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Triggering Patriotism in Contemporary Algerian Official Textbooks. The case study of 'My English Book', 1st Year MS

إثارة الروح الوطنية في الكتب المدرسية الجزائرية الرسمية. دراسة حالة من 'كتابي للغة الإنجليزية' للسنة أولى تعليم متوسط.

Mohammed Nabil BENZIANE¹

¹ University of Tamanghasset - Algeria

benziane.mohammednabil@univ-tam.dz benzianenabil@gmail.com

¹ Laboratory of Gender Studies, Languages and Sociolinguistic Diversities. University of Mostaganem – Algeria

Abstract

Contemporary Algerian official textbooks are characterised by an extensive use of texts and images that tend to trigger the sense of patriotism among students and readers so as to evoke the emotion of affiliation and allegiance. At a very early age, Algerian students are exposed to certain ideas and beliefs that ultimately manifest as ideological perceptions and social consciousness; furthermore, they promote the sense of identity and determine the way young students feel about their nation and fellow citizens. These inferences, indeed, bring forward some serious inquiries about the appropriateness of exposing such beliefs to young students who, in return, attempt to manifest them through actions in real life. The paper at hand

attempts to examine several case studies that have been detected in the official 'My English Book' for 1st Year MS adopting the Semiotic approach of Charles Sanders Peirce. The aim is to reveal the complexity of use of the notion of patriotism, furthermore, examine the extent to which patriotic inferences alter the perception of identity among students. Using both qualitative and descriptive methods, the results have shown that the editorial style of official textbooks has to be reviewed so as to fit the appropriate pedagogical needs of Algerian young students.

Keywords: Algerian Official Textbook, Patriotism, Ideology, Social Consciousness, Identity

Corresponding Author:

Mohammed Nabil BENZIANE, email:

benzianenabil@gmail.com , benziane.mohammednabil@univ-tam.dz , benzianenabil@gmail.com

المخلص

تتميز الكتب المدرسية الجزائرية الرسمية المعاصرة بالاستخدام المكثف للنصوص والصور التي تهدف إلى إثارة الشعور بالوطنية بين الطلاب والقراء من أجل تحفيز مشاعر الانتماء والولاء. في هذا السياق، يتعرض الطلاب الجزائريون في

سن مبكرة لأفكار ومعتقدات معينة تتجلى في نهاية المطاف في صورة تصورات أيديولوجية ووعي اجتماعي، علاوة على ذلك، تهدف هاته التصورات إلى تعزيز الإحساس بالهوية وتحدد الطريقة التي يشعر بها الطلاب حديثي السن تجاه أمتهم ومواطنيهم. هذه الاستنتاجات، في الواقع، تطرح بعض الاستفسارات الجادة حول مدى ملائمة التعرض لمثل هذه المعتقدات للطلاب الصغار الذين، في المقابل، يحاولون إظهارها من خلال أفعال في الحياة الواقعية. نحاول من خلال هذا البحث فحص العديد من الحالات التي تم اكتشافها في "كتابي للغة الإنجليزية" الرسمي للسنة الأولى تعليم متوسط بإستعمال منهج التحليل السيميائي لشارل ساندرز بيرس. الهدف من الدراسة الحالية هو الكشف عن مدى تعقيد استخدام مفهوم الوطنية، علاوة على ذلك، فحص المدى الذي تغير فيه الاستدلالات الوطنية المستخرجة من الكتاب مفهوم الهوية بين الطلاب. بإستعمال طرق التحليل الكيفي و الوصفي أثبتت النتائج أن الأسلوب التحريري للكتب المدرسية الرسمية يجب مراجعته لكي يتناسب بشكل أفضل مع الاحتياجات التربوية للطلاب الجزائريين حديثي السن.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الكتاب المدرسي الجزائري الرسمي، الوطنية، الأيديولوجية، الوعي الاجتماعي، الهوية

1. INTRODUCTION

In addition to their curricula and pedagogical purposes, Algerian official textbooks are characterised by the use of a variety of texts and images that are intentionally and/or unintentionally serving supplementary objectives. These textbooks were written and designed by a group of selected teachers and education inspectors of English language from the Ministry of National

Education. The channel of communication which is used to convey meanings through these textbooks is believed to be composed of complex linguistic and non-linguistic units that aim at stimulating young learners to interact ideologically with texts and images.

The official ‘My English Book’ for 1st Year Middle School students is one eminent textbook which contains several verbal and visual communicative units that aim at triggering the sense of patriotism and national allegiance among young students and readers. Indeed, much of these patriotic features are represented considering the schematic knowledge and the linguistic frames of references that can be evoked among young students and readers once they are exposed to such complex channel of communication. The ultimate objective, therefore, is believed to be the maintaining of social cohesion and the promotion of the sense of national affiliation.

In order to examine this channel of communication, the semiotic approach of the American Philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce stands out to be one prominent approach that aims at decoding the complex structure of signs and the way they are merged by text creators i.e. the coursebook authors in order to create particular ideological perceptions. Close insights into the process through which signs, codes, and symbols are inserted in ‘My English Book’, one can plainly detect a solid ideological

strategy which is meant to be primarily serving certain pedagogical purposes and at the same time promoting certain other ideological preconceived intentions.

2. Semiotics and Meaning Making

Compared to other disciplines, semiotics stands out to be one of the newest research fields in the domain of language studies and its relationship to other human and social sciences. Semiotics is anxious with everything which can be taken as a sign (Chandler, 2007, p.3). As it is agreed by most semioticians and linguists, the system of both denotative and connotative meanings of the world is inspired by semiotics and its variety of sub disciplines. A sign, in return, is everything which can be taken as significantly substituting for something else (Eco, 1976, p.7). Thus, the primary concern of semiotics is to identify and examine the extent to which people make sense of the visual and mental perception of entities in the world out there.

Indeed, the field of semiotics is often referred to as a study that establishes a link between one object that identifies another through a third object (Morris, 1974, p.15). This conception was inspired by the semiotic approach of the American Philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce who asserted that signs are examined according to their iconic, indexical, and symbolic dimensions. In this sense, icons are signs where the signifier is totally in

resemblance with the signified such as a photography which makes reference to a person or thing. Indexes, on the other hand, are signs where the signified is the main reason for the signifier and causes it, for example the smoke which is an index for fire and symptoms are indexes for illness. The last dimension is known as 'symbols', which are signs where the link between signifier and signified is completely conventional and acquired by learning and which finds its root on cultural and social conventions.

Peirce's approach to Semiotics is built upon the idea of the interchangeable use and representation of signs and the way they relate to each other in order to generate meaning in the mind of receivers. However, and as they manifest in such complexity, signs are believed to contribute excessively in shaping the reality of what they represent. Barthes (1972, p.29) emphasises the fact that the representation of the conception (signs, icons, indexes, and symbols) represent less reality than a certain knowledge of reality. Therefore, the analysis of signs in this approach is primarily concerned with the examination of signs' implicit meanings and false connotations in the minds of receivers and the way signs trigger supplementary meanings through mental simulations.

In this regard, the creation of meaning through signs is not arbitrary, but is, rather guided by the human desire for

recognition, influence, power, and the general motivation for social and cultural survival (Kramsch, 1998, p.23). Here, text creators use signs in order to convey preconceived ideological meanings that serve specific intentions among their users who, in return, are expected to interact positively with these ideological meanings. According to Atkin (2016), the meaning of a sign is manifest in the interpretation that it generates in sign users. In order to match the linguistic and visual intention and interpretation, one has to pay close attention to what signs create in receivers' minds about target texts and issues.

3. Maintaining Patriotism and Social Cohesion through Visual Communication

The contemporary focus of language and communication studies is to identify the extent to which text creators use signs and language to convey ideological preconceived meanings and false connotations to second-person parties. The creation of patriotic senses and the maintaining of social cohesion is one fundamental recent issue that instructors of official Algerian textbooks pay close attention to in order to achieve a successful education, meanwhile conserve shared identity between Algerian citizens.

The identity of Algerian citizens is highly represented in the official textbooks where this identity is meant to be consumed in order to maintain social cohesion and promote the sense of

patriotism among students. Social cohesion refers to connections among individuals-social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them (Putnam, 2000, p.19). The official English textbook in Algeria is one important mean where social cohesion is created and maintained among Algerian young students.

Text creators use textbooks to create solid connections between individuals of the same society in order to maintain social cohesion and enhance the shared identity. In return, a shared identity tends to promote social cohesion in the group in which it is shared (Holtug, 2020, p.1084). In this sense, the Algerian society is believed to be always dependent on what textbooks offer to students at an early age; therefore, prepare them to be connected fellow citizens. Importantly, societies where members are united by means of national identities are able to achieve a range of desirable ends that would otherwise be unobtainable (Miller & Ali, 2014, p.237). Thus, a shared identity is the key to create hybrid connotations.

By manipulating the visual channel of communication through icons, indexes, and symbols, text creators aim at establishing a context for receivers to understand the world the way it is ideologically intended. The negotiated meaning of the lexical and visual signs represent worldviews and belief structure and influence the way the intended target audience

relates to their world (Herbst, 2005, p.13). Furthermore, text creators use specific signs in order to better fit the preconceived ideological meanings due to the fact that one sign may have several different meanings, according to different cultures as asserted by Semetsky (2007, p.180). Therefore, the used icons, indexes, and symbols will be associated to the target culture of the individuals so as to make relevant ideological inferences and match with the intention of text creators.

Remarkably, Algerian students often make inferences from textbooks based on their historical, cultural, and social contexts. Due to the fact that signs are interpreted denotatively and connotatively, it becomes an easy task for text creators to contextualise signs based on such contexts and based on the experience of the individual as well. Connotative meanings vary considerably according to culture, historical period, and the experience of the individual (Fourie, 2001, p.346). Hence, the newly created signs on textbooks are limited in their interpretation; students will be expected to match with this interpretation and make ideological inferences as already aimed by text creators.

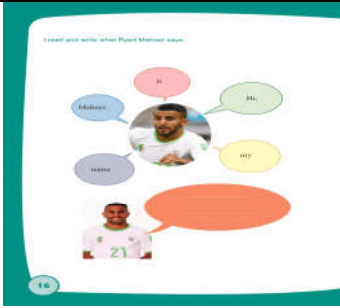
4. Qualitative Insights into ‘My English Book’, 1st Year MS

The official ‘My English Book, 1st Year MS’ is characterised by an extensive use of images and texts that are believed to trigger

the sense of patriotism and national affiliation among students and readers at an early age. By using the qualitative and descriptive methods, several of these images and texts are selected to be analysed in this paper so as to examine their ideological use by the coursebook authors.

The table above shows selected images from the official ‘My English Book, 1st Year MS’ where patriotic and national signs and messages are successfully transmitted to young students as part of the ideological process of triggering patriotism and national allegiance. These images were chosen due to several motives such as the Algerian flag, Algerian historical and national figures, geographical features, and local recognised items. The aim is to examine the extent to which these images simulate students to construct and trigger the sense of patriotism at schools then transmit these senses outside. Furthermore, these images are believed to alter the perception of identity and the sense of allegiance among students at an early age.

No	Image	Description and Inferences
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01	 Image 1. 'My English Book, 1st Year MS', p.13	Early at the beginning of the book, the coursebook authors establish a patriotic context for students by showing a classroom from the inside. Students can clearly see the Algerian flag in the front wall in addition to the list of 'Rights & Duties'.
02	 Image 2. 'My English Book, 1st Year MS', p.16	Another early example of patriotic signs is the insertion of the picture of a well known Algerian football player 'Riyad Mahrez' wearing the Algerian national team shirt.
03	 Image 3. 'My English Book, 1st Year MS', p.80	As sequences and chapters move on, students will come across a picture of a young student wearing the Algerian national team shirt and using a patriotic register to describe his daily routine at school.

04	 Image 4. ‘My English Book, 1st Year MS’, p.100	After being exposed to a set of patriotic signs, students in this picture are shown the front of an Algerian school and a student accounting for ‘Rights & Duties’ that each student should adhere to. The first duty is ‘standing for the national anthem’.
05	 Image 5. ‘My English Book, 1st Year MS’, p.111	As part of ‘Rights & Duties’ sequence, the former student wearing the Algerian national shirt is now shown with two other female young students with the Algerian flag and the expression of ‘Long live Algeria’.
06	 Image 6. ‘My English Book, 1st Year MS’, p.112	In this picture, students are introduced to the meaning of ‘Ideal School’. Several historical figures and national features are shown to students as both, part of their ‘ideal school’ and ‘duties’.

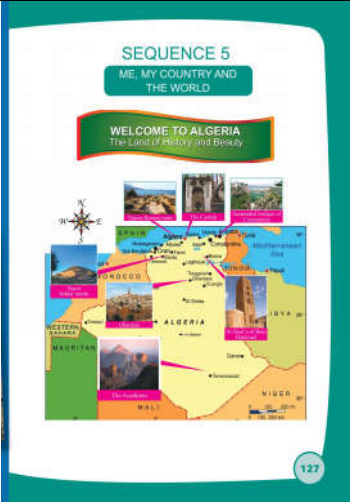
	Year MS', p.116	
07	 Image 7. 'My English Book, 1st Year MS', p.127	The last sequence of this book is entitled 'Me, my country and the World'. Here, Algeria is described as the 'Land of history and beauty'. After being exposed to several patriotic signs and identity features, students are called to set Algeria as an example to see the rest of the world through.

Table 1. Patriotic signs and messages from, 'My English Book, 1st Year MS'

These samples of signs and messages from 'My English Book, 1st Year MS' are successfully transmitted to young students and to readers as part of learning English language, mainly for the first time on the part of students. The learning process of a foreign language is built upon the insertion of national figures and features that are not directly related to the target language. It is true that some passages and sequences show the British and the American flags and introduce some features of their culture and history, however, it was not built upon a comparison. A comparison between the Algerian heritage and that of Great Britain or the United States, in this

context, can be a successful procedure through which students can learn the target language i.e. English.

5. Results and Discussion

Through the examination of the selected images from ‘My English Book, 1st Year MS’, a number of ideological messages have been detected and which aim at triggering the sense of patriotism and national affiliation, furthermore, alter the perception of identity among students and readers at an early age. Also, it is evident that these messages are built upon the notions of icons, symbols, and indexes where students interact with those images so as to evoke specific ideas in mind and, ultimately, build alternative perceptions upon them.

In image.1, the coursebook authors aim at establishing a context for young students early at the beginning of the book by showing the inside of Algerian classrooms and they way they should look like. Here, the Algerian flag is set on the front wall where all students can see it in addition to another small flag along with a list of ‘Rights & Duties’ on the side wall. This list is entitled ‘My charter of good conduct’ and which invoke the sense of loyalty and importance among students.

The second image demonstrates the well known Algerian football player Ryad Mahrez wearing the Algerian national shirt. Here, students are given a task to rewrite the discourse that the player is saying i.e. students are expected to recall this image

and the symbol that it represents as sequences and chapters move on. Despite the fact that Ryad Mahrez represents an icon of Algerian football due to his contributions in football, students will later recall this image when they come across image.3. Here, the picture is accompanied by a written discourse where the child accounts for his daily routine at school using the name of his school 'Ben M'Hidi' so as to refer to the historical figure of the Algerian revolution 'Larbi Ben M'hidi'. Matching both images together, students are expected to evoke national senses and show affiliation to their country.

Images 4 and 5 are exctrated from the same sequence which is entitled 'My and My School: Duties & Rights'. In image.4, students are asked to fulfill the task of 'I look, listen, and repeat'. Students can see here a picture of a main door of a school with a flag at the top, in addition to the list of 'Duties & Rights'. The first right of this charter is 'A good and free education', whereas the first duty is 'I stand for the national anthem'. Listening then repeating such rights and duties are expected to make students establish a link between what their country is offering them (free education) therefore, they are expected to feel more patriotic in return to this opportunity. This, indeed, is confirmed in task 2 of the same sequence where students are asked to listen and repeat the discourse of fellow students glorifying their country by saying 'Long live Algeria' and 'I'm your future man, beloved country'.

In their attempt to set the example of an ‘ideal school’, text creators i.e. the coursebook authors used several historical figures and well known national heroes in image.6 in order to maintain the meaning of ‘ideal school’ and, therefore, trigger students’ sense of national affiliation and the need to preserve their schools and contribute to the progress of national education. Interestingly, the coursebook authors in the 9th instruction call students to decorate their schools with the pictures of national heroes i.e. use symbols to construct a specific intended frame of reference.

Last but not least, image.7 of the final sequence of ‘My English Book, 1st Year MS’ can be considered as the ultimate example of the way text creators of this textbook manifest their ideological intentions to trigger the sense of patriotism and national affiliation among students. This sequence is entitled ‘Me, my country, and the World’ and the sequence’s opening picture includes well known monuments and geographical places to students. A sub-title with the expression ‘Welcome to Algeria: The land of history and beauty’ was added to the opening picture so as students will evoke their schematic knowledge of earlier icons, symbols and indexes about their country and establish a comparison between Algeria and the rest of the World. It is expected that students will eventually feel more attached to their country and have patriotic senses as a result of the previously introduced signs across the textbook.

Broadly speaking, the coursebook authors used the three types of signs i.e. icons, indexes, and symbols in order to trigger the sense of patriotism and national affiliation among students. In that, the coursebook authors used iconic signs by stimulating students to unconsciously think of something and establish specific frames of reference when exposed to particular signs and images. This has been detected for instance in images 2, 3, and 7. The actual use of the footballer Ryad Mahrez as a sign will urge students to think of the previous sports' winnings of their national football team.

Indexical signs, on the other hand, were used by the coursebook authors in a form of 'cause-effect' and 'stimulus-response' so as to infer rational conclusions among students. Images 4 and 5 are relevant examples of the ideological use of indexical signs. Here, students are called to stimulate the meaning that Algeria will flourish if students react positively to the list of 'Duties & Rights'.

Accordingly, the coursebook authors used symbolic signs by focusing on students' previous knowledge about the world in order to urge them to generate ideological patriotic meanings out of the pictures. This could be seen at work clearly in images 2, 6, and 7 for instance. In that, students' knowledge about football and their national monuments will help them feel more affiliated to their country, therefore, maintain social cohesion while distant from fellow students.

6. CONCLUSION

The central aim of this paper was to examine the use of signs and visual messages by the coursebook authors in 'My English Book, 1st Year MS' in order to trigger the sense of patriotism and national affiliation as well as allegiance among students and readers at an early age. For this purpose, a number of images from 'My English Book, 1st Year MS' have been selected to examine their patriotic inferences, and which have shown that the trigger of patriotism took several forms and was continuous throughout the textbook.

Through the use of several icons, indexes, and symbols as shown in the selected images, the coursebook authors confirmed their ideological intentions to maintain social cohesion through the manipulation of signs and their meanings. Social cohesion could be seen at action in real life where young students wear the shirts of the Algerian football national team for instance, and thus confirm that their senses of affiliation and allegiance have been evoked by the textbook.

Broadly speaking, the coursebook authors of 'My English Book, 1st Year MS' used signs and images to trigger the sense of patriotism among students at an early age so as to preserve the perception of the Algerian identity through the official textbooks. These signs and images, in their patriotic

aspect, are believed to promote the shared identity which, in return, maintains social cohesion between society fellow members. However, it is high time for the coursebook authors to review this editorial style by adopting more comparative styles between the British and the American cultures and the Algerian historical and cultural heritage in order to meet the appropriate pedagogical needs of the Algerian young students and those of the target language.

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