

LANGUAGE, CULTURE, AND POWER: A CRITICAL READING OF THE INTERCHANGE ELT SERIES

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ABSTRACT: This study critically examines the *Interchange* English language teaching series as both a pedagogical resource and a cultural artifact, focusing on the relationships among language, culture, ideology, and power. Drawing on a qualitative, bibliographic, and documentary approach, the analysis discusses how global ELT materials construct and disseminate cultural representations through topics, dialogues, images, communicative situations, and references to popular culture. Particular attention is given to the concept of conversion culture, understood as the process through which learners may be exposed to culturally hegemonic ways of speaking, acting, consuming, and representing the world as desirable or normative models. The study also considers the predominance of Anglo-American cultural references, the representation of diversity, the role of editorial updates, and the tension between global marketability and local cultural realities. The discussion suggests that, although *Interchange* has progressively incorporated more diverse and contemporary representations, global teaching materials may still reproduce symbolic hierarchies associated with the international circulation of English. The study therefore emphasizes the importance of critical pedagogical mediation, the inclusion of learners' local realities, and intercultural approaches that enable English to function not as a means of cultural assimilation, but as a resource for pluralistic and meaningful communication.

Keywords: English Language Teaching. *Interchange*. Conversion Culture. Cultural Representation. ELT Materials.

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RESUMO: Este estudo examina criticamente a coleção de ensino de língua inglesa *Interchange* como recurso pedagógico e artefato cultural, concentrando-se nas relações entre língua, cultura, ideologia e poder. A partir de uma abordagem qualitativa, bibliográfica e documental, a análise aborda como os materiais globais de ensino de inglês (ELT) constroem e difundem representações culturais por meio de temas, diálogos, imagens, situações comunicativas e referências à cultura pop. Dá-se especial atenção ao conceito de cultura de conversão, entendido como o processo por meio do qual os estudantes podem ser expostos a formas culturalmente hegemônicas de falar, agir, consumir e representar o mundo, apresentadas como modelos desejáveis ou normativos. O estudo também considera a predominância de referências culturais anglo-americanas, a representação da diversidade, o papel das atualizações editoriais e a tensão entre as exigências do mercado global e as realidades culturais locais. Os resultados da discussão sugerem que, embora *Interchange* tenha incorporado progressivamente representações mais diversas e contemporâneas, os materiais didáticos globais ainda podem reproduzir hierarquias simbólicas associadas à circulação internacional da língua inglesa. Portanto, o estudo destaca a importância de uma mediação pedagógica crítica, da inclusão das realidades locais dos estudantes e de abordagens interculturais que permitam que o inglês funcione não como meio de assimilação cultural, mas como recurso para uma comunicação plural e significativa.

Palavras-chave: Ensino de Língua Inglesa. *Interchange*. Cultura de Conversão. Representação Cultural. Materiais de ELT.

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I INTRODUCTION

English language teaching, particularly in foreign language contexts, is not limited to the mastery of grammatical structures and vocabulary. Rather, it constitutes a field shaped by power relations, cultural flows, and ideological disputes. From this perspective, examining the teaching of English requires an analysis not only of teaching methods and approaches, but also of the discourses underpinning instructional materials.

Among the numerous teaching materials used worldwide, the *Interchange* series, authored by Jack C. Richards, Jonathan Hull, and Susan Proctor, holds a prominent position. Officially launched by Cambridge University Press in 1990 and subsequently published in several editions, it has become one of the most widely used English-language coursebook series worldwide, reaching learners in more than 100 countries. Its communicative approach has gained widespread recognition among teachers and internationally renowned educational institutions; however, its implications extend beyond the boundaries of the classroom.

The concept of conversion culture, understood here as the process through which learners internalize values and ways of life associated with the English language, regarding them as legitimate and desirable, provides a key analytical lens for examining the impact of materials such as *Interchange*. As Phillipson (1992, p. 47) observes, “the spread of English is intertwined with a project of cultural and political power, in which language functions as a vehicle for hegemonic values.” This dimension transforms language learning into something that extends beyond the development of linguistic competence: it also involves the incorporation of specific cultural perspectives.

English functions as a second language), and the Expanding Circle (countries where English is primarily learned and used as a foreign language). Although this classification has not been immune to criticism, it sheds light on how English language teaching worldwide has historically been structured around a central axis of cultural legitimacy.

Within this framework emerges the notion of conversion culture, understood as the process through which learners, while acquiring English, are also encouraged to adopt ways of speaking, acting, and thinking associated with the Inner Circle, perceiving them as desirable or superior. Such conversion does not necessarily occur explicitly; rather, it operates through the examples, images, dialogues, and practices embedded in instructional materials. As Canagarajah (1999, p. 77) observes, “global English language teaching materials are permeated

by ideologies that privilege the native speaker while simultaneously silencing local practices and voices.”

2 The role of global teaching materials

English-language textbooks occupy a central position in the mediation of language teaching and learning. They not only organize instructional content but also shape classroom interactions and cultural representations. Gray (2010, p. 23) argues that “English-language textbooks are never neutral: they carry cultural representations, language ideologies, and notions of normality that shape learners’ experiences.”

According to Risager (2018), teaching materials function as vehicles for discourses surrounding identity, gender, ethnicity, and social values. This means that, when presenting a dialogue, an image, or an exercise, a textbook does more than simply teach vocabulary; it also conveys particular worldviews. When such content is produced in Inner Circle countries, it frequently reflects their norms and values, presenting them as universal.

Research on global ELT (English Language Teaching) materials suggests that, even when efforts are made to incorporate diversity, such representation often remains limited. Sadeghi, Babaii, and Rahimi (2020, p. 11) demonstrate that “learners’ voices and their local contexts remain peripheral, while Inner Circle identities dominate the narratives.” In other words, this form of inclusion tends to be symbolic rather than equitable, thereby reinforcing existing global hierarchies.

This dynamic is directly connected to the notion of conversion culture: learners are encouraged to imagine themselves participating in communicative situations typically associated with the Inner Circle, birthday parties in New York, shopping in London, or vacationing in California, while rarely encountering representations of their own local realities. English is thus presented as a gateway to a specific cultural universe in which the “Other” is consistently constructed as the foreigner to be encountered or the foreign culture to be visited, rather than the local subject and their lived experience.

3. The language textbook as a cultural artifact

Although traditionally regarded as a pedagogical resource, the textbook is also a cultural artifact imbued with meanings, values, and ideologies. Gray (2010, p. 6) states that “textbooks are not neutral; they represent and reproduce particular worldviews and cultural choices.” By

selecting content, images, and examples, textbooks operate as cultural mediators, filtering and reorganizing social realities for pedagogical purposes. In the case of language teaching materials, this mediation becomes even more evident, as such materials involve not only the teaching of grammatical rules but also the representation of cultures associated with the target language.

According to Byram (2021), the textbook functions as a “cultural portal,” providing learners with immersion in a distinct linguistic and social universe. This function, however, is not passive: by determining which topics, characters, and settings are included, authors and publishers shape a particular cultural narrative. Depending on editorial choices, such a narrative may either reinforce stereotypes or challenge hegemonic representations.

Risager (2007) proposes understanding the textbook as part of an “implicit cultural policy,” in which assumptions about what is relevant, appropriate, or desirable to present to learners are embedded. In coursebook series such as *Interchange*, for instance, the presence or absence of references to popular culture is not arbitrary; rather, it reflects commercial, pedagogical, and ideological considerations. The selection of cultural icons reflects an effort to engage the target audience—primarily young and adult learners—while simultaneously adhering to norms of international acceptability.

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The economic dimension of textbooks also influences their role as cultural artifacts. Harwood (2014) emphasizes that international English-language publishers target global markets, which requires them to develop content that is sufficiently neutral to function across different contexts while remaining appealing to learners. This balance often results in the adoption of a form of “filtered popular culture,” in which references are selected for their recognizability while avoiding potentially controversial content.

Littlejohn (2011) points out that, in addition to textual content, the visual design of a textbook constitutes a significant cultural component. Elements such as color palettes, typographic choices, and illustration styles convey subtle messages concerning modernity, inclusion, and diversity. In the *Interchange* series, for example, a gradual increase can be observed in the visual representation of different ethnic groups and in the variety of urban contexts depicted, suggesting an editorial effort toward greater cultural updating and diversity. Nevertheless, the inclusion of people with disabilities or special needs remains largely absent from the illustrations, conversations, and examples presented throughout the *Interchange* series.

It is also important to consider the textbook as a historical document. An analysis of different editions of the same series makes it possible to identify shifts in cultural sensitivities and educational paradigms over time. As Luke (1997) observes, “the textbook is an imperfect mirror of society, reflecting not only what society is, but also what content producers believe it should be” (p. 27). In the case of *Interchange*, examining the series across different decades makes it possible to trace changes in the treatment and representation of topics such as technology, cultural diversity, and gender relations.

From a pedagogical perspective, textbooks also perform a normative function, influencing classroom practices and shaping the expectations of both teachers and learners. According to Richards (2015), one of the authors of the series, widely used materials such as *Interchange* may implicitly shape the actual curriculum enacted in the classroom, sometimes exerting greater influence than official curricular documents. This centrality further amplifies the impact of decisions concerning the inclusion or exclusion of cultural content.

In English language teaching, the cultural selections made by textbooks do more than provide contexts for vocabulary and grammar; they also construct particular images of the “English-speaking world.” As Kumaravadivelu (2012) argues, such constructions may reinforce a Western-centered perspective or, alternatively, adopt a pluricentric approach that recognizes the diversity of English speakers and cultures worldwide. The evolution of the different editions of *Interchange* may be interpreted as a gradual movement toward the latter perspective, albeit in a controlled manner shaped by considerations of commercial viability.

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Thus, understanding the textbook as a cultural artifact entails recognizing it as both a product and a producer of meaning, situated at the intersection of market forces, pedagogy, and cultural politics. This perspective is essential to the documentary analysis undertaken in this thesis, as it provides a framework for identifying how the *Interchange* series has negotiated its cultural relevance over time through the continuous updating of its content and references to popular culture.

4. The case of *Interchange*

The *Interchange* series represents one of the clearest examples of this phenomenon. Developed by Jack C. Richards and his collaborators, the series was designed for global use, adopting a communicative approach and organizing its content around dialogues, activities, and texts based on everyday situations.

According to Richards (2012, p. 15), the aim of the series is “to provide learners with opportunities to practice the language in everyday situations, thereby developing their communicative competence in real-life contexts.” However, the notion of “real-life contexts” is inherently relative, as the situations presented predominantly reflect urban, cosmopolitan, and Western realities.

A study conducted by Rezaei and Jafari (2014) examined *Interchange 1, 2, and 3* and concluded that, although cultural diversity is present, it tends to be represented only superficially. The authors argue that “the materials provide images of multiculturalism, but these are often superficial, lacking critical depth and meaningful engagement with cultural differences” (Rezaei & Jafari, 2014, p. 78). Mahmood (2020), in a study investigating the use of *Interchange* in Pakistan, reinforces this finding, stating that “American English is presented as the standard, while the cultural contexts represented are predominantly associated with the Anglo-American world” (p. 5). Thus, even in an Expanding Circle country, learners are primarily exposed to external cultural realities rather than to representations of their own contexts.

This structure reinforces what Norton (2013) conceptualizes as unequal linguistic identity: English language learning is inherently associated with the negotiation of identities, yet such negotiation becomes constrained when the possibilities made available to learners are homogeneous and predominantly centered on Anglo-American models.

5. Pedagogical Implications

The pedagogical implications of conversion culture in coursebooks such as *Interchange* are significant. First, there is the issue of the diminished presence of local voices: learners’ cultures are either underrepresented or portrayed in stereotypical ways, which may hinder their ability to identify with the material. Second, the persistent emphasis on foreign contexts may contribute to feelings of alienation or disengagement, particularly among learners who perceive little immediate relevance in the situations portrayed.

Norton (2013, p. 45) emphasizes that “learners do not seek merely to acquire a linguistic code; they also negotiate who they may become through the use of that code.” If a textbook presents Anglo-American identities as the primary or only legitimate models, the possibilities for cultural negotiation become restricted, thereby limiting the potentially emancipatory dimension of language learning.

Furthermore, this dynamic reinforces the prestige traditionally attributed to the native speaker as the model of linguistic correctness. Canagarajah (1999, p. 82) observes that “by privileging the native-speaker voice, global teaching materials naturalize a hierarchy in which the non-native speaker occupies a subordinate position.” Such representations may negatively affect learners’ linguistic self-confidence, encouraging them to perceive their own English as inherently deficient when measured against an idealized native-speaker norm.

6. Pathways of Resistance and Critical Alternatives

In response to these challenges, several scholars have proposed strategies for resisting conversion culture. One such strategy involves the critical adaptation of teaching materials. McGrath (2013) argues that teachers should act as critical mediators by adapting content, incorporating locally relevant examples, and fostering discussions that encourage learners to critically examine and contextualize the values implicitly embedded in coursebooks.

Another strategy involves the development of critical interculturality. Menezes de Souza (2011) argues that language teaching should be understood as a space for the negotiation of meanings, in which learners engage with otherness without relinquishing their own voices. From this perspective, the textbook may serve as a point of departure for learning, rather than being treated as an end in itself.

Furthermore, strengthening locally produced materials and developing pedagogical resources that incorporate regional identities may broaden learners’ cultural repertoires, enabling them to use English to articulate and represent their own social and cultural realities. As Risager (2018, p. 92) emphasizes, “the globalization of language teaching requires the inclusion of local contexts so that language can become a space for cultural plurality.”

7. The Role of Editorial Updates in Maintaining Cultural Relevance

Editorial updates to coursebook series such as *Interchange* extend beyond linguistic revisions or curricular reorganization. Rather, they constitute a strategic process aimed at maintaining the cultural relevance of teaching materials in response to social, technological, and media-related transformations. Harwood (2014, p. 56) observes that “the longevity of a textbook depends on its ability to engage with changes in the real world and with learners’ expectations.” In a context in which popular culture evolves at an increasingly rapid pace, this capacity for continuous updating becomes even more crucial.

The incorporation of new topics, images, and cultural references into revised editions responds to both pedagogical needs and market demands. According to Littlejohn (2011), international publishers invest in audience research to identify which topics are most likely to foster engagement and which may discourage potential users. Thus, decisions to include or replace references to singers, television series, or cultural phenomena are not arbitrary; rather, they result from a calculated process that takes into account relevance, universality, and cultural neutrality.

In the case of *Interchange*, the more recent editions (the fourth and fifth editions) incorporate elements of digital culture, such as social media and mobile applications, while retaining established topics such as travel, sports, and relationships. This combination reflects what Gray (2010) describes as a “dual editorial function”: simultaneously ensuring familiarity and novelty. By balancing traditional and contemporary elements, the series remains recognizable to teachers already familiar with it while continuing to appeal to new users.

The cultural relevance of a textbook is also closely related to its capacity to represent the world in an inclusive manner. Byram (2021) argues that editorial updates should take into account the ethnic, gender, and lifestyle diversity found in contemporary societies. In *Interchange*, this tendency can be observed in the increasing variety of characters and contexts represented throughout the activities, reflecting a more pluralistic and multicultural perspective. Nevertheless, the representation of people with disabilities remains noticeably limited.

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At the same time, there is an ongoing challenge in preventing editorial updates from becoming superficial or merely cosmetic. Kumaravadivelu (2012) cautions that replacing images or celebrity names without revising the underlying narratives does not necessarily constitute genuine cultural renewal. From this perspective, the documentary analysis of the different editions of *Interchange* will make it possible to determine whether these changes are substantive—affecting themes and discourses—or whether they remain largely aesthetic and peripheral.

Another factor influencing editorial updates is the obsolescence of cultural references. A song or television program that is widely recognized in one decade may become largely irrelevant in the next. As Crystal (2020) points out, the speed at which cultural symbols emerge and disappear in the digital age poses a significant challenge to the production of teaching materials, which, by their very nature, may require several years to be planned, produced, and

distributed. This temporal gap compels publishers to select cultural elements that are more likely to withstand the test of time, thereby favoring well-established cultural phenomena.

The process of editorial updating also responds to shifts in educational paradigms. Richards and Schmidt (2014) note that the communicative approach, which is central to *Interchange*, requires teaching materials to provide authentic and relevant contexts for language use. Incorporating contemporary cultural references, therefore, is not merely an aesthetic consideration but also a methodological necessity for supporting teaching practices grounded in meaningful and realistic interaction.

Moreover, editorial updates reflect changing cultural and political sensitivities within particular historical periods. Content considered acceptable in previous decades may subsequently become problematic in light of contemporary debates surrounding representation and inclusive discourse. As Risager (2007) suggests, this process of filtering constitutes part of an ongoing form of “cultural curation,” through which textbooks adapt to the norms and expectations of their audiences.

Ultimately, the cultural relevance of a coursebook series such as *Interchange* results from a dynamic balance between continuity and change. Editorial updating functions both as a mechanism for maintaining the series’ viability in the global market and as a pedagogical tool, ensuring that the material not only keeps pace with ongoing cultural transformations but also engages with them critically. A detailed analysis of these editorial updates will therefore make it possible to understand not only how popular culture has been incorporated into the series over time, but also which values and ideologies have remained relatively stable across successive editions.

8. Pedagogical Philosophy and Target Audience

The pedagogical philosophy underlying the *Interchange* series is deeply rooted in the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emerged during the 1970s and 1980s as an alternative to the Audiolingual Method and the Grammar-Translation Method. Richards and Rodgers (2014, p. 85) define CLT as “an approach that prioritizes the ability to use language for authentic communication, emphasizing meaning and interaction over isolated linguistic forms.” *Interchange* translates these principles into thematic units that integrate grammar, vocabulary, listening, speaking, reading, and writing practice in contextualized and meaningful ways.

As implemented in *Interchange*, CLT is not restricted to predetermined dialogues; rather, it promotes situations involving meaningful language use, encouraging information exchange and the personalization of learners' responses. Harmer (2015) emphasizes that this type of practice can foster learners' intrinsic motivation, as language ceases to be perceived merely as a set of abstract rules and instead becomes a tool for achieving concrete communicative purposes.

Another central aspect of the series' pedagogical philosophy is its emphasis on student-centered learning. Littlejohn (2011) observes that the material is structured to encourage learners to participate actively in the construction of knowledge through pair work, group discussions, and research-based activities. This approach is consistent with contemporary trends in language education that recognize learner autonomy and agency as fundamental components of the language-learning process.

Regarding its target audience, *Interchange* was designed to address the needs of a broad range of young adult and adult learners, from beginners to upper-intermediate learners. Crystal (2020) notes that thematic flexibility and the balance between broadly accessible content and specific cultural references make teaching materials adaptable to different geographical and sociocultural contexts. This breadth helps explain the series' success in diverse markets, including Latin America, the Middle East, and East Asia.

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Cultural neutrality, however, is carefully balanced with the inclusion of elements of popular culture and contemporary life. Gray (2010) argues that this strategy seeks to maximize learners' engagement with the content without alienating audiences who may regard particular references as controversial. Consequently, topics such as music, cinema, travel, and technology are addressed in broad terms, avoiding excessive association with highly specific national contexts.

Furthermore, *Interchange* incorporates principles associated with Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), particularly in its more recent editions. Willis (1996) describes this approach as being centered on the completion of meaningful tasks in which language is used as a means of achieving a practical outcome. Within the series, these principles are reflected in projects, simulated interviews, and problem-solving activities that encourage the spontaneous and creative use of English.

The development of fluency and accuracy is balanced throughout the units. Richards (2015) explains that the pedagogical progression of the series is designed to foster both

communicative confidence and linguistic accuracy, preventing either dimension from overshadowing the other. This philosophy is consistent with Ellis's (2003) research, which emphasizes the importance of integrating attention to both form and meaning in language instruction.

From a multimodal perspective, the series' target audience also benefits from the integration of digital resources, including audio, video, and interactive platforms. These resources broaden the range of learning preferences accommodated by the material, providing learners with multiple modes of engagement with the target language. This investment in hybrid formats reflects the broader global trend toward technology-mediated language learning (Gilmore, 2019).

Ultimately, *Interchange* adopts a pedagogical philosophy that combines tradition and innovation, seeking to balance well-established methodological principles with the continuous updating of its content. Its target audience, heterogeneous in terms of age, background, and learning goals, is provided with flexible, culturally aware, and pedagogically consistent materials. These characteristics help explain the series' enduring position as a major reference in the global teaching of English as a foreign language.

Structure and Resources of the *Interchange* Series

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The structure of the *Interchange* series was designed to provide a coherent and progressive learning pathway, ranging from beginner to upper-intermediate levels. Each level—traditionally designated as *Intro*, *Level 1*, *Level 2*, and *Level 3*—consists of thematic units integrating vocabulary, grammar, communicative skills, and cultural elements. According to Richards (2015), its organization follows a spiral progression in which topics and linguistic structures are revisited in different contexts, allowing for gradual reinforcement and further development.

Each unit follows a relatively consistent sequence, generally including a *Snapshot* or warm-up section, as well as *Listening*, *Speaking*, *Reading*, and *Writing* activities and sections devoted to contextualized grammar. Harmer (2015) observes that such structural consistency facilitates navigation through the material for both teachers and learners, while maintaining coherence throughout the course and allowing adaptations according to the specific needs of each class.

Among the series' core resources are its Conversation Models, which provide model dialogues for oral practice. According to Littlejohn (2011), these models perform a dual function:

they provide learners with contextualized examples of language use while also serving as a basis for personalization, enabling learners to substitute information and formulate their own responses. This feature further reinforces the communicative orientation of the series.

Interchange has also been characterized by the integration of multimedia resources across its different editions, initially through cassette tapes and VHS videos and, more recently, through CDs, DVDs, and digital platforms. Gilmore (2019) argues that incorporating authentic visual and auditory resources can expose learners to a wider range of accents, registers, and cultural contexts, thereby contributing to the development of sociolinguistic competence.

Another relevant component is the *Workbook* accompanying each level, which provides additional activities for written practice and review. Richards and Schmidt (2014) emphasize that supplementary materials of this kind are particularly valuable in contexts where classroom instruction time is limited, as they enable learners to consolidate their knowledge independently. In more recent editions, particularly the fourth and fifth editions, exercises have also been made available in interactive online formats, increasing accessibility and flexibility for independent study.

In addition to its core content, the series incorporates sections devoted to pronunciation practice. These activities extend beyond the articulation of isolated sounds to address rhythm, intonation, and connected speech, all of which are important dimensions of natural spoken communication (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 2010). This approach reinforces the series' commitment to the development of comprehensive communicative competence.

Visual resources, particularly photographs and illustrations, also play an important pedagogical role. Gray (2010) emphasizes that the selection of images influences the cultural perspectives conveyed by textbooks. In *Interchange*, photographs and illustrations seek to represent ethnic, generational, and gender diversity while depicting a variety of urban and global contexts, thereby contributing to the series' intended cultural accessibility and adaptability.

The modular structure of the series facilitates its use across different instructional formats, ranging from intensive courses to extended programs lasting up to two years. Richards (2015) suggests that this versatility has been one of the factors contributing to the widespread adoption of the series across institutions with diverse educational profiles, including private language schools, university language programs, and public educational institutions.

Finally, it is important to recognize that the organization and resources of *Interchange* have not remained static. Successive editions have introduced adjustments to the number and organization of units, the topics addressed, and the integration of different media, reflecting technological developments and evolving pedagogical trends. This structural flexibility has enabled the series to remain current and competitive while preserving its core methodological identity.

9. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design of a bibliographic and documentary nature, guided by a critical-interpretive perspective. Its methodological purpose is to examine the English-language textbook not merely as a pedagogical resource, but as a cultural artifact capable of producing, selecting, and legitimizing particular representations of language, its speakers, and the sociocultural contexts associated with English.

The bibliographic component of the study draws on scholarship addressing linguistic imperialism, culture and ideology in language teaching, identity, interculturality, and the critical analysis of teaching materials. Accordingly, the theoretical framework incorporates, among others, the works of Phillipson (1992), Kachru (1992), Canagarajah (1999), Pennycook (1998), Risager (2007, 2018), Gray (2010), Kumaravadivelu (2012), Norton (2013), and Harwood (2014). These scholars provide the conceptual foundations for understanding how the international circulation of English and its pedagogical materials may contribute to the legitimization of particular discourses, identities, and cultural models.

At the documentary level, the *Interchange* series, developed by Jack C. Richards and his collaborators, constitutes the primary object of analysis. The selection of the series is justified by its extensive international circulation, editorial longevity, and communicative orientation, characteristics that make it particularly relevant to discussions concerning the relationship between global ELT materials and cultural representation. The analysis considers constituent elements of the series, including topics, dialogues, images, communicative situations, characters, references to popular culture, and the sociocultural contexts represented throughout its units.

The analysis is organized around thematic categories derived from the theoretical framework and from characteristics identified in the material. These categories include: (a) representations of cultures associated with English; (b) the presence and visibility of local and

global contexts; (c) the centrality of Anglo-American cultural models; (d) representations of identity and diversity; (e) the presence of elements of popular culture; and (f) editorial transformations associated with social, cultural, technological, and media-related changes. These categories make it possible to examine not only what is explicitly represented in the materials, but also absences, recurring patterns, and representational tendencies relevant to understanding their cultural discourse.

The documentary data are interpreted from a critical perspective, relating the series' editorial choices to broader discussions concerning power, identity, and cultural legitimation in English language teaching. Particular attention is given to what this study conceptualizes as conversion culture, understood as a process through which particular ways of speaking, acting, consuming, and representing the world associated with culturally hegemonic contexts may be presented to learners as desirable or normative points of reference.

The study does not, however, seek to attribute direct ideological intentionality to the authors or publishers of the series. Rather, the analysis focuses on the discourses and representations embedded within the teaching materials themselves and on their potential pedagogical implications. In doing so, it acknowledges that global textbooks emerge from a complex interplay of pedagogical decisions, commercial demands, editorial policies, and broader sociocultural transformations.

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Ultimately, the methodological approach adopted in this study seeks to understand *Interchange* in its dual capacity as both a pedagogical instrument and a global cultural product. By combining bibliographic research with documentary analysis, the study critically examines how widely used English-language teaching materials may simultaneously foster communicative competence, broaden learners' exposure to different cultural realities, and reproduce symbolic hierarchies historically associated with the global circulation of English.

10. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The analysis developed in this study demonstrates that English-language teaching materials cannot be regarded as neutral instruments for the transmission of linguistic content. By selecting characters, images, communicative situations, language varieties, and cultural references, such materials actively participate in constructing particular representations of the English language and of the sociocultural world with which it is associated. In this sense, a

globally distributed series such as *Interchange* should be understood simultaneously as a pedagogical resource, an editorial product, and a cultural artifact.

The discussion presented throughout this article highlights a fundamental tension between the international orientation of the series and the persistence of references historically associated with Anglo-American contexts. Although *Interchange* represents a diversity of characters, settings, and situations and has progressively incorporated elements associated with different cultures, technologies, and ways of life, the very construction of teaching materials intended for a global market necessarily involves processes of cultural selection, simplification, and filtering. Consequently, the diversity represented in the series should be examined not merely in terms of its presence, but also in relation to its centrality, depth, and the extent to which different voices are afforded meaningful representation.

It is within this context that the concept of conversion culture acquires particular analytical relevance. English language learning may extend beyond the acquisition of linguistic competence when particular lifestyles, social practices, and cultural references are presented as privileged models of modernity, success, or global belonging. This process does not necessarily occur explicitly or intentionally. Rather, it may operate subtly through the recurrent representation of particular spaces, characters, consumption practices, forms of interaction, and cultural references.

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Recognizing these issues, however, does not imply disregarding the pedagogical relevance of *Interchange* or reducing the series to an instrument of ideological reproduction. Its longevity, extensive international circulation, methodological organization, and capacity to adapt to educational transformations demonstrate its significance within the recent history of communicative English language teaching. Successive editorial revisions also reveal efforts to respond to technological, social, and cultural changes and to broaden the diversity represented throughout the series.

The challenge, therefore, lies less in rejecting global teaching materials than in developing critical and context-sensitive approaches to their use. Within this process, teachers play a fundamental role as mediators between textbook content and learners' sociocultural experiences. Incorporating local references, problematizing stereotypes, comparing different cultural perspectives, and recognizing learners' own identities can transform the textbook from an apparently normative source into a space for intercultural dialogue.

Such a perspective also requires reconsidering the position of the native speaker as the exclusive model of linguistic legitimacy. In a context in which English increasingly functions as a means of international communication among individuals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, it becomes necessary to broaden representations of who can speak English, for what purposes, and from which identities. English language teaching can therefore promote not the replacement of learners' cultural identities, but the expansion of their linguistic and cultural repertoires, enabling them to participate in different discourse communities without relinquishing their own voices.

It can therefore be concluded that the relevance of materials such as *Interchange* should not be assessed exclusively in terms of their linguistic effectiveness or their ability to incorporate contemporary trends. It is equally important to investigate which worlds these materials make visible, which identities they legitimize, and which remain at the margins of representation. A critical reading of textbooks makes it possible to understand English language teaching as a simultaneously linguistic, cultural, and political practice.

Rather than leading learners into a predetermined cultural universe, English language education can provide them with the means to use the language to interpret, question, and represent the world from multiple perspectives—including their own. From this standpoint, moving beyond a logic of cultural conversion entails advancing toward an intercultural, pluralistic, and critical model of language education in which learning English does not require learners to become culturally similar to the other, but instead provides them with new possibilities for engaging in dialogue across cultural boundaries.

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