

## A Comparative Analysis of Moral Values in Iran's *Vision 1* and France's *New Bridges 2e*: Educational Perspectives from Iran and France

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the representation of moral values in English language teaching (ELT) textbooks from two distinct educational contexts: Iran and France. Building on existing scholarship that positions textbooks as ideological tools, the study examines *Vision 1* and *New Bridges 2e* to investigate how moral content reflects national educational priorities. The research is guided by two key questions: how moral values are distributed across social, individual, cultural, and global categories in each textbook, and how these distributions align with their respective sociocultural frameworks. A mixed-methods approach was used, combining qualitative content analysis with quantitative frequency analysis. A total of 274 moral value instances were identified across 10 units from each textbook. The findings revealed that *Vision 1* emphasized social and cultural values consistent with collectivist and religious ideologies. In contrast, *New Bridges 2e* focused more on global and individual values aligned with secular and democratic ideals. The results demonstrate how textbooks mirror national ideologies and contribute to shaping students' ethical perspectives. These insights have important implications for curriculum developers, educators, and policymakers interested in promoting culturally responsive and ethically grounded language education. The study also highlights the need for increased awareness of the moral messages embedded in language materials and calls for further research on how such content is interpreted and enacted in classroom practice.

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### 1. Introduction

Foreign language education has increasingly been recognized not only as a means of linguistic development but also as a powerful platform for moral and cultural formation.

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In an era of global interconnectedness, language classrooms serve as venues where learners are exposed to diverse worldviews, ethical frameworks, and cultural norms. Within this context, textbooks, central tools in most educational systems, function as ideological instruments that implicitly and explicitly convey values, beliefs, and moral assumptions. This dual role renders textbooks highly significant for researchers concerned with the sociocultural and ethical dimensions of language education.

Educational theorists have long emphasized the importance of incorporating moral values into school curricula (Krippendorff, 2004; Pingel, 2010). In the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), this discourse has expanded, acknowledging that textbook content often extends beyond grammatical structures and vocabulary to include moral narratives and value-laden examples (Tomlinson, 2012; Gray, 2013). Nevertheless, moral education in ELT remains underexplored, particularly in comparative international contexts. Prior research tends to focus on single-nation textbook analyses, leaving a critical gap in understanding how different sociocultural systems encode moral messages through ELT materials.

Iranian ELT textbooks, such as the *Vision* series, have been shown to promote Islamic ethics, national identity, and collectivist values (Jamali, 2018; Hosseinzadeh et al, 2022). In contrast, French textbooks like *New Bridges 2e* reflect secularism, multiculturalism, and individual agency, shaped by France's democratic and inclusive educational policies (Gray, 2013; Thongrin, 2018). These contrasts reflect deeper national ideologies embedded in educational goals, yet a direct comparative analysis between such textbooks has not been sufficiently addressed in the literature.

This study seeks to fill that gap by critically examining the moral values embedded in two widely used English textbooks: *Vision 1*, part of Iran's national high school curriculum, and *New Bridges 2e*, used in French secondary education. Grounded in the assumption that textbooks serve as cultural artifacts, this research adopts a descriptive content analysis approach to investigate how moral values are represented, categorized, and prioritized in these texts.

The study holds both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it contributes to a growing body of interdisciplinary work linking applied linguistics, ethics, and curriculum studies. Practically, it offers insights for educators, textbook designers, and policymakers seeking to align moral education with both national and global values. As moral development is increasingly viewed as integral to student formation, understanding how textbooks frame such values becomes essential for responsible curriculum design.

To guide the investigation, the following research questions are posed:

**Research Question 1:** How are moral values represented in *Vision 1* and *New Bridges 2e*, and what categories (social, individual, cultural, global) are emphasized in each?

**Research Question 2:** How do these representations reflect the broader national educational priorities and sociocultural ideologies of Iran and France?

## 2. Review of Literature

The integration of moral education in English Language Teaching (ELT) has garnered growing attention from scholars in recent decades. As textbooks serve as core instructional tools in language classrooms, their potential to shape learners' moral and ethical perspectives has become a subject of critical inquiry. This section reviews the relevant literature, highlighting how ELT textbooks convey moral values across

different educational systems, and identifies the gaps that the current study aims to address.

Textbooks are not neutral pedagogical instruments; rather, they are socio-cultural products that embody the ideological, ethical, and political priorities of the societies in which they are produced (Krippendorff, 2004; Pingel, 2010). Studies in applied linguistics and curriculum theory suggest that textbooks frequently embed implicit messages concerning morality, citizenship, and social norms (Gray, 2013; Tomlinson, 2012). These embedded values influence not only students' language acquisition but also their worldview and character development. Consequently, understanding how moral values are presented in textbooks can reveal broader educational agendas.

In the Iranian context, ELT materials are closely aligned with national ideological and religious goals. The *Vision* series has been found to incorporate Islamic ethics, promote collective responsibility, and reinforce cultural identity (Jamali, 2018; Hosseinzadeh et al, 2022). These textbooks often reference Islamic teachings and traditional narratives that emphasize respect for elders, community cooperation, and national pride. The emphasis on religiously grounded moral development reflects the objectives of Iran's National Curriculum Guidelines (2012), which position ethical instruction as central to student formation. However, while moral content is present, studies often overlook how it is thematically categorized or compared across different cultural contexts.

In contrast, French ELT textbooks are shaped by the principles of secularism (*laïcité*), democracy, and multicultural inclusivity. Textbooks like *New Bridges 2e* reflect these values by promoting critical thinking, personal autonomy, and global awareness (Gray, 2013; Thongrin, 2018). Topics such as climate change, human rights, and cultural diversity are frequently addressed, with learners encouraged to reflect on global issues and their ethical implications. Rather than referencing religious frameworks, these materials rely on civic values and universal principles of justice, empathy, and equality. Despite this emphasis, limited research compares the moral orientations of such secular content with textbooks from more theologically driven contexts.

Several studies have attempted to categorize moral values in ELT materials using thematic frameworks. For instance, Borg (2012) and Hinkel (2011) propose dividing moral content into social, individual, cultural, and global categories. These classifications provide a structured lens through which the implicit and explicit moral dimensions of textbooks can be systematically analyzed. However, few comparative studies apply this model across diverse national settings.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is grounded in sociocultural theories of moral education and critical approaches to textbook analysis. It serves as the conceptual lens through which the representation of moral values in English language textbooks is examined and interpreted. By identifying, defining, and contextualizing the key concepts relevant to the study namely, moral values, cultural ideologies, and textbook discourse. This framework provides the basis for linking the research problem, questions, and methodological approach.

Moral values are understood in this study as socially constructed principles that guide individuals' judgments and behaviors in relation to what is considered right or wrong, good or bad. Common moral values found in educational discourse include

respect, responsibility, honesty, empathy, tolerance, and cooperation (Krippendorff, 2004; Jamali, 2018). These values may be explicitly taught or implicitly conveyed through narratives, images, or activities in textbooks. The concept of moral values in this context is not universal but rather influenced by the cultural, religious, and political ideologies of a given society.

Textbooks, as primary educational materials, are not merely repositories of neutral content. They are considered ideological tools that reflect and reinforce dominant societal narratives (Pingel, 2010; Gray, 2013). Within the framework of critical pedagogy, textbooks are viewed as discursive spaces where cultural norms, ethical standards, and national ideologies are embedded and normalized.

Cultural orientation whether collectivist or individualist, secular or religious—plays a decisive role in shaping the moral themes emphasized in a country's educational materials. Collectivist societies tend to stress community-based moral values such as obedience, loyalty, and harmony, while individualist cultures prioritize autonomy, personal achievement, and critical thinking (Thongrin, 2018).

This study draws on several theoretical traditions to frame its analysis. First, Krippendorff's (2004) content analysis model offers a structured methodology for identifying latent and manifest moral values in texts. His emphasis on meaning-making and social context aligns with the study's goal of interpreting values within their cultural frameworks.

Second, the categorization model by Hinkel (2011) and later applied by Borg (2012) provides a typology for organizing moral content into four main domains:

- Social Values (e.g., cooperation, respect for others)
- Individual Values (e.g., autonomy, self-discipline)
- Cultural Values (e.g., heritage, national identity)
- Global Values (e.g., human rights, environmental responsibility)

This model facilitates systematic comparison between textbooks by offering clear categories aligned with educational goals and moral ideologies. The model's applicability in different cultural contexts further justifies its use in this comparative study.

This perspective is particularly relevant in analyzing how values are constructed differently in Iranian and French ELT materials. The framework assumes that textbooks reflect national ideologies and that moral values are embedded according to the cultural orientation of the country. The relationship between educational policy, textbook content, and student moral development is central to this study. Through the comparative analysis of moral themes, the study seeks to reveal how values are operationalized differently under distinct cultural frameworks.

This theoretical framework was selected for its capacity to connect sociocultural theory, moral education, and content analysis cohesively. The integration of Krippendorff's methodology, Hinkel's categorization model allows for a comprehensive and nuanced examination of moral values in textbooks. The framework is particularly well-suited to address the study's core research questions, which require both interpretive depth and empirical structure.

The theoretical framework directly informs the research design by shaping the coding scheme, guiding the categorization of data, and contextualizing the interpretation of findings. It supports both the descriptive analysis of value frequencies and the

interpretive comparison of ideological orientations. Ultimately, it ensures that the study maintains conceptual coherence from problem formulation through to analysis and discussion.

#### 4. Methods

This section outlines the methodological framework adopted for investigating the representation of moral values in two English-language textbooks from Iran and France. A structured, systematic approach was used to ensure the validity, reliability, and replicability of the findings. The components below explain the research design, sampling procedures, data collection, and data analysis strategies.

##### 4-1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive content analysis approach, supported by quantitative frequency analysis to compare the moral values embedded in *Vision 1* (Iran) and *New Bridges 2e* (France). A mixed-methods design was selected to capture both the depth (qualitative interpretation) and distribution (quantitative frequency) of moral themes across textbooks. This design was deemed appropriate as the research sought not only to describe how moral values are represented but also to statistically compare their prominence between two sociocultural contexts.

##### 4-2. Participants

The sample consisted of two official English textbooks widely used in public secondary education:

- *Vision 1*, part of the national ELT curriculum in Iran
- *New Bridges 2e*, used in French high schools
- Each textbook's first 10 units were selected to ensure a manageable scope and representative coverage of the moral content. These units provided a balanced sample across diverse language tasks, reading passages, and visual content.

As this study analyzed published textbooks, no human participants were directly involved. Therefore, informed consent was not required, and no ethical approval was necessary. However, the study adhered to ethical research standards by maintaining objectivity, avoiding cultural bias, and transparently reporting data.

##### 4-3. Data Collection Instruments

The primary instrument was a custom coding scheme developed based on prior literature (Hinkel, 2011; Borg, 2012). This framework categorizes moral values into four domains:

- Social Values (e.g., respect, cooperation, obedience)
- Individual Values (e.g., autonomy, personal responsibility)
- Cultural Values (e.g., national identity, heritage)
- Global Values (e.g., human rights, environmental awareness)

The coding manual included clear definitions and examples to ensure consistent identification of value instances. Two trained coders were involved in the process, and the instrument was piloted on two textbook units (one from each book) to confirm clarity and usability.

##### 4-4. Data Collection Procedure

1. Textbook Review: Each unit of the selected textbooks was carefully read by two independent coders.
2. Moral Theme Identification: Instances of moral values (textual or visual) were highlighted and tagged according to the four-category framework.
3. Coding Application: Each instance was assigned a code (e.g., SV for Social Value, GV for Global Value).
4. Frequency Logging: Coded items were tallied to determine their frequency and proportional representation in each textbook.
5. Validation: Discrepancies between coders were discussed and resolved through consensus.

All data were collected manually using digital versions of the textbooks and recorded in an Excel spreadsheet for analysis.

#### 4-5. Data Analysis

Quantitative analysis involved calculating the frequency and percentage of each moral value category within both textbooks. Descriptive statistics were used to identify dominant value types in each text.

Qualitative interpretation followed, linking the frequency patterns to broader cultural, religious, and educational ideologies. This dual-layered analysis ensured that both what is present (content) and why it matters (context) were addressed.

### 5. Results

#### Key Findings by Research Question

Research Question 1: How are moral values represented in *Vision 1* and *New Bridges 2e*, and what categories (social, individual, cultural, global) are emphasized in each?

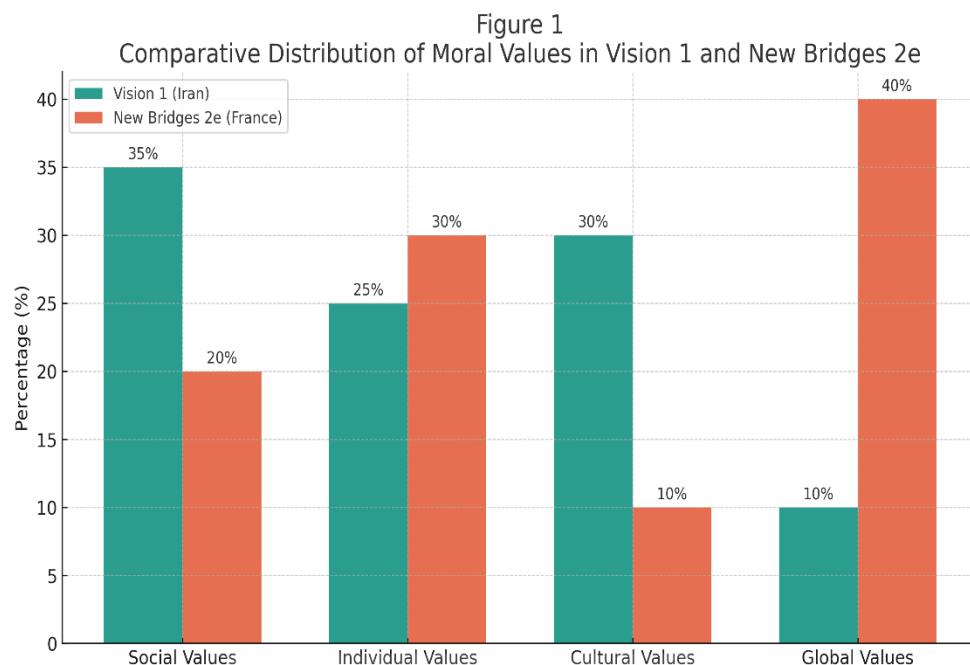
In *Vision 1*, the most frequently represented values were social (35%) and cultural (30%), aligning with themes of family, community, national heritage, and religious values.

In contrast, *New Bridges 2e* emphasized global (40%) and individual (30%) values, often reflecting environmentalism, multiculturalism, personal goal-setting, and civic responsibility.

These findings suggest differing emphases in the moral focus of each textbook.

Figure 1

Comparative Distribution of Moral Values in *Vision 1* and *New Bridges 2e*



Note. The figure illustrates the relative frequency of each moral value category across the two textbooks.

Research Question 2: How do these representations reflect the broader national educational priorities and sociocultural ideologies of Iran and France?

While interpretation is addressed in the Discussion section, the objective results show a pattern:

*Vision 1* features a higher concentration of collective and cultural themes.

*New Bridges 2e* displays a greater focus on individualism and global citizenship.

#### Moral Themes in *Vision 1*

The analysis of *Vision 1* revealed that the textbook places a strong emphasis on collective and religious values, consistent with Iran's sociocultural and educational context. The distribution of moral themes is as follows:

Social Values (35%) – The majority of the textbook promotes respect for family, elders, and community responsibilities. Activities and readings encourage teamwork, unity, and mutual assistance. For example, in Unit 3, the sentence “We should always help our neighbors in times of need” (p. 42) explicitly calls for social solidarity. Similarly, the activity “Do voluntary work to help your community” reinforces the importance of civic responsibility.

Cultural Values (30%) – The text frequently references Iran's cultural and religious heritage, including Islamic traditions, historical figures, and moral stories from the Quran. For instance, a reading in Unit 6 describes Nowruz as “a celebration that brings families together to honor our traditions” (p. 95). Another lesson cites the Quranic verse promoting kindness to parents, embedding moral guidance within cultural identity.

Individual Values (25%) – While collective responsibility is central, the textbook also highlights personal virtues such as perseverance and self-discipline. One story advises students to “work hard and never give up, even when you face difficulties” (Unit 5, p. 78), encouraging self-development for the betterment of society.

Global Values (10%) – Although less prominent, the textbook addresses global concerns like environmentalism. In Unit 4, the reading “Simple Ways to Protect Wildlife” states: “When you keep nature clean and safe, the animals will live longer” (p. 58), linking environmental care to Islamic moral duty.

#### Moral Themes in *New Bridges 2e*

In contrast, *New Bridges 2e* emphasizes individualism and global values, reflecting France’s secular, democratic, and globally oriented education system. The distribution of moral themes is as follows:

Global Values (40%) – A dominant theme is global citizenship, with repeated references to climate change, human rights, and cultural diversity. For example, lesson one states: “Recycling helps combat climate change,” and another encourages “learning about different traditions broadens our perspective.” These examples promote awareness of environmental and intercultural issues.

Personal Values (30%) – The textbook places strong emphasis on self-reliance, initiative, and goal-setting. In a reading about personal development, the sentence “Emma sets personal goals and works hard to achieve them” in lesson 4 inspires students to think independently and persevere. Another unit features “Lucas volunteers at a refugee center”, highlighting personal responsibility for social change.

Social Values (20%) – Although less central than in *Vision 1*, cooperation and respect for others (lesson 7) are still present. Group projects often encourage listening to peers and valuing teamwork.

Cultural Values (10%) – The book promotes respect for various cultures, such as in activities (lesson 3) where students share experiences from cultural festivals or work with peers from diverse backgrounds.

#### Comparative Insights

Social vs. Individual Values – *Vision 1* emphasizes social solidarity (35%), aligning with Iran’s collectivist structure, whereas *New Bridges 2e* prioritizes personal growth (30%), reflecting France’s focus on autonomy and self-determination.

Example: “Ali helps his neighbors and earns blessings” (*Vision 1*), versus “Emma sets personal goals and works hard to achieve them” (*New Bridges 2e*).

Cultural vs. Global Values – *Vision 1* focuses heavily on cultural heritage and Islamic moral teachings (30%), while *New Bridges 2e* highlights global concerns such as human rights and environmental awareness (40%).

Example: “Nowruz is a celebration that brings families together to honor our traditions” (*Vision 1*), versus “Learning about different traditions broadens our perspective” (*New Bridges 2e*).

Religious vs. Secular Orientation – *Vision 1* links moral guidance directly to religious doctrine, whereas *New Bridges 2e* promotes values through secular and humanistic perspectives.

## 6. Discussion

This study set out to examine how moral values are represented in two widely used English language textbooks, *Vision 1* from Iran and *New Bridges 2e* from France by categorizing and comparing their content across four domains: social, individual, cultural, and global values. The findings revealed clear distinctions in the moral

orientation of each textbook, reflecting their respective national educational philosophies and cultural ideologies.

Consistent with the first research question, *Vision 1* exhibited a strong emphasis on social (35%) and cultural (30%) values, highlighting themes such as respect for elders, community responsibility, and national identity grounded in Islamic traditions. In contrast, *New Bridges 2e* prioritized global (40%) and individual (30%) values, with topics like climate change, human rights, personal goal setting, and multiculturalism at the forefront. These patterns affirm the hypothesis that Iranian ELT materials promote collectivist and religiously-informed values, while French materials align with secular, individualistic, and globally conscious frameworks.

These findings support the work of previous scholars such as Jamali (2018), who argued that Iranian textbooks are designed to reinforce Islamic morality and collective social norms. Similarly, the high representation of national and cultural heritage in *Vision 1* aligns with the curriculum directives outlined in Iran's National Curriculum Guidelines (2012). The results also resonate with studies by Gray (2013) and Thongrin (2018), which highlight the secular, inclusive, and globally oriented nature of French educational materials. The prominence of themes like environmentalism, civic engagement, and personal autonomy in *New Bridges 2e* reflects the ideological priorities of France's democratic and multicultural system.

The observed divergence between the two textbooks reflects not only differing pedagogical goals but also broader sociopolitical and cultural agendas. In Iran, textbook content is tightly controlled by the Ministry of Education and is explicitly designed to foster national loyalty and religious virtue. Conversely, in France, ELT materials often promote critical thinking, cross-cultural understanding, and global citizenship, in keeping with the country's commitment to *laïcité* (secularism) and democratic values. These differences underscore how textbooks function as cultural tools that shape students' moral development in ways that extend beyond language acquisition.

The study has several important implications. Theoretically, it contributes to a deeper understanding of how moral values are encoded in language education materials, particularly within contrasting ideological contexts. Practically, it provides insights for textbook authors, curriculum developers, and policymakers aiming to design ethically responsive and culturally sensitive ELT content. For educators, awareness of the implicit moral narratives in textbooks can support more informed and reflective teaching practices.

However, this research is not without limitations. First, the analysis was restricted to the first 10 units of each textbook. While this sample was representative, it may not capture the full range of moral content presented throughout the entire curriculum. Eliminated. Second, the study focused exclusively on textbook content and did not explore how teachers or students interpret or respond to these moral messages in real classroom settings.

## 7. Conclusion

This study explored how moral values are represented and prioritized in two nationally endorsed English language textbooks, *Vision 1* from Iran and *New Bridges 2e* from France, through a comparative content analysis grounded in a culturally responsive framework. The results revealed clear differences in value orientation: *Vision 1* strongly emphasized social and cultural values aligned with collectivist and religious ideologies,

while *New Bridges 2e* prioritized global and individual values reflective of secular, democratic principles.

These findings underscore the powerful role that ELT textbooks play not only in language instruction but also in shaping students' ethical perspectives, social attitudes, and cultural identities. The moral themes embedded in each textbook mirror the broader national ideologies and educational priorities of their respective countries, confirming that textbooks are not ideologically neutral but rather function as vehicles for value transmission.

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to the fields of applied linguistics, moral education, and curriculum studies. By systematically comparing how two contrasting sociocultural systems approach moral education through language textbooks, the study provides useful insights for policymakers, curriculum designers, and educators seeking to foster ethically grounded and globally aware learners.

In addressing the research questions, the study has shown that the distribution and nature of moral values in ELT materials are shaped by national identity, religious philosophy, and global engagement. These insights highlight the importance of critically evaluating textbooks not just for their linguistic content, but for the values they communicate and the worldviews they promote.

Future research should build on these findings by investigating how moral messages in textbooks are received, interpreted, and enacted in classroom contexts. Such inquiry will help bridge the gap between curricular design and pedagogical reality, ensuring that moral education in language learning is both intentional and effective.

Ultimately, as globalization continues to blur national boundaries, the challenge and responsibility of embedding balanced moral perspectives in educational materials becomes even more vital. Textbooks that thoughtfully integrate both local values and global ethics can play a pivotal role in preparing students to navigate a complex and interconnected world—linguistically, culturally, and morally.

### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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