McDonaldization in Iranian ELT Textbooks:
Absence or Presence?

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Abstract
The development of materials for language teaching has been retraced from different perspectives. For example, some have identified influences of a social view on designing course books and compiling materials for language classes. The purpose of this article is to focus on the specific case of ELT material, its design and priorities in the context of Iran. This article also offers a detailed analysis of the contemporary condition of Iranian context and the consequences of materials colonization in English language teaching courses.In addressing the question of "How McDonaldization is attributed to language teaching", it is attempted to broaden the understanding of the condition of English teaching classrooms in different private language institutes and universities of Iran and show how the framework of standardization of materials is regarded as the main concern of the present educators of Iran's context of English language teaching. Finally, the idea that uniformity of materials is an integral part of our classes is presented. Reviewing some scholars' ideas about standardization of materials in our EFL context, the way teachers are pictured with their roles as experimenters rather than the mere designers of the detailed instructions is also highlighted. Meanwhile, increasing the amount and quality of teacher development programs and not disregarding the role of teachers would be practically useful recommendations for those involved in the process of EFL teaching in Iran.
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Introduction

Materials are considered to play a pivotal role in every language teaching context both for learners and teachers since they serve as the essential resources for advocating the learners to learn. Materials are sources of information for language teachers (Kirkgöz, 2009; Richards, 2001).Material designers at different eras have been considered as members of the social life with their special perspectives, attitudes, values, and concepts, social and political relations current in the social context of that time. The interaction between teacher and learners alongside with material designers may naturally result in the process of socialization of learning context. During the history of ELT, the development of materials for language teaching has been retraced from different perspectives. For instance, the influences of asocial view on designing course books and compiling materials for language classes have been identified. Lin(1999) has drawn on the theoretical notions of *cultural capital, habitus, symbolic violence*, and *creative, discursive agency* as analytic tools to focus on the classroom dilemmas in which students and teachers from different socioeconomic backgrounds found themselves as well as the creative, discursive strategies they used to cope with these dilemmas. The implications of their strategies are discussed with reference to whether the students and teachers were doing-English-lessons in the reproduction or in the transformation of the students' social worlds.

McDonaldization

As it seems common, the inclusion of *outside* a classroom norms and requirements in developing materials is overlooked by those who bear the indication of *inside of the* classroom condition into their design. Littlejohn (2013) set out an argument to show how the development of materials for language teaching has largely been a reaction to social developments and interactions of social factors beyond the classroom level. Littlejohn (2012) portraits the development of materials for language teaching from "an unusual perspective "or in another word looks at "the very big picture surrounding materials production" , with the aim of showing how materials design has always been warmly associated with the wider social and historical context in which it

occurs. In the same article, he elaborates on the concept of McDonaldization and its relevance to English language teaching.


Regarding such a perspective, what is highlighted the most is observing materials not only as pedagogic tools but also as cultural objects not originated from a specific culture or time but as instruments shaped by the human activity and their particular context in which they are occurring. This is vividly the manifestation of the struggle over developing materials as a response to the requirements and commands of the *other world or an external world* except that of English language teaching.

Regarding the history of McDonaldization and its application, it is clearly perceived that it origins in the works of sociologist George Ritzer (1993, 2012) and some other social theorists. He explains it occurs when a culture possesses the characteristics of a fast-food restaurant. McDonaldization is a reconceptualization of rationalization, or moving from traditional to rational modes of thought, and scientific management. He sees the fast-food restaurant as having become a more representative

contemporary paradigm (Ritzer, 2004). In contemporary society, the concept of McDonaldization is gaining attention in different aspects such as culture and language learning. McDonaldization thesis in cultural version is a comparatively recent idea of the world wide homogenization of cultures. There are two powerful scenarios regarding the consequences of *Globalization* of culture and education. The most current one is based on the theory of McWorldvs. Jihad by Benjamin Barber which considers globalization as the process of homogenizing cultures .This scenario incorporates the idea that societies with different cultural norms in the world will be attacked by goods, media and global institutions. Cultural features in such a *World* in which everybody in different points from Australia to Europe is wearing Benetton clothes, eating Big Mag fast food, watching MT.V and C.N.N channels and speak about human rights are seriously threatened. The other scenario is based on the Hantingtom`s theory of cultural collapse. In summary, the process of McDonaldization can be summarized as the way in which "the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as of the rest of the world". Littlejohn (2012) claims that by presenting McDonaldization, Ritzer does not mean to criticize McDonald's, but rather he surely tries to indicate how the phenomena is increasingly 'colonizing' other areas of social life, where standardized products and standardized routines of interaction have now become the norm. Thus, Ritzer talks about 'McCinema,' 'McUniversity,' 'McNews,' and 'McTV.' For Ritzer, society itself is becoming 'caged' as we are locked evermore into scripted, predictable, homogenized environments of consumption.

In a nutshell, the resemblance of the contemporary state of English language teaching and learning in most parts of the world to a hamburger chain restaurant norms and regulations has been figured recently. These notes have specifically concentrated on the position that North American educational environments, especially language classes, are taking regarding the distribution of McDonaldization. Concerning the content of materials in relation with McDonaldization in language teaching, I prefer to talk about the dominance of English language teaching course books which are designed by western academic institutions for mostly under or developing countries. These are designed as tools to transfer and *Interchange* their target cultural aspects, mostly western-oriented life styles, ways of living and their dominant attitude toward English acquisition. Presentation of singers, actors and actresses' biographies and life styles rather than those of famous scientists, inventors, discoverers and cultural-historical revolutions are mostly evident in the texture of the course books. Standardization of teacher training such as Cambridge CELTA courses and UK PGCE courses are presented as examples of teacher reflection reduction to more routinized exercises. This movement toward "standardized materials, deskilled operative, determined script" with the ultimate impact on the commercial success is making a large social phenomenon of "McDonaldized world".
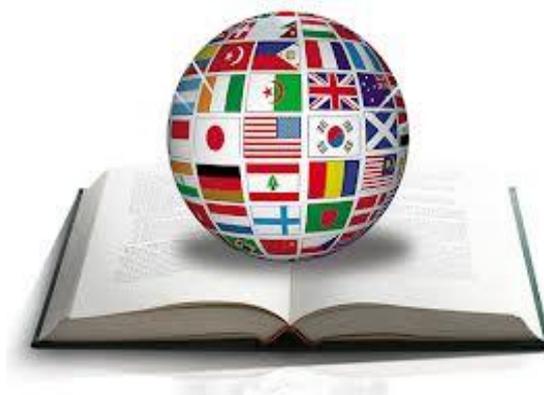
Purpose of the study

Adapting the ideology of McDonaldization and English language teaching directly from the work of Littlejohn (2012), this paper aims to broaden the understanding of how these two phenomena are influentially framing the contemporary status of Iran `s ELT materials design. Existence of a strong tie between language teaching practices alongside with their evolutions and socio-historical context of language learning is what this article tries to highlight regarding the current status of materials development in Iran.

Similar to the purpose of this article, considering the framework of standardization of materials is regarded as the main concern of the present educators of Iran's context of English language teaching. It is also aimed to find justification to the uniformity imposed to language teachers and learners in terms of usefulness.

We, as both private and public university language teachers, are facing the very fast ongoing process of standardization of materials in our academic contexts with no moment of pause or hesitation for concentration. Considering the development of English language teaching materials in the context of Iran, this paper argues how ideas for materials were (or were not) influenced and shaped by McDonaldization. This article also offers a detailed analysis of the contemporary condition of Iranian context and the consequences of materials colonization in English language teaching courses. In the remainder of this article, I discuss whether the impact of McDonaldizationis evident on the design of English language teaching materials of Iran. In this paper it also is aimed to show how standardization of materials is regarded as the main concern of the present educators of Iran's context of English language teaching.

Research questions
This study was designed to address the following three research questions:
1. How isMcDonaldization attributed to language teaching?
2. Is the impact of McDonaldization evident on the design of English language teaching materials of Iran?
3. How the uniformity imposed to language teachers and learners is justified in terms of usefulness?

McDonaldization in Language Teaching of Iran
Regarding the relevance of McDonaldization and Ritzer analysis to our country`s English language teaching context, standardized packages of materials in the form of chunks of work plans, limited-in-time lessons, units, modules, warm up activities followed by some reading or grammar work that leads to written practice are fixed sequences which set up the examples of courses now on offer in Iran. As every sequence of presenting skills of language learning are predicted in much published materials ,a new picture of materials design gets vividly visible which seems to be the dominant style for materials developers ,teachers and learners to follow.

For the purposes of the present article `s argument, however, I want to more precisely focus on the condition of English teaching

classrooms in different private language institutes and universities of Iran and also public universities in general. Considering our own country `s position in language learning, the frame work of standardization of materials is regarded as the main concern of the present educators of Iran's context of English language teaching. We, as both private and public university language teachers, are facing the very fast ongoing process of standardization of materials in our academic contexts with no moment of pause or hesitation for concentration.

Common Features of English classes
The term "material packaging "or presenting chunks of work plans, limited-in-time lessons, units and modules is a very relevant one in our English classes while instructors are obliged by higher-in–rank legislators of our educational environments and their syllabuses to set a one hour and half work plan including the coverage of 3to4 pages, sometimes incorporating a larger unit of a lesson or chapter. We personally find ourselves as contextualized images of robots with no other choices except those prefabricated by the aforementioned members of our organization. However, comparing the widespread population of English language teachers in Iran with the minority of instructors with their own polices for teaching syllabuses and classroom management, it is apparently observable that imposing uniformity is the *essential* part of every successful language teaching class. It is not our purpose here to engage in a critique of the argument against or for standardization of materials in language teaching but cautiously to construct a division and build the specifications of the context of language teaching in our country, Iran `s individualized condition of teaching and learning English.

Based on the previous research in our context by Haghighati (2003), it is not acceptable to follow trendy fashion of designing tasks which are open-ended and have the potential of producing unique outcomes each time they are used. The findings are also supportive of the fact that it requires not only courageous, well-determined and committed teachers but also creative and innovative teaching techniques. Additionally, as a prove to this argument ,the literature on the dominant ELT methods in English classes of Iran shows that most

universities are still using GTM and most teachers are not competent enough to make attempt to use other approaches to motivate their students and design their own courses and syllabuses. Most of Iranian language teachers do not have a good command of language as they lack the sense of self efficacy in their teachings. Based on the previous literature on teachers `efficacy, the findings are evident of the fact that novice Iranian EFL teachers do not feel efficacious in managing an EFL class and its materials (Eslami, 2008).

Viewpoints in syllabus design
Considering the above line of discussion, the viewpoints of three scholars in syllabus design are presented. According to Stern (1984) the first trend is represented by Candlin and Breen. This trend is called "Lancaster School". This school of thought is against the notion of fixed syllabus since it is imposed on teachers and students. They believe that it should be negotiable by teachers and group of learners. On the other hand, the "London School" represented by Widdowson and Brumfit (1984) argues that the first view is "extreme and unrealistic". What is considered as the pivotal part of any language teaching and learning is the existence of a standardized syllabus. Widdoson makes a distinction between syllabus and teaching methodology. The final direction (Yalden`s formulation) represented by Allen is a bridge between the London school and Lancasters School viewpoints. It is called Toronto School. Yalden stands for the teacher's role for deciding the objectives and content of the syllabus.

Although some scholars like Breen (1987) have argued the necessity to have the learners identify individual and group goals for language learning, learner goals may be initially vague and certainly change over time and become more refined and realistic so directing the learners toward obtaining the potentials for getting misdirected as they approach the goals of learning. It seems a logical justification for responding positively to the necessities of a more standardized approach toward learning English. He believes that a curriculum should theoretically be sound and practically useful.

Which viewpoint fits Iran's condition?
Concerning the condition of English teaching of Iran, the approach by Widdowson and Brumfit possibly looks more sensible. Taking the Iranian context of language teaching into account, transferring curriculum decisions and materials design into the hands of those directly involved in the process of language instruction such as teachers and learners, increases the risk of getting misdirected from the real goals of language learning set by educational system based on the prior needs analysis done in English classes. As Widdowson (1984) states, a syllabus is necessary, economical and useful. By taking this position, I do not mean to reject the idea of freedom for the teacher, but evidently intend to portrait the reality within the fiber of Iranian classrooms and later at the end of my discussion leave some room for researchers and scholars interested in the topic of materials development for English classes in Iran to extend the research domain into a more practical one for further changes in the system. There is ample evidence that the way teachers are pictured with their roles as experimenters rather than the mere designers of the detailed instructions is more logically applicable in our EFL context.

Relevant to the present article, Stern (1984) emphasizes the necessity for language teaching to pursue all the objectives and content areas simultaneously. This is suggestive of the fact that a language policy in general and a course work plan in specific must identify as clearly as possible both its objectives and the content of teaching, and justify its priorities on rational grounds. This is similar for the case of Iran as there is large number of language learning organizations working toward similar ultimate goals. It is required to coordinate different sections` aims, assessment techniques and teaching materials by practically applying the uniformity that I earlier presented in the framework of McDonaldization. What McDonaldization highly demands in the context of Iran is providing and expanding coordination between various organizations, as its absence is seriously felt. A very big issue that raises here is the question of how to apply McDonaldizationif those in charge do not care for working the problem out and impose management to have more collaboration between organizations.

Course designers ideally make use of information from all interested sources when they write objectives. In some countries, according to Dubin and Olshtain (1986), general goals of a language program might be defined more narrowly if the system has different types of language learning organizations. On the basis of broader goals, it is necessary to set up a number of intermediate objectives in an attempt to specify expected outcomes at each stage. Based on the previous research on materials development and course book designs in those countries and the main concern of this paper, Iran, it can be generalized that what Littlejohn concerns and criticizes about his own native context of language learning cannot be fully applicable to all regions of the world and more specifically here to Iran. McDonough and Shaw (1993) refer to reordering process of teaching materials that "refers to the possibility of putting the parts of a textbook in a different order". This may mean the adjustment of presentation sequence within a unit or taking units in a different sequence from that originally intended. This technique is commonly used in Iranian context of language teaching and has proved to be helpful in adding spice to the sometimes monotonous trend of McDonaldization and applying standardized materials in our language classes. The use of interesting text can also help to increase the motivation level of students in the classroom. Additionally, teachers in Iranian English classes are also suggested to decrease paying much attention to pre-planned packages of grammatical formula and ordering their elements as neatly as possible. Such activities may be boring and therefore do not draw the students attention to learn more English.

Discussion
This article represents a global move towards a standardization of materials design as materials are increasingly getting the byproduct of the interaction between every members of the learning environment such as teachers, learners and materials designers. As a result of socialization of learning context, standardization of materials has emerged to introduce the new concept of McDonaldization in language learning contexts. Adopting" McDonaldization" in language learning from the work of Littlejohn (2012) and addressing some of its outstanding features, this paper has focused on investigating its

existence in the Iranian context of language learning. Taking on an even more pervasive character, most of published ELT courses now aim to structure in detail almost every moment of classroom and non-classroom learning time through a variety of tools such as DVDs, online exercises, video, mobile device applications, as well as the more 'traditional' components such as workbooks, grammar practice books, and so on. Relevant to this idea, Littlejohn (1992) states that:

> And yet, while the best-selling ELT texts have quietly gone about exporting the views of language learning held by authors and publishers, the language teaching professions have remained virtually silent on what it is that these texts actually contain. Given the widespread use of published materials, it is remarkable that, of the many variables involved in language teaching and learning, the design of commercially produced materials is probably one of the least explored….(p.6)

The top-down curriculum fashion imposed by the ministry of education, ministry of sciences and other policy makers for teaching EFL text books in Iranian schools and universities can exactly portray how Iranian learners 'level of exposure to English, teachers` role, educational expert groups and teacher efficacy for conduction language classes and designing course books differ from EFL learners in other parts of the world. This also has caused many Iranian researchers to feel willing to investigate the extent to which English programs on TV or radio are proven to play the role of a fruitful context, providing the chance for the learners to acquire the foreign language(Eslami-Rasekh & Valizadeh, 2004).The results of these relevant studies has shown that most of the language teachers do not have a good command of language in all four skills as they lack the sense of self efficacy in their teaching so not being able to engage students in learning English (Ghanizade, 2011).

Eslami and Fatahi (2008) have come to the idea that "novice Iranian EFL teachers do not feel efficacious in managing an EFL class and its materials". Relevant to the current study`s intention of justifying the usefulness of "McDonaldization" and its presence in the

Iranian context of language learning specially designing materials, the fact that different factors might interact with teachers' capabilities for designing their own courses and materials should be reminded. As a result the need for teachers to improve their language proficiency and obtain a good command of language is recommended. Considering the present study's line of discussion, teacher training programs that focus on improving teachers' sense of efficacy and help them become more familiar with the concept of self-efficacy and its sources –mastery experience, vicarious experience, social and verbal persuasion and physiological and emotional states- would be a good suggestion. In addition, it has implications for policy makers and authorities to equip EFL teachers with preparation programs, specially less experienced teachers, to warrant professional materials designed by experts who are willing to spice their teaching environment with their own diagnoses of the learners` needs and learning environment effects so resulting in greater student satisfaction with teachers in particular and the educational system in general.

As it is highlighted earlier in the study, this study was designed to find justification to the uniformity imposed to language teachers and learners in terms of usefulness. So in line with our discussion regarding the concept of McDonaldization, this study fills in the gap in literature by presenting the today's EFL instruction in Iran and emphasizing the essential role of proficiency, self-efficacy and self-satisfaction of EFL teachers and designing materials for their classes so suggesting implications for programs concerned with professional development of teachers in Iran.

I have decided to use the term McDonaldization to picture the current situation of language teaching in Iran and bring some evidence to support both its presence and necessity to compensate inefficacy of language teachers as their own agents of designing classrooms` materials. To avoid boredom and monotony, adjustment of presentation sequence within a unit or taking units in a different sequence from that originally intended is suggested .This technique is commonly used in Iranian context of language teaching and has proved to be helpful removing monotonous moments of learning standardized materials in our language classes.

As it is mentioned earlier in this paper, it is not much worrying if unskilled or not enough skilled language instructors that make up the majority of our educational society, follow the universality and homogeneity constructed by much more experienced syllabus designers so they can avoid their inaptitude to interfere in the process of foreign language teaching. My personal view insists on the manner in which uniformity is offered to language teachers and consequently language learners since most of these people who are directly involved in the process of language learning are not efficient enough to make fundamental decisions for their curriculum and syllabus. While there is no guarantee for the language teacher as the classroom conductor to be potentially capable of taking necessary actions in the contingent situations, producing tasks which are open- ended with potential of producing unique outcomes each time they are used would be essentially indiscretion. We are not reluctant in this paper to also mention one of the demerits of such systematization since it never meets the requirements presented as a result of variety in tastes in our English classes. As I mentioned earlier in this paper, we personally find ourselves as contextualized images of robots with no other choices except those prefabricated by the aforementioned members of our organization. So increasing the amount and quality of teacher development programs and not disregarding the role of teachers would be useful recommendations for those involving in the process of EFL teaching in Iran. Additionally, educational policy adjustments and planning revisions are recommended.

As I noted above, My own view is that this is precisely what we need to involve in our language teaching, by accepting the manner in which uniformity is being presented, and by not letting curriculum decisions into the hands of teachers and learners unless we get more sensitive to our teacher education programs development and modifying our policies by regulating and coordinating different sections of our system.

Conclusions

Materials development is now not only undertaken by practitioners but is also a field of academic study. As a practical activity it involves the production, evaluation and adaptation of materials (Masuhara,

Haan, & Tomlinson, 2008). During the history of ELT, different scholars have retraced the development of materials for language teaching from different perspectives. Some have identified influences of a social view on designing course books and compiling materials for language classes. As it seems common, the inclusion of *outside* a classroom norms and requirements in developing materials is overlooked by those who bear the indication of *inside of the* classroom condition into their design. Regarding the distribution of McDonaldization, English language teaching course books are designed by western academic institutions for mostly under or developing countries as tools to transfer and *Interchange* their target cultural aspects, ways of living and singers and actresses' biographies . Standardization of teacher training such as Cambridge CELTA courses and UK PGCE courses are presented as examples of teacher reflection reduction to more routinized exercises. This movement toward "standardized materials, deskilled operative, determined script" with the ultimate impact on the commercial success is making a large social phenomenon of "McDonaldized world". In addressing the questions of How McDonaldization is attributed to language teaching? Is the impact of McDonaldization evident on the design of English language teaching materials of Iran? And how the uniformity imposed to language teachers and learners is justified in terms of usefulness? I attempted to picture the present status of English learning in Iran and concluded that uniformity of materials is an integral part of our classes since a very short look at the literature on Iranian teachers' efficacy shows that the majority of teachers lack enough knowledge and confidence in managing an EFL class and its materials. Comparing the widespread population of English language teachers in Iran with the minority of instructors with their own polices for teaching syllabuses and classroom management, it is apparently observable that imposing uniformity is the *essential* part of every successful language teaching class.

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