


# Global Content in Global Coursebooks: The Way Issues of Inappropriacy, Inclusivity, and Connectedness Are Treated in Headway Intermediate

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## Abstract

This study aims at exploring the issue of “globality” in global coursebooks as manifested in investing features of connectedness, avoiding inappropriacy, and preserving inclusivity. To do this exploration, two research methods, content analysis and the questionnaire, were adopted. The content of an example of global coursebooks, *Headway Intermediate* (H/I), in addition to the perception of 251 of its users at Institute Bourguiba for Living Languages (IBLV) were investigated. The results obtained revealed that “globality,” in terms of connectedness, inappropriacy, and inclusivity is partial in H/I as learners’ perceptions of it do not map with the content in the coursebook. This study raises questions about the suitability of global coursebooks to globally diverse learners and reveals the necessity of taking measures in the direction of localizing the content of English as a foreign language (EFL) coursebooks.

## Keywords

globality, global coursebook, inappropriacy, connectedness, inclusivity, globalization of ELT materials

## Introduction

This work will explore the extent to which an example of global coursebooks (i.e., coursebooks produced to be disseminated around the world) are “global” in terms of being globally inclusive, globally sensitive to the issue of inappropriacy, and globally investing in what connects people worldwide. This study will also explore the way learners using *Headway Intermediate* (H/I; Soars & Soars, 2003) perceive its global content. Such an attempt helps English language teaching (ELT) practitioners rethink about how the identity of the language learner shape and is shaped by the materials used and especially the coursebook.

As outlined hereinbefore, themes mentioned in previous research will be explored such as “inclusivity,” “inappropriacy” (Gray, 2002), and “connectedness” (Chang, 2003). To do so, this study will review the issues of globalization and language teaching especially as manifested in connectedness, the question of representation and the implications of inclusivity, and the issue of inappropriacy and the problematic facts related to it.

It is secret to no one that the spread of English language in the world has resulted in the promotion of an already important industry for Anglophone countries and specifically Britain (Howatt, 1984; Melliti, 2012), which is ELT (Crystal, 2003; Derbel, 2004; Graddol, 2000; Gray, 2002). Apart from the exportation of English language practitioners (Pennycook,

1994; Phillipson, 1992) to Outer and especially Expanding Circles (Kachru, 1985), Britain benefited from the exportation of English textbooks (Graddol, 2000; Gray, 2002). Being used in many teaching situations around the globe, English language textbooks have been called “global” (Graddol, 2000; Gray, 2002). Global coursebooks are characterized by their global use (Canagarajah, 1999; Graddol, 2000; Gray, 2002). Accordingly, they are worth investigating in terms of content as well as learners’ perception of their content. Analyzing the content of coursebooks, research studies could focus on the linguistic and cultural content (Michael, 1993). In addition, investigating learners’ perception of global coursebooks, the results of a questionnaire can be corroborated.

## Globality in Global Coursebooks

What is meant by the term *globality* is the end state of the process of the globalization of a particular item (Schafer, 2007). Hence, the “globality” of ELT coursebooks is the end state of the globalization of these teaching materials not only in terms of themes but also in terms of distribution most of

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the time with a superficial consideration for the identity of particular learners. With reference to the “globality” that is said to be characterizing global coursebooks in terms of content (Gray, 2002; Riches, 1999) and use (Graddol, 2000; Phillipson, 1992), it is important to investigate the applicability of the generalized cultural content in these teaching materials (Gray, 2002; Kilickaya, 2004). Generalized cultural content is related to coursebook writers’ attempt to invest in general topics that take into consideration including and being sensitive to international audiences, which results in the sanitization of content (Gray, 2002). Investigating the suitability of content for world audiences is important because globalization, which is defined as the mutual social exchange of influence between remote events and ideologies (Derbel, 2007; Giddens, 1990), affects coursebooks’ production and use (Gray, 2002). Investigating this suitability is what is meant by exploring the “globality” of the global coursebook.

This study is conducted in the 21st century, where one hears a lot about globalization, which is “a fashionable term” (p. 1) according to Block and Cameron (2002) and a theme that dominates contemporary discourse and affects the teaching profession according to Derbel (2007) including the production and dissemination of ELT textbooks. In fact, globalization, being a force that is continuously shaping and reshaping human relationships and products (Giddens, 1990), affects ELT in different ways (Derbel, 2007). Kubota (2002), for example, describes the way globalization frames ELT in Japan representing the discourse of “Kokusaika” (i.e., internationalization) characterizing teaching, contributing, thus, in the promotion of the “interconnectedness” marking ELT (Derbel, 2007). The discourse of “Kokusaika” (Kubota, 2002) could be seen as an attempt toward the end state of globalization, which is “globality.” For the Japanese, the discourse of “Kokusaika” meant the use of a global medium, which is English, to transmit Japanese culture to the world (Kubota, 2002).

In addition, Cameron (2002) stresses the fact that globalization influences ELT through framing the kind of communication used by global users, which is most of the time related to the dominant’s varieties and modes of communication. Accordingly, Kramsch and Thorne (2002), defining communication as information exchange, highlight the fact that this kind of communication is manifested in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories, methods, and tasks. Such methods and tasks, according to Block (2002) are not sufficient to cater for the globally diverse aspects of English language learning. What is meant by this is that modes of communication are not the same all over the world while SLA theories assume they are so (Block, 2002). It is for this reason that coursebooks writers are to cater for the cultural identity of the learners to be a vehicle of learning not a cause of learner resistance. Globalization influences also the materials used in ELT (Block & Cameron, 2002). For instance, Gray (2002) attests that this influence is manifested in the

claims of “globality” that the publishers of global coursebooks pretend to maximize profit. He suggests that, concerning the relationship between globalization and ELT materials, the future will be for diversity of these materials, not homogeneity. This prediction entails that the global coursebook will more and more tend to be glocalized by producing coursebooks that meet the needs of local users while preserving their connection with the world (Gray, 2002).

In this context, the notion of connectedness manifested in what the publishers that Gray (2002) interviewed call constructing bridges between what is local and what is global, is noticeable in the idea of “*glocalisation*, [being] a neologism which attempts to capture something of the complexity inherent in globalisation by conflating the terms global and local” (p. 166, italics in original). What Gray (2002) means by this suggestion is the inclusion of local topics, aspirations, and concerns in the content of coursebooks to motivate the users and avoid possible resistance. One might add that such possible resistance does not only concern the learners but also the teachers, as clarified by Canagarajah (1999) and Gray (2002), respectively. While Canagarajah (1999) argues that resistance can be manifested in learners’ distortion of their coursebooks, Gray (2002) provides evidence that some teachers are not satisfied with the kind of content that global coursebooks communicate. Different ELT theorists have considered coursebooks of paramount importance (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994; Tomlinson, 2001), while others have warned that coursebooks are not suitable (Allwright, 1982; Rinvoluceri, 1999). Whether a coursebook is “good” or “bad” depends on the angle from which one looks at it and the kind of content existing in the coursebook. Hence, what is important is that evaluating coursebooks is a necessity (Case, Ndura, & Righettini, 2005). For example, Nunan (1991) claims that the evaluation of coursebooks is the final stage in its production. For this reason, this study explores the cultural content in an attempt to contribute to the literature on the issues related to the extent to which global coursebooks can be said to have a real “globality” in themes and in representation (Azimova & Johnston, 2012).

In fact, coursebooks have been subject to various kinds of examination. Ellis (1997) differentiates between “predictive evaluation” and “retrospective evaluation.” While predictive evaluation concerns the decision of choosing the suitable material, retrospective evaluation focuses on materials that are already in use. Rea-Dickens (1994) adds to this distinction the description of the postuse evaluation. She distinguishes between preuse evaluation, in-use evaluation, and postuse evaluation. Nunan (1991) enumerates the different perspectives and angles from which commercial coursebooks could be evaluated. He adopts the six perspectives for evaluating materials that Littlejohn and Windeatt (1989) mention:

1. The general or subject knowledge contained in the materials.

2. Views on the nature and acquisition of knowledge.
3. Views on the nature of language learning.
4. Role relations implicit in materials.
5. Opportunities for the development of cognitive abilities.
6. The value and attitudes inherent in the materials (quoted in Nunan, 1991, p. 209).

Nunan (1991) comments that such a scheme is modest in the sense of being more realizable than calls for inviting teachers to “adopt a critical stance towards the materials’ aims, appropriateness, and utility” (p. 209), as proposed by Breen and Candlin (1987). Litz (n.d.) asserts that recent research studies on coursebook evaluation are documented to focus on many issues such as “textbook design and practicality, methodological validity, the role of textbooks in innovation, the authenticity of materials in terms of their representation of language, and the appropriateness of gender representation, subject matter, and cultural components” (p. 2). As stated by Nunan, “[e]valuating and selecting commercial materials is not an easy task” (p. 209). It is so because many decisions need to be taken concerning these two operations like “[matching] the materials with the goals and objectives of the program, and [ensuring] that they are consistent with [teachers’] beliefs about the nature of language and learning, as well as with . . . learners’ attitudes, beliefs and preferences” (Nunan, 1991, p. 209, italics added). Therefore, it is essential to evaluate teaching materials and particularly coursebooks to forecast, measure, or evaluate their suitability for learners around the globe. Numerous studies have focused on the evaluation of the cultural content in global coursebooks such as the investigation of stereotyping and gender representation starting from the 1970s (Gray, 2002; Hartman & Judd, 1978; Mineshima, 2008; Porreca, 1984).

Examples of inappropriate, or politically incorrect, cultural terms and topics are found in Gray (2002) who calls them PARSNIPs (an acronym referring, respectively, to politics, alcohol, religion, sex, narcotics, isms, and pork). The assumption behind the avoidance of these topics is that they are inappropriate for many cultures. In fact, culturally unacceptable issues vary across the world and what is perceived to be taboo or problematic in one culture may be normal, in the sense of being accepted, in other cultures (Alptekin, 1993). Interviewing the publishers of H/I (Soars & Soars, 1996), Gray (2002) finds that other examples of inappropriate issues that are to be avoided in ELT global coursebooks include “anarchy, Aids, Israel and six pointed stars, genetic engineering, terrorism, and violence” (p. 159). Gray (2002) detects a tendency that some of the above-mentioned inappropriate topics are avoided through the investigation of the content of a coursebook as well as through the guidelines imposed by publishers. The guidelines consisted in every topic that the publishers perceived as upsetting and controversial for their potential global users such as political and ethical matters.

For seemingly cultural reasons publishers impose on ELT coursebook writers a list of topics and issues to be avoided (Gray, 2002; Viney, 2000). This claim is attested by Viney (2000) who himself is a coursebook writer. In a reply to an article written by Rinvolucri (1999), in which he strongly criticized ELT coursebooks, Viney (2000) contends that publishers provide coursebook authors with guidelines to be followed. One of the guidelines in the Heinemann *Guide for Authors* (1991) dealing with inappropriacy is quoted in Viney (2000).

Due to the sensitivity of some of the markets for which we produce books, we have to be very careful about the topics which we cover. Obviously when producing books for the UK and Northern European markets most subjects are acceptable, but in more conservative and religious markets there are various things we must be careful with. The list below should be used as a guideline but please do discuss any topics you feel strongly about using with your editor. (para. 29)

Viney (2000) states that the list “includes abuse, aids, narcotics, terrorism, disputed borders, sex, rape, religion, pornography” (para. 30). The concurrence of this list in ELT coursebooks could show the accentuation of “globality,” by focusing on controversial and problematic issues. For the publishers and coursebook authors, the more inappropriate topics are avoided in a textbook, the more it is likely to be considered “global” (Bronner, 2002). However, trying to cater for a world audience and at the same time avoiding offending a world audience could result in what Gray (2002) calls “sanitisation of content” (p. 166) that aims at making the coursebook politically correct (Gray, 2002). Dendrinos (1992) explores this issue too and concluded similarly that sanitization of content based primarily on trivialization of topics and opting instead for advertising and comedy is an observable characteristic of ELT global coursebooks.

Hence, it can be argued the cultural diversity of the world represents a challenge to the mono-ethnic mono-cultural content issues peculiar to the target language culture invested in coursebooks. This issue will be explored in the following subsection that concerns the necessity, and at the same time the possible cultural inappropriacy of investing target language culture in global coursebooks. In his investigation of H/I (Soars & Soars, 1996), Gray (2002) detects a tendency to include people and situations from around the world. As he put it, “[a] modern coursebook like *New Headway/Intermediate* (1996), while still a very British book, is much less exclusively *located* in Britain” (p. 157, italics in original). This means that, in general, the book writers attempted to be inclusive in the sense of showing awareness of the need to include images from the entire world in global coursebooks, not only British ones. Thus, integrating images and situations from around the globe gives the coursebook a global outlook.

Using a checklist that focused on representation of women, age, and social class, Arikan (2005) investigates the visual materials representing people in H/I (Soars & Soars, 2003) and *Think ahead to First Certificate* (Naunton, 1993) and concludes that

the majority of the visual materials in these coursebooks represent the middle class social strata composed of the middle aged individuals in a way that the numbers of both genders represented seem to be similar. However, the critical study of the discursive practices making up these images unearth [*sic*] the fact that there are many imbalances in such representations. (p. 35)

Arikan (2005) claims that there are two kinds of representation in the investigated coursebooks; apparent inclusivity and hidden (or subtle) imbalance. To illustrate this point, Arikan provided data concerning the social classes of the human images in H/I (Soars & Soars, 2003) using the content analysis method. He found that the “middle” class is the class represented in 84.44% of the total number of human images in the coursebook. Such visibility of the middle class was at the expense of representing other classes such as the “lower” class, mentioned only in 2.2% of the images. As for the lower classes, Arikan (2005) claims that they are “represented through individuals from the third world except for those who are eccentric individuals living in the U.S. or the U.K” (p. 37). An example of what Arikan identified as an eccentric individual from the West is the portrait of a young man on page 83 funnily pretending to be a Hollywood star, which is the only picture of a lower-class individual not belonging to “the third world.”

It could be stated, then, that the inclusion of some groups of society in the coursebook Arikan (2005) investigated is misleading, as while minorities were represented (manifested in the inclusion of third-world people), they are represented in an inappropriate manner (only lower-class people). This is, in fact what is meant by subtle imbalance. Another illustration of what Arikan calls subtle imbalance in the representation of minorities concerns the representation of women. Arikan claims also that the number of female humans in the images of H/I (Soars & Soars, 2003) and *Think Ahead to First Certificate* (Naunton, 1993) represents only 29.80% of the total 302 images, which shows underrepresentation of women (Arikan, 2005).

Therefore, Gray’s (2002) assertion that “the most cursory look at a selection of modern global coursebooks produced in the UK shows that [misrepresentation of women] is no longer the case” (p. 157) seems to be incorrect. Actually, Gray does not provide evidence to illustrate his claim. Based on the findings of Arikan (2005), a possible refinement of Gray’s statement is that misrepresentation of minorities seems to have moved from being clearly visible to being subtly hidden (Arikan, 2005, p. 36).

In addition, Mineshima (2008) analyzes the content of a Japanese ELT coursebook *Birdland Oral Communication I*

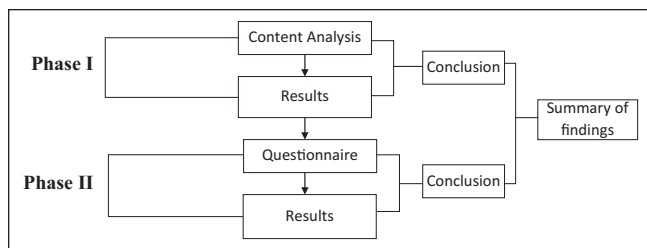
(Yoshida et al., 2007) for evidence as to the issue of gender representation. She used qualitative and quantitative analyses of the representation of language and pictures in the textbook and found that

... there seems to be ample evidence to suggest that the textbook examined in this study exhibits fairly egalitarian representations of the two genders. It has succeeded in maintaining a generally well-balanced proportion of females to males in text and pictures, and in describing both genders in a variety of personalities and interests, emphasizing multiformity of individuals regardless of their gender. (p. 16)

For Mineshima (2008) coursebook writers are successful in being inclusive as far as the issue of gender is concerned. However, what is interesting to note is that this claimed balance may be counter to prevailing cultural values. This could mean that besides teaching the language, coursebook writers may end up also promoting cultural values that are different from those of “native” Japanese. This could raise the issue of cultural imperialism, especially for critical readers and learners, viewing that two native speakers were among the authors of the coursebook investigated by Mineshima (2008).

As far as being culturally inclusive in English as a foreign language (EFL) materials, Renner (1997) comments that modern ELT coursebooks reflect rather than ignore native cultures. He claims that “books now produced for the international markets include a variety of realia taken from native and non-native speaking countries reflecting diversity of the native culture” (p. 2). This quote shows that publishers are sensitive to representing various images from around the world in modern coursebooks. However, it remains unclear how and to what extent different local cultures are represented in coursebooks produced in the Inner Circle (Kachru, 1985).

In conclusion, it could be said that the global coursebook is subject to diverse forces influencing its content (LaBelle, 2010). Coursebook writers need not only to concentrate on the linguistic content, but also to compromise the cultural content. The exploration of the literature on global coursebooks showed that publishers are compelled to make compromises mainly between three principles of investing in connectedness, avoiding inappropriacy, and preserving inclusivity. First, regardless of the success in doing so, coursebook writers try to pay attention to what connects people all over the globe while designing the content. Such search for common ground results in “sanitisation of content” (Gray, 2002, p. 166). Second, coursebook writers may strive, to a certain extent, to avoid what is culturally inappropriate in the coursebooks that they intend to sell internationally. Their attempt to produce a coursebook that is “appropriate” for the world, however, is bound by the need to represent “authentic” aspects of target language culture that may contain inappropriate items for world users. Third, publishers and coursebook writers attempt to be inclusive in the



**Figure 1.** Research flowchart.

sense of representing people, cultures, and images from the entire world. A major problem for this attempt is establishing a compromise between inclusivity and “authenticity.”

Hence, because of the importance of the cross-culture in the global, “appropriate” compromising occupies center position. Without this quality, it seems, real “globality” will be impossible to achieve. It is interesting, then, to explore the extent to which an example of global coursebooks is actually reflective of these principles and the perception of learners as to this reflection in an attempt to explore the real “globality” of H/I (Soars & Soars, 2003).

## Method

This study is composed of two phases. In Phase I, the coursebook *Headway Intermediate* (H/I; Soars & Soars, 2003) was analyzed and its content was discussed in terms of its treatment of the principles of preserving inclusivity, avoiding inappropriacy, and investing in connectedness. In light of the findings of the content analysis concerning these themes, a questionnaire was distributed among 251 learners at Institute Bourguiba for Living Languages (IBLV) Tunis, in Phase II. Figure 1 clarifies the research process.

### Phase I: Content Analysis

The coursebook was examined carefully for evidence of “globality.” The words and pictures in the units were considered and critically interpreted to track the viability of the principles of inclusivity, inappropriacy (Gray, 2002), and connectedness (Chang, 2003; Tomlinson, 1998). “Critical” here means attempting to uncover the possible overt and hidden implications (Fairclough, 1989) behind the choices made by coursebook writers. This means that each time the researcher found a term or a picture that was related, based on previous literature and the researcher’s analysis, to the themes explored in the coursebook, it was documented and interpreted.

To explore the extent to which the writers of the coursebook are inclusive of minorities, the numbers, the roles, and the topics related to women, men, Whites, Blacks, and other diverse characters were reported. Similarly, to explore the extent to which the writers of the coursebook are sensitive to the issue of inappropriacy, the following examples of issues are investigated: sex (overt mention), narcotics, isms, pork,

anarchy, AIDS, Israel and six-pointed stars, racism, genetic engineering, terrorism, politics, violence, alcohol, out of marriage relationships (i.e., relations with someone other than ones’ spouse such as cohabitation, dating, boy/girl-friend), glorifying some dangers in some countries, religion, ideological icons, and revealing clothes. Likewise, to explore the extent to which the writers are investing in what connects people around the world, leisure activities, the issue of language, and global locations are explored. The researcher considered only the instances of representation where the depiction of the variables was clear. For example, instances like the following were not reported when exploring inclusivity of women: “I’ve got two brothers and a sister” (Soars & Soars, 2003, p. 6).

### Phase II: The Questionnaire

The questionnaire used is composed of two main sections. The first section of the questionnaire is general in the sense of gathering background data about the participants’ gender, educational level, employment, and the kind of English they need. The second section is composed of seven questions targeting what is and what should be mentioned in the coursebook in terms of language varieties, themes, and closeness of the materials to participants’ context and expectations. These questions cover learners’ perceptions of the themes of connectedness, inappropriacy, and inclusivity (see appendix).

The target population of this study is 251 third-year adult learners of English, studying at IBLV Tunis. The participants were chosen because they used the coursebook explored, H/I, during the school year. Their familiarity with the coursebook could be valuable not only for exploring the issues related to the notion of “global coursebook,” but also for measuring the appropriateness of this kind of coursebook for them. What follows is a description of the target population as indicated from the results of the first section of the questionnaire reserved for background information.

Table 1 summarizes the background information of the participants.

The table reveals that 54% of the participants are women, while 46% are men. As far as the educational level of the respondents is concerned, 32% of them claimed that they are maîtrise (M) holders in comparison with 26% with licenses (L) and 20% with baccalaureate (B) degrees. The other (O) degrees that the participants claimed they hold are MA, PhD, and engineering diplomas.

Needless to mention that 42% of the respondents claimed they have a job, while 58% do not. The jobs that the learners claimed they occupy are tourist guides (9 learners), flight attendants (10), doctors (15), bank officers (7), accountants (7), receptionists (4), lawyers (5), teachers (14), university teachers (6), researchers (5), nurses (4), operators in call center (6), engineers (11), and journalists (2). Among those who affirmed having a job, 83% said that they need English in their occupations, while 17% said they do not.

**Table 1.** Background Information of the Participants.

Alternatives Percentages	Gender		Educational level				Employment		Need for English		Needed kind of English				
	Female	Male	B	M	L	O	Yes	No	Yes	No	GE	ET	BE	SE	O
	54	46	20	32	26	22	42	58	83	17	46	19	7	17	11

Note. B = Baccalaureate; M = Maîtrise; L = License; O = Other; GE = General English; ET = English for Tourism; BE = Business English; SE = Scientific English; O = Other.

After preparing the final draft of the questionnaire, 251 copies were produced and distributed by the researcher and three of his MA colleagues. The researchers collected data using two ways depending on the situation. Some participants were given copies of the questionnaires that they answered by themselves at the end of the class sessions. Others were questioned directly by the researcher in the lobbies of IBLV when the participants were entering, leaving, or having a break. The answers of the participants were written directly by the researcher on the questionnaire papers. Sometimes the researcher felt the need to paraphrase or translate certain words into Tunisian Arabic for the respondents, but this happened only on two or three occasions.

The administrative staff at IBLV and its annexes were very cooperative except for some teachers who were rushing to finish their courses and refused to assist with questionnaire administration. Besides, some learners were reluctant to answer the questions and when the researcher witnessed their lack of motivation, they were thanked and their questionnaires omitted. In addition, 22 questionnaires were missing data to reach the final number (251 participants) and therefore, fresh questionnaires were distributed another day to make up the count.

Survey data were analyzed manually by the researcher through creating four sets of tables each representing 50 questionnaires in addition to a fifth set representing 26 questionnaires and a sixth set representing 25 questionnaires. In each set of questionnaires, the answers specific to each question were counted and checked carefully if there was a mismatch between the numbers and the total number of each set. This procedure resulted in the production of six sets of tables. The six sets of tables were gathered in one set representing the total number of participants, which is 251 respondents. These tables were, then, transformed into graphs using Microsoft Excel software.

The results of the study are discussed in the following sections.

## Results and Discussion of Content Analysis

### *The Limits of Inclusivity in Representation*

The attempt of writers to be inclusive was found to be partial. Women were mentioned 128 times (compared with 149 for men) and shown in diverse situations (including 11

stereotypical ones) but the problem lies in the authenticity of the image the writers drew for women at the global level. This means that the coursebook primarily foregrounds Western women in Western situations. In fact, such situations hardly depict non-Westerners, which might strengthen some claims of ethnocentricity in the content of global coursebooks.

Racial bias was found to be characterizing the representation of different races in terms of numbers, role, as well as topics. Such bias favored Whites over the other groups (such as Blacks, Asians, Arabs, Muslims, and Native Americans). The publishers of global coursebooks seem to be enjoying a kind of freedom in representing Men in the content. Such freedom is absent, nonetheless, with Blacks or Asians who are not depicted as thieves and alcoholic so as to possibly evade charges of racism. Nevertheless, racial bias is revealed in the limited numbers and kinds of the roles and topics assigned for non-White minorities. This failure could be explained by the diversity of the global audiences, which shows the impracticality of perfect representation of globally diverse people. Based on the results found in this study, it could be said that it is unfeasible to preserve the principle of global inclusivity of various minorities in ELT global coursebooks, which shows that the notion of “global” is vague and unrealizable in a world characterized by different and sometimes conflicting identities.

### *The Global Coursebook and Cultural Inappropriacy*

*Controversial topics avoided.* The following issues are not mentioned in H/I: sex, narcotics, anarchy, Israel and six-pointed stars, racism, genetic engineering, terrorism, isms, and pork. Due to the controversial nature of the topics mentioned earlier, publishers seem to have chosen to avoid them in H/I. Discussing these controversial issues in an ELT global coursebook could represent a source of motivation and of developing argumentation skills (Thornbury, 2002). For the kind of learners who might look at the teaching of English as an imperialistic act, certainly, argumentation skills could be developed using other topics. However, the problem is that if local audiences accept discussing these controversial topics, then, avoiding them is a nonsuitable decision. It is for this reason that localizing teaching materials seems to be the best choice for it helps meeting the needs of specific learners and identities.

*Controversial topics treated with caution.* Three issues are treated with caution in H/I, which are politics (mentioned only twice and in general instances), violence (only domestic), and AIDS (once). Not to lose markets, publishers prefer not to talk too much about these themes despite the fact that avoiding them prevents the coursebook from being an instrument of change and raising awareness in learners from different parts of the world.

*Controversial topics mentioned.* There are five controversial topics mentioned: alcoholic beverages (represented because it is part of target culture), revealing clothes (shown in 8 out of 12 units) and out of marriage relationships like dating (Unit 1) and cohabitation (Units 2, 3, 6, 9, and 11), dealing with some dangers in particular countries (Unit 4), religion, and celebrating specific ideological icons (Armstrong, Frank Sinatra, Madonna, etc.). Through the content analysis it was possible to demonstrate that the writers of H/I showed only partial concern for avoiding “inappropriate” global issues. In fact, the state of “globality” may be unattainable, given the huge and contradicting amount of controversies that the writers need to consider.

### *The Global Coursebook and Global Connectedness*

*Leisure activities.* Ninety-seven different leisure activities were mentioned in H/I. The most mentioned topic among leisure activities is travel (43 times in 12 units). This could be explained by publishers’ attempt to talk about standardized hobbies and safe topics, but what is remarkable also is absence of mention of problems of visa and segregation suffered by non-Western travelers in Western ports. Another topic mentioned also is sport which is stated 22 times in the 12 units. It is also another safe topic to be invested by coursebook writers, but the kinds of sport used (Golf, skiing, etc.) are not available worldwide. Using leisure activities as a connectedness aspect seems to be a cosmetic change that embodies, whether consciously or unconsciously, ethnocentric orientations.

*The language issue.* Standard English and British everyday English dominate H/I. There were only two instances of referring to another slightly different variety, which is American English (Units 3 and 4). This fact demonstrates a shortfall despite the need for a unified code. Neglect of New Englishes could deprive learners from the opportunity to benefit from intercultural information. Using New Englishes also helps in interacting with Asians and avoiding potential accusations of ethnocentricity.

*Global connectivity.* The settings in H/I are predominantly Western as 47% of the locations refer to Europe, 28% to America, and 4% to Australia. Such a dominance of Western locations could legitimate drawing the conclusion that H/I is ethnocentric as it promotes the dominance of the West and

pays partial consideration to the rest of the globe (only 3% for Africa), which deprives the global coursebook from being really global. What is interesting concerning global connectivity is the relative importance of the mention of Asian countries (18%), which may be to show awareness of the spread of English across nonnative contexts. It could be also a compensation for the linguistic, numerical, and functional underrepresentation of Asians in the coursebook.

To explore the perception of the users of H/I as to the issues related to the “globality” of the coursebook, the researcher resorted to another research method, which is the questionnaire. The results of the questionnaire will be presented and discussed in the following sections.

## **Results and Discussion of the Questionnaire**

### *Learners’ Perception of Connectedness*

*Learners’ perception of topics.* Forty percent of the respondents replied that they preferred international topics in comparison with only 12% who reported that they preferred purely American and British topics, which shows discomfort with “ethnocentric” content in global coursebooks.

Surprisingly, almost one fourth (22%) of the participants chose the alternative “Specific to Tunisia,” which reflects the desire of an important number of learners to learn using content derived from their local settings. In light of this finding and as the content analysis showed that H/I is predominantly European in terms of content, it could be deduced that it does not include the type of content that 62% of the respondents would like to have. Needless to mention that the global content is preferred by more than one fourth of the learners.

*Learners’ perception of language varieties.* Fifty-five percent of the participants in this study claimed that the coursebook used to teach English should contain international English and not British English only (15%) or American English (2%).

This finding goes in parallel with the results that concerned the topics discussed in the previous section in the sense of showing learners’ tendency toward internationalization or “globality.” The same finding contradicts what exists in H/I, which was found to contain only two instances of American English and no instance of Asian varieties. Learners’ preference of international English reveals that they are aware that they need a global language that goes beyond the purely British or solely American varieties. The content analysis of H/I did not show any instance of using Asian Englishes. Such a finding is another instance of the mismatch between the preferences of new generations of local users, explored in the questionnaire, and global coursebook’s standardized and globally compromised content, as shown in the content analysis. It seems that considering and investing the different identities of the learners have minor importance compared with imposing an assumedly global model.

*Perception of the coursebook's connectedness potential.* The percentage of chatting and corresponding electronically (44%) shows the important position that the Internet for communication holds in the lives of the respondents.

Indeed, the respondents reported that the coursebook is helpful in preparing them to be part of a global community through English, whatever the variety used is. As for its "connecting" value, the coursebook is only appreciated because it allows the users to acquire communication skills. For this reason, it seems important to enrich the use of the coursebook with tasks and activities that invest new phenomena and technology in the classroom such as computers, Facebook, and Twitter.

### *Learners' Perception of Inappropriacy*

Sixty-two percent of the respondents agree when it comes to mentioning inappropriate issues (23% of them strongly), while 38% disagree (20% of them strongly).

Such finding suggests that it is useless to avoid some topics for inappropriacy reasons for the target population investigated. However, there are some topics considered inappropriate by the learners. This could be explained by the fact that Tunisian students accept talking about what coursebook publishers consider taboo in global coursebooks. This may be explained by the openness characterizing Tunisian society, but one wonders about the situation today viewing the sociopolitical change that started in 2011.

*Appropriate issues for learners.* The participants expressed that they had no objection to mentioning AIDS (82%), alcohol (62%), anarchy (68%), divorce (80%), genetic engineering (80%), narcotics (61%), politics (62%), pork (66%), racism (84%), religion (61%), stereotypes (80%), and violence (60%), which shows that they do not see these topics as inappropriate. Considering the results of content analysis, the publishers are (coincidentally) successful only concerning mentioning the issues of alcoholic beverages and divorce, as the rest of the issues identified as "appropriate" by the Tunisian respondents are either totally or partially avoided in the content of H/I.

*Inappropriate issues for learners.* The respondents identified three themes as inappropriate, which are: Israel and six-pointed stars (74% disagreed about mentioning them), out of marriage relationships (62%), and terrorism (53%). This suggests that there is a limit to learners' tolerance concerning what they perceive as inappropriate. Concerning "inappropriacy," the publishers were found to be successful only with handling 4 out of the 15 explored themes. Their advice to coursebook writers to avoid alcohol, divorce, Israel and six-pointed stars, and terrorism as "inappropriate" was justified judging from the results obtained in this study. However, such a low score reveals the controversy of designing global material, as the compromise that the publishers made is

found to be not matching the positions taken by the particular learners investigated in this study.

### *Learners' Perception of Inclusivity*

*Cultural inclusivity.* Learners identified two types of cultures: dominant cultures and poorly represented cultures.

*Dominant cultures.* Learners are aware of the fact that H/I presents predominantly British culture (70% of the respondents scored it "High"), youth culture (81%), international culture (72%), and American culture (70%). Therefore, it could be said that what the respondents identified as highly included cultures are only Western cultures despite the fact that they see international culture as included. This perception shows how visible these aspects of "global culture" in the content and could reveal that learners do not distinguish between Western and international cultures due to globalization, which is based on blurring of boundaries (Giddens, 1990; Phillipson, 1992). The content analysis in addition to previous literature on the issue detected the dominance of Western culture in global coursebooks.

*Poorly represented cultures.* The respondents identified Asian cultures (67%) and North African culture (92%) as poorly represented in H/I. The findings may provide evidence for Said's (1978) theory about the representation of low cultures by the West. Considering his claims about the ideological and imperialistic motives behind representing the Orient in a pejorative way in the writings of the West, it could be said that the low representation of Asian and North African cultures in H/I may not be innocent. This strengthens the claim that the identity of the Tunisian learner is not properly reflected in H/I.

*The inclusivity of learners' individual lives.* The results indicate that 44% of the participants reported that the closeness of the content of H/I to their situations in terms of hopes, daily life, jobs, problems, concerns, and leisure activities is medium, while only 38% said it is high and 18% said it is low. Therefore, the highest rate is for learners who perceive the coursebook to be only moderately inclusive of their lives, which is the result of designing one coursebook for the entire world. Such a finding coincides with the literature on this issue, as it is claimed that global coursebooks are characterized by sanitization of content for commercial reasons (Gray, 2002; Renner, 1997; Toms, 2004) and neglect of local identities.

### **Recommendations**

Viewing the nonsuitability characterizing the content of H/I as an example of global coursebooks, it seems important for the administration to take at least one of the following measures:



### 1. Produce locally designed coursebooks.

Designing local coursebooks (i.e., investing features of local cultures of users) to be used in teaching English in Tunisia even in the private sector could help overcome the weaknesses of global ones documented in this study. Local coursebooks could be more relevant to local learners in terms of recognizing local connectedness needs, avoiding only local inappropriate issues, and being inclusive primarily of local communities for more effective learning. Such measure could be promoted by establishing various research units in the English language departments focusing on conducting studies on coursebooks evaluation and design in the direction of recognizing the importance of localization of materials.

### 2. Recommending coursebooks specifically designed for local learners from global coursebooks' major publishers.

Such measure could provide the learners with glocal coursebooks that are tailored specifically for particular learners. This glocalization process is valuable for meeting the expectations of the learners, which permits effective learning to take place.

As far as the recommendations for the teachers are concerned, it seems important for them to be aware of the controversy characterizing the issue of global coursebooks. Until the realization of the previously recommended administrative measures, teachers and teacher educators are suggested to take the following procedures.

#### 1. Promoting teacher autonomy.

What is meant by this is avoiding teachers' "slavery" to coursebooks. As the results of this study revealed, chatting and corresponding electronically is perceived to be highly valued by the respondents, which presents an important opportunity to avoid the limitations of coursebooks and to be as close as possible to learners' preferred learning topics and styles. What is meant by this is that teachers are invited to exploit any new productive opportunity to help learners learn "better" by avoiding the fossilization of topics and activities in coursebooks. Teachers can invest new phenomena, especially technological ones such as Facebook and Twitter, as a vehicle for effective learning in addition to coursebooks.

#### 2. Training teachers to adapt coursebooks materials.

As the publishers of global coursebooks might not have a clear idea about what is appropriate content and what is not in the Tunisian context, teachers may adapt the content on the basis of their knowledge of their learners and their shared cultural values. This could help them make the content as relevant and motivating as possible to the local learners.

To sum up, teachers and coursebook writers are suggested to (g)localize coursebooks to provide learners with what they need and what they can deal with. As a phase prior to the realization of this procedure, teachers and trainers are recommended to promote teacher autonomy and to resort to appropriation techniques.

## Conclusion

Learners' expectations as far as connectedness and inappropriacy are concerned were found to be partially handled by the publishers. In fact, the topics and the language varieties used in H/I are found to be different from those stated by the participants. This is actually not a very surprising finding as literature on this issue detected the generalization characterizing the content of global coursebooks (Gray, 2002). The most important value of H/I according to the respondents was in communication skills that they report to need while surfing the Internet.

In addition, this study documented match between H/I and the claims of the participants as far as inappropriacy is concerned only in 4 out of 15 issues, which means only in 26.6% of the cases. Accordingly, it is surprising that the participants expressed tolerance as to mentioning some supposedly "inappropriate" issues like racism, alcohol, politics, and pork, which provides evidence that avoiding mentioning them is not necessary as far as the Tunisian users investigated in this study are concerned.

Besides, the participants were found to be aware of the partiality characterizing the inclusiveness of the coursebook in terms of culture and the closeness of the content to learners' situations. In fact, this study provides evidence that it is hardly expected from a global coursebook like H/I to be inclusive of diverse local cultures and daily lives of all the peoples of the globe.

Putting into consideration all of these findings, it could be said that the notion of "the global coursebook" is a commercial expression that does not necessarily mean coursebooks' reflection of global interests and use of global contexts in the content. The implementation of the principles of investing in connectedness, avoiding inappropriacy, and preserving inclusivity were found to be hardly practical in H/I as a supposedly "global" coursebook. It is hoped that these findings will motivate coursebook publishers to move in the direction of publishing "glocal" content to achieve true "global" characteristics.

## Appendix

### Questionnaire for Learners

University of Manouba  
English department  
Research project: MA Thesis  
Researcher: Author

### Questionnaire for Learners

This is a questionnaire that attempts to study the issue of globality in global coursebooks among a cohort of English language learners at the private sector. This research is going to be used only for academic purposes and all answers will be anonymous. Thank you for your collaboration.

#### Section 1:

- 1.1. Gender:  Female  Male
- 1.2. Educational level:  
 Baccalaureate  Maîtrise  License  Other:
- 1.3. Do you have a job?  Yes  No
  - 1.3.1. If yes, what is your occupation .....
  - 1.3.2. If yes, do you need English in your occupation?  Yes  No
- 1.4. What kind of English do you think you will need in the future?  
 General English  English for Tourism Other:.....  
 Business English  Scientific English

#### Section 2:

- 2.1. Do you think that in terms of content an English textbook should include themes which are (you may tick more than one alternative)  
 International  
 Specific to Tunisia  
 International and Tunisian  
 British and American only
- 2.2. Do you think *Headway Intermediate* (H/I) should include (you may tick more than one alternative)  
 American English only  Asian Englishes  
 British English only  International English
- 2.3. To what extent does H/I include features of the following cultures according to the following scale?  
 Circle number where applicable. 00 = Lowest  
 05 = Highest

	Rank					
2.3.1. American culture	00	01	02	03	04	05
2.3.2. Asian cultures	00	01	02	03	04	05
2.3.3. British culture	00	01	02	03	04	05
2.3.4. International culture	00	01	02	03	04	05
2.3.5. North African culture	00	01	02	03	04	05
2.3.6. Youth culture	00	01	02	03	04	05
2.3.7. Other:	00	01	02	03	04	05

- 2.4. To what extent do you find in *Headway* parallels with your own situation?

	Rank					
2.4.1. Hopes	00	02	01	03	04	05
2.4.2. Daily life	00	02	01	03	04	05
2.4.3. Jobs	00	02	01	03	04	05
2.4.4. Problems	00	02	01	03	04	05
2.4.6 Concerns	00	02	01	03	04	05
2.4.7. Leisure activities	00	02	01	03	04	05

- 2.5. Should these topics be mentioned in the coursebook? Please tick as applicable to *Headway*.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2.5.1. AIDS				
2.5.2. Alcohol				
2.5.3. Anarchy				
2.5.4. Divorce				
2.5.5. Out of marriage relationships				
2.5.6. Genetic engineering				
2.5.7. Israel and six-pointed stars				
2.5.8. Narcotics				
2.5.9. Politics				
2.5.10. Pork				
2.5.11. Racism				
2.5.12. Religion				
2.5.13. Stereotypes				
2.5.14. Terrorism				
2.5.15. Violence				

- 2.6. Do you think the topics dealt with in H/I are specific to (you may tick more than one alternative)

- America  Britain  The world
- The Arab world  North African  Europe

- 2.7. Do you think the materials in H/I prepare you to

- Communicate with other Tunisia professionals
- Understand media in English
- Chat
- Correspond electronically
- Negotiate with international partners
- Read scientific research articles
- Read travel book
- Translate legal documents

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