a country, how small it might be, cannot know, meet, or hear of all other members, but each member has an image of their community in the mind. Thus, language is a powerful tool that binds a nation together. According to Hall (1996, p. 613) “a national culture is a discourse -a way of constructing meanings which influences both our actions and conception of ourselves”. In other words, national identity is constructed discursively (Van Dijk, 1997). Since the most common representation of discourse is the text, it is vital to find out what aspects of national identity are represented in textbooks.

The inclusion of the concept of identity in teaching materials has been a major concern in most EFL contexts in four recent decades. Much of the concern is indeed over the premise that learning a language also involves learning different aspects of cultural values over certain sociolinguistic, cultural, and ideological dimensions. In fact, protecting national identity is the main cultural concern of EFL educators and textbook designers in non-English-speaking countries. Curdt-Christiansen and Weninger (2015) provided a thorough review of textbook analysis studies and concluded that the nature of foreign-language textbooks is sociocultural materials that authorized institutionally and entrenched ideologically and present texts as closely correlated to the politics of identity.

The reason for focusing on the concept of nation and national identity is the presumed threat of globalization for local cultures, since the impact of globalization on various aspects of our life is on the rise, and language learning as a worldwide social phenomenon acts as the main tool of this global trend and is believed to have outstanding effects on the future of the world. In fact, many scholars, sociologists, policymakers, and even psychologists have expressed concerns over the detrimental effects of globalization on national identity (Blum, 2007), and learning English as the main instrument of the new globalized society is a complex phenomenon that may accelerate such a world movement. So, EFL learning and its relationship with national identity need to be examined methodically.

Pavlenko (2003), in a comparative study on national identity, examined discourses of national identity and foreign-language education in the U.S., the Soviet Union, and Eastern Europe. He discovered that the most striking feature of policy discourse in foreign language learning is patriotism, by means of which a particular image of the national identity was exposed to the students.

In the Iranian context, Soltan Zadeh (2012) carried out a study on the representation of Iranian national identity in history textbooks. She examined the representation of national and religious dimensions of Iranian history and identity in Iranian middle school history textbooks in a qualitative study. She concluded that textbooks present a generally-negative discourse of Iran's history which has been dominated by foreign invasions and ineffectual monarchs. At the same time, the role of Islam and Muslim clergy progressively increases as a type of messiah who saves the country from misery in history. This role gains more prominence in the contemporary era and finally culminates in the Islamic Revolution which has been exposed as the eventual point of victory for the Iranian people. Further, she reported that Islam becomes increasingly dominant in the narrative of Iranian identity in the textbooks' and becomes the single most prominent element in the Islamic Revolution.

Theoretical Framework

This study followed the research frameworks proposed and used by Smith (1991, 2001) and Van Dijk (1995). Smith offered a framework of five basic aspects of national identity (p. 14): 1) common homeland, 2) common myths, 3) common culture, 4) common legal rights and duties, and 5) common economy. Van Dijk (1995) put forth the concept of "self-identity descriptions" (p. 147) as a framework for analyzing ideological discourse, considering questions such as "who we are?", "what do we have?", "what is our tradition?", "what are we proud of?", "what are we confident to do?".

Methodology

The Corpus

The corpus of the study included all textual and visual (images, tables, and cartoons) content of the *Vision book series*. The books contain 10 units altogether. Each unit of the series comprises the following sections: Get Ready, Conversation, New Words and Expressions, Reading, Grammar, Listening and Speaking, Pronunciation, Writing, and What You Learned.

The Get Ready section consists of new words and sentences that function as a warm-up, usually one page, accompanied by pictures. The Conversations are from a few lines to half a page, and often occur between Iranian characters and sometimes between Iranian and foreigners. The Readings consist of one paragraph to half a page. Most readings deal with topics related to Iran. The Grammar and Listening sections are relatively short, that is, less than one page. The listening activities are mostly filling or completion activities. The final

section, What You Learned, is a review of the material presented in the unit. It often consists of one page.

Instrumentation

The corpus analysis was performed by counting the frequency of the names related to countries and nationalities and writing them down in a table (Table 1). Also, the content analysis was carried out using a checklist (Table 2). The study was carried out in light of Smith's (1991, 2001) content analysis framework. Thus, the checklist aimed at studying aspects of national identity and, thus, included the components suggested by Smith's framework, namely common homeland, common myths, common culture, common legal rights and duties, and common economy.

A good number of studies have been carried out using Smith's identity framework (e.g. Soltan Zadeh, 2012; Wang, 2016). Thus, the reliability and validity of the checklists have already been approved in previous studies. Further, a panel of researchers discussed and approved the content validity of the instruments. Also, the reliability of the checklist was calculated through the Kappa agreement index.

Procedure and Data Analysis

In the beginning, the related literature and the theoretical underpinning of the study were studied. Then, the methodology for data collection and data analysis was delineated. Next, the instruments were prepared and the data gathering was started with the cooperation of the raters, after a few sessions of discussion and training. The data were collected through corpus and content analysis. Corpus analysis was carried out to locate the places where references to self and identity were made (e.g. names of countries and nationalities). Content analysis was adopted to exactly categorize and describe the aspects of national identity that appear in the texts.

First, a corpus-based analysis was carried out manually, in order to locate and count the frequencies of references to countries and nationalities. All visual sections including images, tables, and cartoons were included for analysis. Two researchers independently read through the whole corpus twice to ensure inter-rater reliability. Kappa agreement index was calculated to ensure consistency in the two counting attempts ($r = .95$). Also, a word processor (Microsoft Word, 2019) was used to locate and count the nouns related to each country or nationality in the textual sections. The visual items were few in number and were

only rechecked manually. Even though it was tried to minimize inconsistency and occasional omissions, the criteria of “representation” was decided on quite subjectively.

In order to outline the aspects of national identities represented in the corpus, content analysis was carried out. Initially, the five categories in Smith’s (1991, 2001) framework were used as coding nodes regarding the aspects of identities. In the second step, the coder read through the paragraphs carefully to see where self-identity descriptions occurred (Van Dijk (1995; Ferguson, 2009). This part of the judgment on the relevance of the descriptions was quite subjective as well. However, discussions were made whenever a confusing or controversial case was encountered. Also, two sociologists were consulted with regards to the instances where it was not straightforward to decide on a category.

Results and Discussion

Frequencies of Reference to Nations

This study aimed at investigating the representation of national identity in the *English Vision textbook series* for Iranian senior high schools. For this aim, corpus analysis and content analysis were carried out. The corpus analysis aimed at providing a full description of the terms associated with nations or nationalities. Table 1 shows the results. It was found that Iranian nationality is the most frequently referred, and has been referred to in 13 categories. Concerning other nationalities, China was the most frequently referenced country ($f=12$, $n=156$), followed by Spain ($f=11$) and France ($f=11$). Further, Asia ($f=13$) was the most frequently referenced continent, followed by Africa ($f=9$). Altogether, 13 categories of reference (Table 1) were observed in relation to Iran and Iranian nationality, for example, referring to the name of the country, Iranian nationality, the language, map, flag, and also citing Iranian historical, literary, or scientific figures. References to other nations and nationalities were also counted and the frequencies were presented. The most frequently referenced country was “Iran”, which designates strong attention to the “who we are?” question. Similarly, by referring to other countries and nationalities, and using expressions such as “foreign countries” and “abroad”, it has been tried to draw more attention to “us” as opposed to “others”. China, Spain, and France were, respectively, the most frequently referred countries, which might be rather accidental if not resulting from a political penchant and might suggest the presence of the political disinclination toward the main English-speaking countries of the United States of America (the U.S.) and the United Kingdom (the U.K.) that are not mentioned in the corpus at all. Among the continents, the most frequently

referred were, respectively, Asia and Africa, while Europe and America were mentioned less in the whole corpus, which might, as well, corroborate the “us” versus “others” or “core versus “periphery” dichotomy.

Table 1. Frequencies of References to Nations in the Series

Ids	Iran		Ids	Others	
	Frequencies	Percentages		Frequencies	Percentages
Iran	95	25.53	Asia	13	08.33
Persian Language	21	05.64	Arab	2	01.28
Iranian Culture-related Things	56	15.05	China	12	07.69
Iran's Flag	2	0.53	Japan	3	01.92
Iran's Map	6	01.61	India	3	01.92
National Figures	19	05.10	Pakistan	2	01.28
Iranian Place Names	66	17.74	Russia	2	01.28
Our Country	6	01.61	Korea	1	0.64
			Turkey	1	0.64
			Iraq	1	0.64
			Azerbaijan	1	0.64
			Armenia	1	0.64
			Turkmenistan	1	0.64
			Afghanistan	1	0.64
			Beirut	1	0.64
Domestic People	1	0.26	Oceania	1	0.64
Iranian-Islamic things	19	05.10	Australia	3	01.92
Muslims	33	08.87	Africa	9	05.76
Proper Persian names	9	02.41	Egypt	4	02.56
Proper Persian names	39	10.48	Europe	5	03.20
			Italy	6	03.84
			Germany	3	01.92
			Spain	11	07.05
			France	11	07.05
			The Americas	1	0.64
			Canada	1	0.64
			South America	4	02.56
			Peru	2	01.28
			Chile	2	01.28
			Brazil	5	03.20
			International Figures	17	10.89
			Foreign Country	2	01.28
			Abroad	1	0.64
			Proper names	18	11.53
			Christ	4	02.56
			A.D.	1	0.64
Total	372		156		

Aspects of National Identity

In order to examine the aspects of national identity represented in the textbook series, content analysis was carried out. Six themes of self-identity description were found in the textbooks which correspond to the thematic categories introduced by Smith (1991, 2001). Only the category of “common legal rights and duties” in Smith’s framework has been divided into two headings of “common legal rights” and “common duties” in this study. Table 2 shows the results.

Table 2. *Themes Related to Aspects of National Identity Represented in the Series*

Aspects	Themes
(1) Common homeland	Being proud of the beautiful and wide homeland
(2) Common myths	Being proud of ancient Iran, its history and its traditions
(3) Common culture	Pledge to uphold Iranian traditional values
(4) Common legal rights	Having legal rights for all in the country
(5) Common duties	Loving the country and being ready to sacrifice for it
(6) Common economy	Trying to help the economy and make a prosperous country

Common Homeland: Being Proud of the Beautiful and Wide Homeland

In this theme, Iran has been tried to depict as a vast and beautiful country; and every Iranian must be proud of being an Iranian. By naming and showing pictures of nature (plains, forests, wild animals), and a (rather slight) representation of historical sites and monuments, the country has been described as a very attractive land that is interesting for tourists to visit. For instance, in “Moghan Plain is a nice place in the North-west of Iran” (Vision 1, Lesson 1 (V1, L1), p. 21), the place has been described as “nice”. Likewise, in “This wild animal (Cheetah) lives only in the plains of Iran” (V1, L1, Reading, p. 22), cheetah, which is considered as a symbol of Iran, has been referred to as indigenous of Iran. Further, the plural S in the word “plains” further emphasizes the presence of many more plains in this “vast” country. In the following excerpts as well, Iran has been described as a vast country, which is full of wildlife and beautiful tourist attractions and is an interesting place to visit.

Alfredo is an Italian tourist. He lives/will live in Rome. He likes to travel and see different places of the world. He will take photos especially from animals. Next month, he and his wife will travel to Iran. They will go to Tooran Plain to see animals. They are hopeful to see Persian zebra, Iranian cheetah, Persian leopard and gazelle. After two weeks, they visit/will visit some beautiful cities in Iran. (V1, L1, Exercise, p. 26)

-**Diego (tourist)**: I heard Iran is a great and beautiful country, but I don't know much about it.

-**Carlos (travel agent)**: Well, Iran is a four-season country. It has many historical sites and amazing nature (V1, L4, Conversation, p. 102).

Likewise, the next excerpts describe Iran as a vast and beautiful country that is a "paradise" for visitors. Iranian people have been described as nice and hospitable, and tourists can do many different activities in Iran. In addition, Iran has been emphatically depicted as an Islamic country and a popular destination for Shiite Muslims who wish to go on pilgrimage to holy cities in Iran.

Iran: A True Paradise

In Asia, Iran is a great destination for tourists. This beautiful country is a true paradise for people of the world. Each year, many people from all parts of the world visit Iran's attractions. Iran is a four-season country and tourists can find a range of activities from skiing to desert touring in different parts of the country. Many Muslims also travel to Iran and go to holy shrines in Mashhad, Qom and Shiraz. Iranian people are hospitable and kind to travelers and tourists. (V1, L4, Reading, p. 105)

"The *pilgrims* came to Imam Reza Holy Shrine" (V1, L4, p. 101), and "I.R. stands for the Islamic Republic". (V3, L2, p. 50)

Iranian people have been depicted as skilled and able in terms of arts, and Iranian handicrafts have been described as magnificent and interesting. Tourists can buy souvenirs from among many different types and varieties of Iranian handicrafts and artworks coming from every corner of the country.

Persian art is famous in the world for reflecting moral and social values of Iranian people and the natural beauty of this vast country.

Many people of the world appreciate the art and skill of a young Iranian girl who weaves a beautiful silk carpet in a small village of Azarbaijan or Kordestan. When tourists buy Persian rugs or carpets, they take a part of Iranian art and culture to their homelands (V2, L3, Reading, p. 91)

Common Myths: Being Proud of Ancient Iran, Its History and Its Traditions

Throughout the series, Iranian historical figures such as poets, inventors, and scientists have been shown or referred to in many instances. For example, photos of Sadi's tomb (V1, L1, p. 27), and old Iranian scientists such as Avicenna (V1, L3, p. 70-71) are present in the series.

With regards to ancient monuments, only a few cases were observed. Ancient wind towers are shown with a short explanation (p. 103) and a photo of the Maragheh observatory has been shown together with a short description in a conversation (V1, L3, p. 76). A photo and a description of Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque are also present in the series (V2, L3, Exercise, p. 84). Also, a photo of Persepolis (V1, L4, p. 100) and a photo of Sio-se-pol (V1, L4, p. 101) have been portrayed, both without any name or description.

Unlike the historical places and monuments, the myths and the old history of the country are represented more frequently. It has been tried to remind of the common myths and the common history shared by Iranians, and they must be proud of the great literature and literary figures such as Sadi, Hafez, and Ferdowsi which bind and unite Iranians together under the umbrella of "Iran". One flaw one can designate with regard to Iranian literature can be the absence of any mention of Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* which is a defining feature of Iranian national identity, even though Ferdowsi's name and birthplace are named, and also Hafez's *Divan*, Nezami's poems, and other literary books are mentioned in the textbooks.

I was reading a book about famous Iranian scientists. ... For example, Razi taught medicine to many young people while he was working in Ray Hospital. Or Nasireddin Toosi built Maragheh Observatory when he was studying the planets. (V1, L3, p. 76)

I watched/was watching a movie about a great scientist, Ghiyath al-Din Jamshid Kashani. He was a great inventor. (V2, L3, p. 85)

Iran has a five-thousand-year-old history of artistic works and handicrafts including pottery, painting, calligraphy, rugs and carpets, etc. (V3, L3, Reading, p. 90)

Ferdowsi was born in a village near Toos. (V3, L1, p. 22)

Rudaki who lived in the 4th century is a famous Persian poet. (V3, L2, p. 59)

Hafez is known to be as one of the most famous Persian poets of all time. He was born sometime between the years 1310 and 1337 A.D. in Shiraz. In his childhood, he received religious education. He is called Hafez because he learned the Holy Quran by heart. Hafez is mostly remembered for a special type of poetry that is called Ghazal. Emotions and ethics are used in Ghazals a lot. The collection of his poems is called *Divan*. It has been translated into

countless languages including German, English and French. Hafez is known to be the inspiration for many poets and authors around the world. (V3, L1, Reading, p. 29)

The Persian language has also been referred to in the textbooks as a common language that every Iranian is identified with. The following paragraph is a description of the first Persian dictionary that is described as “a valuable treasure of Persian language”.

The first Persian dictionary which is still published was compiled more than 900 years ago. Loghat-e Fors was made by Asadi Tusi who was a famous poet in the 5th century. The list of entries has been arranged according to the final letters of the words. There are example sentences which were taken from poetry. The dictionary has synonyms and explanations that were used by young poets. This dictionary has been used widely by the poets who lived after Asadi Tusi. Many words have been added to the first dictionary which Asadi compiled. The dictionary has been published several times and is a valuable treasure of the Persian language (V3, L2, p. 57)

Finally, common culture, heritage, values, principles, and guidelines have been exposed as the merits that collect Iranians under the identity of Iranian, as the following excerpt denotes:

Yet another important thing is our heritage and culture. We have much to learn from our parents regarding our heritage, to be proud of our past. This heritage and history bring a sense of belonging. Most importantly, it brings us a sense of identity of our past and the responsibility to protect it for our future generations. What I can add at the end is the role of our parents' morals, values, and principles in our lives. Our elders have either learned, created or have been brought up with a set of morals, values and principles in their lives. Our elders want the best for us and they are willing to tell us what set of rules and guidelines have made them successful, and hopefully, peaceful (V3, L1, p. 41)

Common Culture: Pledge to Uphold Iranian Traditional Values

Another quality that is displayed in the textbook series and has the capability to define Iranian national identity is common culture, which seemingly emanates mostly from Islamic beliefs. Common values such as believing in Allah and practicing Islam, valuing hardworking, bravery, politeness, and helping others are, among others, the moral and cultural values represented in the textbooks.

In the following excerpt, blood has been described as a blessing that we must thank Allah for it. Also, helping and donating has been recommended as a good social and humane practice.

This wonderful liquid (blood) is a great gift from Allah. We can thank Allah by keeping our body healthy. One way to do that is ... is to donate our blood to those who need it. (V1, L2, p. 50)

The next excerpt describes as a hardworking woman writer and translator. Meanwhile, by introducing a translator of the *Quran*, Islamic values and attending to Islam-related activities are particularly emphasized.

Tahereh Saffarzadeh was an Iranian writer, translator and thinker. When other kids were still playing outside, she learned reading and reciting the Holy Quran at the age of 6. As a young student, she was working very hard to learn new things (V1, L3, p. 82)
-We live in an Islamic society (V2, L1, p. 22)

Bravery, polite behavior towards older people, and generosity are among the cultural values that are represented in the following sentences drawn from the textbooks.

-The firefighters went into the burning house bravely,
-She looked at the child and asked politely, "what's your name?",
-The students were waiting patiently for the bus, Soheil never talks to his parents rudely (V1, L4, p. 115)
-The people of the town ... (*generously*) helped poor people (V1, L4, p. 117)

The next excerpt is about a conversation occurred between an elderly mother and her grown-up son. The moral lesson and message of the story is being patient towards our elderly parents and taking care of them as they have taken care of us and even sacrificed for us when we were very young.

On a spring morning, an old woman was sitting on the sofa in her house. Her young son was reading a newspaper. Suddenly a pigeon sat on the window.

The mother asked her son quietly, “What is this?” The son replied: “It is a pigeon”. After a few minutes, she asked her son for the second time, “What is this?” The son said, “Mom, I have just told you, “It’s a pigeon, a pigeon”.

After a little while, the old mother asked her son for the third time, “What is this?” This time the son shouted at his mother, “Why do you keep asking me the same question again and again? Are you hard of hearing?”

A little later, the mother went to her room and came back with an old diary. She said, “My dear son, I bought this diary when you were born”. Then, she opened a page and kindly asked her son to read that page. The son looked at the page, paused and started reading it aloud:

Today my little son was sitting on my lap, when a pigeon sat on the window. My son asked me what it was 15 times, and I replied to him all 15 times that it was a pigeon. I hugged him lovingly each time when he asked me the same question again and again. I did not feel angry at all. I was actually feeling happy for my lovely child. (V3, L1, Reading, p. 24)

Common culture such as food, customs, artworks, and literature are also present throughout the textbook series. For instance: “Rice is the most popular food in Iran” (V2, L1, p. 22).

In the next sentence reference has been made to the Iranian new year, Norooz: “Behzad: Hi Sina. How is it going? I haven’t seen you since Norooz” (V2, L2, p. 53). The following sentences, together with photos, depict Iranian art and literature.

- I bought this beautiful ... cup in Meibod,
- The little boy was sleeping on the It was soft and warm,
- Can you read that ...?
- There is a collection of Farshchian’s in Astan Ghods Museum,
- There are lots of ... in Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque
- It seems to be one of Nezami’s poems, (V2, L3, Exercise, p. 84)

The next is an inviting conversation that occurs between an Iranian shopkeeper in a handicrafts shop, as well, depicts the variety and reasonable prices of Iranian handicrafts.

Reza: How can I help you, sir?

Tourist: I am looking for some Iranian handicrafts.

Reza: Here you can find a range of Iranian hand-made products, from carpets to pottery and tilework, but we don’t sell

metalwork.

Tourist: I'd like to buy a Persian carpet, but it seems too expensive.

Reza: The price depends on its size. Instead, you can take an Isfahan Termeh or a Qashqai Gabbeh (V2, L3, Conversation, p. 85)

Common Legal Rights: Having Legal Rights for All in the Country

Little has been depicted in the textbooks regarding legal rights. The following excerpts from the textbooks, however, imply that Iran is an egalitarian country and the citizens have equal rights to get proper education and healthcare. All Iranian students get the education and learn English. Mahdi, an ordinary Iranian boy, can easily visit "his doctor". Sara, likewise an Iranian girl, has been hospitalized in a medical center that has been built particularly for children. The implication is that all Iranian citizens can easily use the healthcare services in the country.

- "The students learn English, Mahdi visited his doctor" (V2, L1, p. 42)

- "Sara has been in the Children's Medical Center for a week. She has caught a terrible flu. The doctor told her to stay there to get better" (V3, L1, Conversation, p. 19)

Common Duties: Loving the Country and Being Ready to Sacrifice for It

Throughout the textbook series, it is a common duty of all people to love the country and try to do their best for its prosperity, protect it in the best way, and sacrifice for it. For instance, in the following excerpt, Iranian people are described as people who take care of nature and protect the environment and wildlife. Moreover, the text suggests that if we protect plants and animals, "we will have enough food in the future", and also "a happy life". Thus, it is a common duty for all people to take care of the environment and wildlife in order to have a good country.

-The Iranian cheetah is among these endangered animals. This wild animal lives only in the plains of Iran. Now there are only a few Iranian cheetahs alive. If people take care of them, there is hope for this beautiful animal to live. Recently, families are paying more attention to nature, students learn about saving wildlife, and some hunters don't go hunting anymore. Hopefully, the number of cheetahs is going to increase in the future. (V1, L1, p. 22)

-Nowadays, many people are taking care of nature. They pay more attention to our world. Hopefully, we won't lose any plants and animals and we will have enough food in the future. The animals won't lose their natural homes and they will live longer. In this way, we will have a happy life. (V1, L1, p. 24)

In the following sentences, love of the country has been introduced as an idea in the textbook that is the duty of all Iranian people: "An idea: love of country" (besides Iran's flag, V1, L1, p. 35), and "We love our country" (V1, L3, p. 92). Likewise, a photo of martyred Iranian nuclear scientists is shown which implies that people should respect them and love them since they sacrificed their lives for the country (V1, L3, p. 75).

The next excerpt denotes that Iranian people have a common duty to introduce the country in the best way possible and behave so that "give a good image" of Iran to the world.

As a tourist, we should be careful about our behavior in a foreign country. . . . Our good behavior can give a good image of our country to other people. They may want to come and see our country soon! (V1, L4, p. 107)

The following lines are from a conversation between a student and a translator who works for the IRIB (Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting). In this conversation, an educated Iranian person who speaks several languages loves and prefers his mother language, Persian. In this conversation as well, the implication is that love of the country and the Persian language is an obligation for all Iranians.

Meysam: Hmm... that's an important point. May I know what your favorite language is? English, French, or Russian?

Mr. Saberian: To be honest, I enjoy using them all, but my favorite language is absolutely my mother tongue! (V3, L1, p. 19).

Common Economy: Trying to Help Boost the Economy and Make A Prosperous Country

In the following excerpt, the author directly maintains that by taking care of nature and protecting animals and plants, we can have more food in the future. Having enough food in the future implies having a thriving economy.

Nowadays, many people are taking care of nature. They pay more attention to our world. Hopefully, we won't lose any plants and animals and we will have enough food in the future (V1, L1, p. 24)

In the next conversation between a shopping clerk in a handicrafts shop and a tourist, various Iranian handicrafts are introduced and advertised. Focusing on tourism and on selling handicrafts has been part of the policies of the government to improve the economy by producing non-oil products in recent decades. Moreover, in the last line of the conversation, the shopkeeper maintains that all family members help the business which implies that all Iranians should help the business in the country and do their best to have a flourishing economy.

Tourist: I'd like to buy a Persian carpet, but it seems too expensive.

Reza: The price depends on its size. Instead, you can take an Isfahan Termeh or a Qashqai Gabbeh.

Tourist: Wow! How touching this Gabbeh is! How much is it?

Reza: It is 85 dollars. If you buy more than 100 dollars, you'll get a 20 percent discount. You can take this calligraphic tile for only 30 dollars.

Tourist: Well, I'll take both. Please pack them for me.

Reza: Yes, sure.

Tourist: Do you work for this shop? Who has made these beautiful items?

Reza: Actually, it is my father's workshop and store. I work here after school. All my family members work here to help our family business (V2, L3, Conversation, p. 85)

This excerpt from a Reading section clearly directs that by focusing on tourism and selling handicrafts we can boost the economy and also introduce the country across the world. Further, it declares that it is a popular economic endeavor around the world, and a good part of the income in some countries comes from selling handicrafts.

-Making and selling handicrafts are good ways to help a country's economy and introduce its culture to other nations. Many people of the world produce handicrafts and sell them to tourists. In some Asian countries a part of the country's income comes from making and selling handicrafts. If you travel across Iran, you'll get back home with excellent handicrafts as souvenirs for your family and friends (V2, L3, Reading, p. 90)-

Another way to help boost the economy, as the following lines from the textbooks direct, is saving energy. By using clean energies, for example, designing and constructing our buildings in a way to use the energy from the wind and the sun for cooling and heating, and using suitable materials in building houses we can prevent the loss of energy; as the following conversation and reading paragraph denote.

-Emad and his father are traveling to Guilan. On the way, in Manjeel, Emad sees huge wind turbines.

Emad: Daddy, look at those big fans!

Father: They are actually wind turbines.

Emad: Wind turbines?

Father: Yes, wind turbines are used to produce electricity from wind power.

Emad: These wind turbines remind me of what I read about using wind power in Yazd's buildings.

Father: You mean wind towers? (V3, L3, Conversation, p. 75)

-The most common type of clean energy is the solar power. Solar energy is produced by the radiation that reaches the earth. People have used the sun as a heat source for thousands of years. Iranians, for instance, use special designs and arrangements of windows, balconies, and yards to get the most sunshine. Different types of materials might also be used in building the houses. This keeps people warm during cold seasons and cool during hot days of the year. (V3, L3, Reading, p. 80)

The following sentence, likewise, directs that "Iran is rich in oil resources" (V3, L3, p. 77), and oil has a significant effect on the economy. In other words, since the biggest share of the income of Iran comes from producing and exporting oil and natural gas, we can boost the economy of the country through developing the oil production and export industry.

In general, parts of the findings in this study are to some extent in line with the findings of Soltan Zadeh (2012) who found that Islamic concepts and values are dominant in the narrative of Iranian identity in the history textbooks.

Similarly, the findings of this study are in agreement with the findings of Pavlenko (2003), who inspected discourses of national identity and foreign-language education in the U.S., the Soviet Union, and eastern Europe and found that the most outstanding attribute of policy discourse in foreign language learning is patriotism, which acts as a means to expose the students to the desired image of national identity.

Conclusion and Implications

This study investigated the representation of national identity in the *English Vision textbook series*. The results showed that Iranian identity is the most frequently referenced and was referred to in 13 different ways. Also, six major themes, corresponding to the themes introduced by Smith (1991, 2001), were found with regards to aspects of national identity in the textbooks. To seek an answer for the “who we are?” question, the classic “us” versus “others” dichotomy is noticeable in the series. Concerning the “what are we proud of?” question, Iran has been depicted as a vast and beautiful country that all Iranians are proud of. It has been described as a wide country with beautiful nature, a great variety in wildlife, an old history, a lot of historical sites and monuments, and with friendly people who love their country, who are skilled in literature, arts and handicrafts, and possess their own values and principles. However, even though Iran has been introduced as an old country, only a few cases have been shown with regards to historical sites and monuments which are a part of Iranian national identity. As well, only a few Iranian customs and traditions such as Norooz are represented. In comparison, Iranian arts and handicrafts are introduced frequently.

Iranian art and literature are frequently referenced. Also, the Islamic aspect of Iranian national identity has been highlighted. This representation is obvious in using the plural pronouns such as “we”, e.g. “we live in an Islamic society”.

The findings of this study might offer insights to education policy-makers and textbook designers in Iran concerning the crucial role of textbooks, and in shaping national identity, and also complexities that are present concerning the role of textbooks in shaping collective identities.

Yet, further research is required that can contribute to a more transparent and more precise interpretation of how top educational policies and practices impact the shaping of national identity in Iran. A study of the policy and politics in the Iranian textbook would add to the richness of the above findings. Also, further research is needed to study the views of Iranian stakeholders, especially EFL teachers and students regarding Iranian national identity, and also match or mismatch between their views and what is represented in the textbooks.

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