Ayatollah Khamenei's Concern Regarding Western-Based Social Sciences: A Theoretical Backup in ELT

Ghassem Tayyebi

Abstract

English, as the world-wide lingua franca, has made its way into foreign language education curriculum in institutes, schools and universities all over the world. Apparently, the ulterior motive for spreading English language and the culture of the countries in which it is spoken goes beyond the financial purposes; it has a root in expansionist policies of Western superpowers. If a wider look is taken, it will dawn on the English language users or whoever is involved in English language that Western giants have been incorporating abundance of exotica such as their traditions, practices, attitudes, ceremonies etc. into other countries through English textbooks. The issue has been addressed in the Islamic world particularly in Iran.In line with the recent concerns of Ayatollah Khamenei (2012, 2013,2014) regarding the Western-based social sciences incorporated and/or practiced in Iranian curricula, the current note attempts to theoretically address the issue. In particular, the researcher is trying to shed light into Ayatollah Khamenei's concerns from a CDA perspective and determine the extent to which these concerns have theoretically been addressed by prominent Muslim scholars and CDA pioneers. The findings of related studies are also reported to identify the extent to which well-developed and well-accepted linguistic theories provide support for such issues.

Keywords*: Ayatollah Khamenei, Humanities, Islamization, ELT.*

Ghassem Tayyebi is Assistant Professor of English, Islamic Azad University of Kazeroon, Iran. Email: ghassem_tayyebi@yahoo.com

Introduction

> *The issue of preparing plans and investing in research and fundamentals, both in humanities and in experimental sciences… is among my concerns and it is necessary to take care of it.* (Ayatollah Khamenei, 2012)

In the broadest view, we can conclusively assume that the Islamization of knowledge started from the revelation of Qur'an. Muhammad used knowledge to bring about changes in thoughts, attitudes and behaviors of people and then established the first Islamic community on a spiritual foundation. However, since the l977 International Conference on Islamic Education, a revivalism has been called for and Muslim scholars have made marvelous efforts to address the issue; a movement which refers to a line of efforts, methods and approaches to synthesize the Islamic ethics and value system with various fields of modern thought. As Ragab (1999) asserts, for various epistemological, ontological and of course methodological reasons, it is almost undeniable that the Islamization of humanities and social sciences is the heart of this intellectual issue.

Apparently, this movement may also be called Islamic Revivalism (Ahsan et. al. 2013) which means a reform-oriented movement motivated by a conscious change in Muslim thoughts, attitudes and behaviors; a movement which is characterized by a commitment to revive Islamic Ideology. The chief forces, according to Shujaat (1995), in the establishment of this movement are as follows:

1. Reformism, i.e., the forces that tend to reform Muslim society by reforming individuals with the help of the basic social institutions,

2. Activism, i.e., the political movement and

3. Intellectualism, i.e., the movement of Islamization of knowledge that inspires and inspires Muslim scholars to advance, promote and spread knowledge, to pursue reformation of Muslim thoughts, Islamic-based methodology and to facilitate Islamic transformation of Muslim communities.

In the current paper, the researcher first tries to provide readers with a background of studies, continuum of thoughts as well as the standpoint of prominent religious figures in the related field. Next, the debate over the idea of incorporation of Western cultural issues and value systems in ELT contexts will be addressed. Finally, concluding remarks on Islamization of Education on the basis of the content will be presented.

Opposing Views

Having looked at various positions held by scholars in this area, the researcher came to the conclusion that apparently there are contradictory standpoints with two extremes. On one side of the continuum, thinkers such as Davies (1988) can be reported who are critical of Western Anthropology, to the extent of almost regarding it as irrelevant for the Muslims and Muslim societies. Consequently, these scholars advocate a *Reconstruction* of an Islamic Anthropology based on Islamic ideology, beliefs and contexts. The Supreme Leader's view about Western Anthropology appears to be in line with that of scholars in this camp as portrayed in the following excerpts:

> *After the introduction of humanism and the schools of thought which rely on humanism, after the introduction of the philosophies that originate from Western humanism, the West was no longer intellectually productive and it no longer produces novel ideas for humanity and human life. (2012)....In my opinion, the best thing to do is to establish a research-based framework for the development of humanities... humanities will be beneficial to individuals and society when they are based on a divine and Islamic world view (2013).*

This view is also supported by Ayatollah Mesbah (undated), as he advocates the program which has been suggested by the Qum Theological School regarding the *Reconstruction* of the human sciences curricula in Iranian universities*:*

> *The program which we propose for reconstruction of the human sciences and the restructuring of the human sciences curricula in Iran is based on... understanding of man, his essence, knowledge of the diverse aspects of his being, and the ultimate perfection towards which he should move (undated).*

Some other Muslim scholars (e.g., Ragab 1999& Faruqi 2002) provide arguments in favor of an *Integration* of the humanities and social sciences with certain Islamic traditions. In their view, only some part of Western-based traditions, contradict Islamic value system. But how to apply this integrationist approach is a matter of debate and scholars in this camp adopt different strategies.

Interestingly, nearly all the scholars and researchers approach the issue in the following way:

1. Criticizing the Western-based knowledge
2. Exploring the relevant Islamic parameters
3. Providing a strategy, methodology and epistemology of either an Integration of the two perspectives or a Reconstruction of the disciplines.

Though knowledge is ideally perfect, neutral and universal, considering the realities in today's world, different bodies of knowledge and various claims to knowledge, it can be concluded that this is not the case. Perhaps this is why we can observe the same chronological pattern in the Supreme Leader's concerns as well:

1. *...the West ... no longer produces novel ideas for humanity and human life* (i.e., criticizing the Western-based values) (2012)

2. *.... humanities will be beneficial to individuals and society when they are based on a divine and Islamic world view* (i.e., pursuing Islamic parameters) (2013)

3. *... the best thing to do is to establish a research-based framework for the development of humanities*(i.e., the Reconstruction of the discipline)(2013)

Among various studies and books conducted and written on the Islamization of Knowledge, only a few were taken and reported in this paper for two main reasons: 1. to the researchers best knowledge, the ones reported in the current study can be viewed as representatives of different epistemological, ontological and methodological positions Muslim scholars have held in the current issue and 2. including all the relevant studies is much beyond the scope of any scientific article including the present one. Here is a review the literature in accord with the above-mentioned phases:

Criticisms of Western-based Humanities and Social Sciences

The criticisms posed by Muslim scholars concerning the Western-based Anthropology are usually concentrated on two main domains. The same domains can also be seen in Ayatollah Khamenei's speech as well:

The basis of humanities in the West is materialistic and non-divine. This is while humanities will be beneficial to individuals and society when they are based on a divine and Islamic world view. (2014)

These domains can briefly be reported as follows:

a. The over reliance on sensory and empirical facts and the total exclusion of revelation (namely the Holy Qur'an) for social scientific education (As the Supreme Leader puts it *the basis of humanities in the West is materialistic and non-divine*).

b. Humanities and social sciences are never neutral but a biased social paradigm loaded with Western value system and preferences. This standpoint with further clarification is also depicted in the Supreme Leader's speech as follows:

c. *...science is impartial at the level of discovering realities. When science wants to discover a material or spiritual truth about the world, naturally it cannot do so with prejudgments. It must go ahead and explore without prejudgments. Here, science is impartial. But when science wants to be at the service of a certain orientation, it is not at all impartial. In the modern world, science is not impartial.* (2012)

As Faruqi (2002) puts it, sociology adopts a scientific approach to the study of social phenomena in a way which is not different from the study of natural phenomena. Mere reliance on sensory (as the Supreme Leader puts it, *materialistic*) knowledge and ignoring the fact that human existence has multiple layers will prevent the social scientists to provide a complete knowledge of social phenomena. Similarly, the incomplete knowledge is also the adverse consequence of the fact that the scholars in humanities and social sciences do not make any effort to scrutinize the epistemological and ontological characteristics of physical and/or social phenomena as these aspects are viewed to be difficult to understand, problematic or irrelevant.

On the other hand, Ragab (1996) focuses on criticizing the positivist tradition of humanities and social sciences. This position has resulted merely in identifying the existence of matter and to view materialism as the heart of the scientific approach itself, consequently resulting in the formulation of a mechanical view of the universe. This has also resulted in the almost entire exclusion of the spiritual and religious aspects of human society (as Ayatollah Khamenei puts it, *non-divine*).In other words, social sciences will only be able to provide an incomplete insight into complex nature of human being. The reality portrayed in the Western-based social sciences is, according to Faruqi (2002), the matter-oriented reality and not and not spirit or God-oriented reality. This type of argumentation is supported in the speeches of the Supreme Leader as reported above and as quoted bellow:

> *The most scientifically-developed country which is America has a great distance from human ideals such as justice, security, peace and prosperity. This is because of the big gap which exists between science and morality/spirituality in the West* (2006).

Moreover, Max Weber (cited in Faruqi, 2002) acknowledges the complexity of social phenomena to which individuals attach meaning. In line with him, Ragab (1996) argues that the new developments in science have revealed the need for alternative approaches and methodologies in social sciences, such as hermeneutics and phenomenology. In particular, he agrees with Sorokin's Integral Theory of truth and reality which supposedly provide us with

the most promising epistemological foundation for an effective answer to the questions posed by the critique of the positivist tradition. He further maintains that this theory not only effectively free us from the limitations of the empiricist/positivist position, but also allows us to transcend the historical/political blunders of the religion and science conflict. Whether his faith in this theory will pay off is to be seen, but to the researcher's view, to some extent he is right as the positivist/empiricist tradition in social sciences in the West was a revolution against the control of the church in the politics of knowledge creation. Therefore the foundation of positivist/empiricist paradigm in its extreme sense is necessarily anti-religion, consequently anti-Islam, which is not acceptable to the people of faith. Perhaps that's why the Supreme Leader is calling for the establishment of *a research-based framework for the development of humanities* (2013).

In addition, the work of Davies (1988) eloquently provides another theoretical backup for the concerns of Ayatollah Khamenei as she argues that humanities and social sciences are always directional, full of values with biased social constructs, in particular these sciences are loaded with Western-based value system and preferences. She further supports her views by providing examples such as otherness and primitive in anthropology and maintains that these ethnocentric constructs are based on Western value system. The concept of otherness implies a division between the Westerners, including the colonizers and missionaries. Similarly, the concept of primitive implies that the West is developed and superior. The whole discipline of anthropology is a tool employed to serve the benefits of the West; henceforth, the study of such sciences only observes what the investors or Western governments want to know. She finally argues that a discipline established under such biased tenets is worthless to Muslims who believe in mutual dialogue and interaction.

Exploring the Relevant Islamic Parameters for Social Life and Social Sciences

Regarding the relevance of Islam and Islamic ideology to social sciences, Ayatollah Mesbah (undated) provides the following standpoint:

> *When we have a school of thought that is based on a particular ideology and worldview, it is vital to its existence that its world-view is infused into the nation and its ideology is put into practice in all its dimensions [italic style added by the researcher]. This is so because these are the pre-conditions of its continued existence and vitality…..*
> *Since our culture is directly related to our ideology, the Islamic Revolution cannot remain indifferent towards either of them. It is*

essential that all those aspects of the human sciences which are compatible with our culture and religion should be affirmed, and anything that is opposed to our Islamic culture, world-view and ideology must be eliminated.

From the above-mentioned standpoint, it can be implied that researchers', scholars' and educational administrators' epistemological and ontological views can definitely influence their reasoning, scholarship and decisions. For instance, a realist administrator to a great extent (if not totally) disregards the revealed knowledge when deciding on or implementing academic policies. It can also be concluded that Muslim scholar need to have world-views which are different from those of idealists, realists and so on. As a result, when science is not Islamic based, it needs to be refined to in terms of an Islamic Ideology in which knowledge originally comes from Allah's revelation to his Prophet Muhammad.

The related literature on the Islamization of humanities and social sciences conclusively agree that social sciences have to either *Integrate* with the Islamic parameters of social life or to be *Reconstructed* in the Islamic parameters of social life. Among the Islamic concepts, *towhid* (i.e., unity) is the most significant one. Islam does not accept division of different truth or knowledge. The key point here is how to apply the agreed-upon Islamic parameters of social life to reconstruct humanities and social sciences or how to integrate them with social sciences. So far, there is no agreed-upon framework and here is where Muslim scholars propose divergent standpoints. In this regard, the Supreme Leader displays his concern in the following words:

This [fundamental changes to humanities] *should not be done in haste, but it is not also appropriate and acceptable to do it slowly.* (2014).

Faruqi (2002) provides us with an adequate summary of the approaches to the Islamization of Knowledge in general. The first paradigm is the "*Reconstructionist approach*". Considering the tenets of this approach, humanities and social sciences should be critically scrutinized and liberated from the Western-based ideologies. Then these filtered disciplines should be reconstructed by deconstructing the Islamic parameters and Western social scientific ideas. While Faruqi (2002) still acknowledges the efficiency of some Western sociological ideas for the Muslim world, Davies (1988), in line with Ayatollah Khamenei, is advocating a scheme that is based totally on Islamic value system. She believes that the objective of Islamization of humanities and social sciences should understand the nature,

circumstances, meaning and implications of consonance in the study of all human beings in their existence. She further throughout her work argues that a salient aspect of the Islamized sociology is that it is concerned with the study all human beings as *ummah* (community). In other words, Muslim scholars try to discover how community functions as a system that facilitates the harmonious embodiment of moral values as a constructive context for right action; as a result, Islamized sociology is essentially normative, in service to the final goal God set for human beings ,i.e., teleological. If Islamic sociology is reconstructed totally on the basis of Islamic value system, according to Davies (1988), no distinction can be made between advanced, modern and primitive societies; above that, no distinction can be made between sociology and anthropology.

According to Faruqi (2002), the second approach, developed by the *Office of Preliminary Societies of the Encyclopedia of Islamic Sciences* is known as "fighati's New Sociology". According to this approach, to follow the divine path and to attain excellence and seek God's pleasure humanities and social sciences should discover divine rules; a view supported by Ayatollah Khamenei in his speeches. The proponents believe that the paradigm is to identify the rules of social life based on normative, prescriptive and descriptive laws found in traditional jurisprudence. Consequently, divine laws can be deduced from them, i.e., the laws which can be viewed as the basis of humanities and social sciences. Faruqi (2002) personally advocates the acceptance of the traditional Islamic three levels of knowledge in sociology, namely knowledge by inference, knowledge by perception and knowledge by intuition. As, to the researcher's best knowledge, no further issues regarding the standpoints of the Supreme Leader in this regard has formally or informally been announced, it is not obvious to what extent these tenets might be approved by the Iranian and Islamic scholars in near future. Though, as an academic guess, this approach would be open to questions and suspicion; in other words, as Achoui put it, it can be guilty as it can be viewed as an attempt to spread the domination of the science of jurisprudence's methodologies over social sciences, which is a methodology that is more suited to deal with theoretical texts and forms. It may also confuse the distinction between social philosophy and social sciences. As a result, first of all, particular attempts need to be made to clearly indicate the relation between these two. In the researcher's opinion, in order not to confuse how things should be(which is related to the science of jurisprudence) with how things really are in real life situations (which is related to the social science)other axioms need to be included to create an all-inclusive approach. Perhaps that's why Ayatollah Khamenei, as quoted above, warns scholars against being hasty

in developing a thorough framework.

According to Faruqui (2002), as there are evidently widespread interests in the works of Muslim social thinkers, the third approach is to study the social thoughts in their works. For example, Muhammad Husayn Tabatabaei who had a great contribution to the revival of Islam, revived *Kalam*, Islamic philosophy and *Tafsir*. On the other hand, Morteza Motahhari who (among other issues) argues against groups who depend on other schools, especially materialistic schools but who present these foreign ideas with Islamic emblems. Motahhari in a June 1977 article warned all great Islamic authorities of the danger of the external influential ideas under the pretext and banner of Islam.

The original approach or strategy for Islamization of humanities and social sciences advocated by Faruqi (2002) may be the most acceptable one to the Muslim scholars in sociology, though some may claim it is not sufficiently Islamic. According to Ragab (1999) the process of Islamization of knowledge involves two steps: 1. Integral theorizing and validation through research and practice (this step involves critical, systematic and comprehensive review of related social science literature and relevant Islamic material), and 2. Conceptualization in terms of the dialectical relationship between theory and research (this phase includes hypotheses formation from the integral theoretical framework and testing the hypotheses using acceptable analytical procedures such as statistical analysis, comparison and interpretation). The interaction between these steps is essential as they provide both the basis and the application of Islamic humanities and social sciences.

However, as these formulations cannot be viewed to be true a priori, some scholars believe the framework is not sufficiently Islamic. In other words, the fact that they are based on verses from the Qur'an and/or valid Hadiths does not render them sacred, for the simple reason that we normally do not base our integral theorizing on a single verse or one valid Hadith. It seems that this framework is not as revolutionary and fundamentally a reconstructed position in the realm of humanities and social sciences as it seems, as these appear to be the normal social sciences modified a bit; as a result, this view cannot be in line with the viewpoints of the Supreme Leader who calls for a *Reconstruction* of humanities and social sciences.

On the whole, the enterprise of Islamization of knowledge in the social sciences is indeed still at its infancy. Whether Muslim scholars take the *Reconstructionist path* or the *Integrationist path*, the journey is certainly going to be very long with many obstacles. For Iran, the journey is definitely even longer for two main reasons:

1. The current political atmosphere between Iran as a Muslim country and the West, due to many reasons particularly the West policy in the Middle East and the sanctions imposed on Iran, is also far from conducive.

2. Though the path to the Islamization of humanities and social sciences in Iran is not documented yet, Iranian Muslim scholars are most probably to peruse the *Reconstructionist path*, as this is the one being addressed by the Supreme Leader. Compared to the *Integrationist path*, it is definitely more demanding.

The Status of ELT in the Current Issue

The dialectical relation between culture and language has created much debate among ELT scholars. For some (e.g., Pulverness, 2003), language is entangled with culture and any attempt toward linguistic exchanges demands some kind of cultural knowledge. Among other approaches to language learning, the communicative competence puts the greatest emphasis on the acquisition of new cultural frames. These frames are considered to reflect the target language culture and native speakers as the key elements to the success of learners. In their extreme positions, as Bex (1994) puts it, the proponents of this approach believe that foreign language learning is nothing but acculturation or enculturation, asserting that learning a foreign language means changing in mind and body so as to understand and be understood.

English as the language of power has crept into foreign language education programs in universities and language institutes around the world. Despite being a potential tool for job opportunities and financial success, the instructions of teaching Englishdoes not often complement the cultures of its learners or the local/national curriculum. This concern is particularly noticeable in the Islamic world in general, and in Iran in particular.

Pelinka (cited in Wodak 2007: 1) argues that:

> politics is not only parties and parliaments or war and peace — politics is everything, at least potentially. But everything is not seen politically.... And not everything is the product of politics…. Language reflects power structures — and language has an impact on power structures. Language can be seen as an indicator of social and therefore political situations — and language can also be seen as a driving force directed at changing politics and society. Language is an in-put as well as an out-put factor of political systems: It influences politics — and is influenced by politics.... Language can be an instrument for or against enlightenment, for or against emancipation, for or against democracy, for or against

human rights. Language can be used by totalitarian regimes and it can be used as a mean of resistance against these regimes.

Hence, Wodak (2007:1) draws on van Dijk (1998), Wodak and Weiss (2004) and Wodak (2006) to conclude that "language is intricately related to beliefs, opinions and ideologies". The global use of the English, as a world-wide lingua franca, requires global cultural awareness rather than mere conformity to the target culture or acculturation. In other words, it may be proposed that the world-wide communication via English is instrumentally driven and it primarily involves non-native speakers' interactions, thus the need for a unilateral native model cannot be a must. In line with this type of argumentation, McKay (2004) believes that English as an International Language needs to represent learners' culture and concerns to others rather than being interconnected to the culture of its native speakers.

As the above-mentioned line of thought is not in practice, scholars such as Pennycook (1994) believe that English and the growth of ELT can be associated with the spread of Western-based ideology which is secular. And others such as Reddy (1979) argue that, as ideas are objects, language is a container, communication is sending, English in the Middle East, and particularly in the Persian Gulf States can be seen as a container of Western-based ideologies which may results in restructuring the ideas impeded in it and, therefore, delivering the wrong messages to the society in general (Karmani, 2005).

In support of this position, Argungu (1996) asserts that English and ELT was and still is one of the main weapons with which the West sends its huge intellectual and cultural attack against Muslims. He believes that English is strategic and it functions as a catalyst in the process of Islamization of Knowledge for it cuts across almost all academic disciplines acting as a transporter of science and culture. As a consequence, Karmani (2005) believes that the ELT serves as a tool for linguistic imperialism, cultural alienation and de-Islamization of Muslim countries. For instance, Glasser (2003) in a Washington Post article entitled "Putting English over Islam", argues that in the movement of the post9/11 educational reform, learners in the conservative Muslim country of Qatar are now learning less Islam and more English and in order to spend more hours on studying English, classes in Islamic studies are being reduced (cited in Karmani, 2005).

Although the views highlighted by Karmani (2005) provided a better insight into the matter, some argue that the issue of *More English and Less Islam* is not based on any kind of socio-linguist study on this relatively new phenomenon. In other words, the opponents believe that holding the idea that more English will result in weakening the Islamic ideology denies

the place of English as medium for global communication. Though the following pieces of research and counter argumentation provide support for *More English and Less Islam.*

According to Gray (2000), based on evidence, some ELT textbooks focusing on the target culture have an alienating effect on learners who are not willing to be culturally assimilated and, as a result, give up learning the language. On the other hand, he further continues, it is quite common for many EFL learners to become alienated from their own social and cultural contexts as they get assimilated to the Western-based value system. Many Asian and African learners have expressed their concerns for the status of their native culture and language in relation to the cultural content of ELT materials developed for international use.

In a pioneer study conducted by TESOL Islamia, it was surveyed whether ELT, as exercised today in the Muslim World, is in contradiction with Islamic values. The result of this study with 129 respondents in 2006 was resounding 62% in affirmative. Though, it needs be clarified that these results were obtained and accessed only by highly educated English speakers in the Muslim World. Probably the findings of the study reflect the widely held belief that most EFL materials employed in Muslim countries are produced from a primarily Western-based cultural outlook.

In another study conducted by Zarei and Khalessi (2011), the researchers attempted to examine cultural density in the internationally-distributed textbooks of the English Language, i.e., Interchange Series. To this end, a model of cultural patterns was formulated to analyze the contents of the textbooks under investigation. They reported that value as one component comprised 'entertainment, liberal, consumerism, and inculcation of Western values. Norm as another component encompassed 'girlfriend-boyfriend relationship, opposite sex contact or dating, pet-keeping, and club-dancing'. The next category in their study was institution which involved entertainment, commercial, sports, educational, and conventional institutions. The ten sub-components of cultural artifact included occupation, clothes, name, music, sport, art, celebrity, food, instrument, and education. Totally, the researchers concluded that textbooks are artifacts which are strongly grounded in cultural assumptions and biases. According to Fairclaoug (1989; cited Zarei and Khalessi, 2011: 295), "language is not an independent construct but a social institution that creates and is created by certain forces and structures forming our functions in the society. Thus, learning a foreign language is a particular way of assimilating into a complex system of categorized experiences, thoughts, beliefs, behaviors, and modes of interaction of certain people."

Moreover, Moghaddam, Lotfi and Haghverdi (2013) analyzed four internationally-distributed English textbooks based on critical discourse methodology proposed by Fairclough's 1989 model. In their study, three dimensions of meaning, i.e., content, relations and subject positions were examined to interpret their experiential, relational and expressive values respectively. They reported that the analysis of the textbooks signified a neo-liberalism, neoclassical ideology chosen by Western-based ELT textbooks which may affect learners' attitudes towards social problems such as religious and ethnic minorities, social inequality, power dominance, culture diversity, gender differentiation and colonialism. According to Tollefson (1991), ELT methods and materials assume a neoclassical approach to language education which satisfies itself with maximizing communication but pays little respect to historical and structural impacts on learner motivation.

On the other side of the debate, Kabel (2005) argues that although English can be viewed as hegemonic and imperialistic, we need to take into account how it is constantly appropriated and creatively reshaped to give voice to emerging agencies subjectively. Despite the fact that learners are exposed to a language containing Western-based values and ideologies which might contradict Islamic ones, it can be seen as a motivating mind activity, and in turn, it can provide an opportunity to look outside the box and appreciate differences between the two cultures. The idea of embracing someone else's values and ideologies can be very positive.

In line with the above-mentioned standpoints, Youssef and Simpkins (1985) found that Muslims who lived in a U.S.- dominated context for a long period of time held a positive view toward their own culture. Despite the fact that those Muslims were under daily exposure of the Western ideology and value systems, they were still proud of their own and did not suffer from de-Islamization of their values. There are also other scholars who believe despite the fact that learners of English are likely to carry the cultural impact of the English culture when learning or using it, this can be easily dealt with and maneuvered accordingly. From the contrastive rhetoric in linguistics (Connor, 1996) and Inter-language Pragmatics (Kasper, 1992), it can be argued that English (or any other given language) can be at the service of its users. As a result, like a virtual language (Widdowson, 2003), English can be shaped and reshaped efficiently according to contexts of its users.

Concluding Remarks

On the whole, Ayatollah Khamenei's concern about the Western-based social sciences

practiced in Muslim World is well-documented and it has been portrayed in various works of Muslim scholars. In addition, these concerns are theoretically supported by the pioneers of CDA. Though, to the researcher's best knowledge, no practical direction regarding how to apply the fundamental Islamic issues in humanities and social sciences has been provided yet; as a result, the movement needs to be explicated further.

Muslim scholars are trained in Islamic and/or Western-based disciplines; as a result, they are potentially capable of conducting studies, providing robust criticisms to the current Western-based norms practiced in different parts of the world, write books and express their Islamic ideology through any efficient media. Meanwhile, the researcher hopes adoption of the *Reconstructionist approach* will not imply an overall disregard for the achievements of the West as the movement may involve the risk of being counter-productive. In this regard, the Supreme Leader expresses his viewpoint as follows:

The meaning of changing humanities is not that we do not need scientific and research works of Westerners. (2014)

From this perspective, scholars can be hopeful that the *Reconstructionist approach* from the standpoint of Ayatollah Khamenei does not mean the total disregard of Western-based achievements.

Finally, with regard to the field of ELT, though the findings of research in Iran are not promising and although it encourages a *Reconstructionist approach*, further investigation is necessary to address the following main issues:

1. Does the current method of ELT in Iran pose any danger to the Islamic and national identity of Iranians?

2. Does English with Western-based ideology serve as a tool for modernization or a weapon for de-Islamization of Iran and other Muslim countries?

Holborow (2007, cited in Wodak 2007:3) holds the view that English itself constructs the hegemonic order of global capitalism. He argues that that the ideology of neo-liberalism cannot be adequately described as a discourse. Instead, "it is an ideology with specific historical roots and which, as a dominant ideology, makes itself felt in language, although not without contradictions". He further concludes that "there is not a simple relationship between language and ideology (neo-liberalism): *language and ideology are not the same and that it is in the dynamic of their interconnection that world views are both made and contested* (my

italic)". Considering the line of thought presented in this paper, putting the *Reconstructionist approach* into practice, particularly in designing language policies and developing ELT materials, needs tremendous effort. Various steps should be taken to shape and reshape the target language so that they can be at the service of Islamic ideology.

وَمَنْ يَعْتَصِمْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ هُدِيَ إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ...

And whoever holds fast to Allah is indeed guided to the right path. (3:101)

References

Ahsan M. A. , Shahed, A. K. M, Ahmad, A. (2013). Islamization of Knowledge: An Agenda for Muslim Intellectuals. USA: Global Journals Inc.

Bex, A. R. (1994) 'The problem of culture and English language teaching in Europe', IRAL, XXXII (1), pp. 57-67

Davies, M. W. 1988. Knowing One Another. Shaping An Islamic Anthropology,, London and New York: Mansell Publishing Limited.

Fairclough, N. (1989). Language and Power.Essex: Blackwell.

Farooqui, J. 2002 . Towards An Islamic Sociology ,Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia.

Farooqui, J. 2003. Sociological thought of Shah Wali Allah Al-Dehlawi, The Islamic Quarterly, Vol. XLVII, No . 3 .

Glasser, S.B. (2003, February 2). Qatar reshapes its schools, putting English over Islam. Washington Post. A20.

Gray, J. (2000). The ELT coursebook as cultural artifact: How teachers censor and adapt. ELT pp. 274-283.

Holborow, M (2007) Language, ideology and neoliberalism, Journal of Language and Politics,Volume 6, Number 1, 2007 , pp. 51-73(23).

Kabel, A. (2005). The Discourses of Appropriation: A Response to Karmani (2005), Applied Linguistics, 28.1, 136-142.

Kafi, Z., Ashraf, H. and Motallebzadeh, K. (2013) English Textbooks And Cultural Attitudes Of Iranian Efl Learners: Investigating A Relationship. International Journal of Language Learning and Applied Linguistics World, Volume 4(2), 25-36

Karmani, S. (2005). English, 'terror' and Islam. Applied Linguistics 26(2), 262-67.

Argungu, D.M. (1996). English, Muslims and Islamisation: Between needs and deeds in English and Islam: Creative Encouters 96, Proceedings of the International conference, Malaysia, 331-347.

Khamenei, S. A. (2012, Aug.). Supreme Leader's Speech to Professors. Retrieved from http://www.leader.ir/langs/en/?p=contentShow&id=9656

Khamenei, S. A. (2013, July). Supreme Leader Meets with University Professors. Retrieved from http://www.leader.ir/langs/en/index.php?p=contentShow&id=12052

Khamenei, S. A. (2014, July). Supreme Leader Meets with University Professors. Retrieved from http://www.leader.ir/langs/en/index.php?p=contentShow&id=12052

McKay, S.L. (2004). Western Culture and the Teaching of English as an International Language.English Teaching Forum Online, 42 (2), 10 14.

Mesbah, M. T. (undated). The Human Sciences and Islamic Ideology and CultureRetrieved from   http://www.al-islam.org/al-tawhid/vol1-n1/human-sciences-and-islamic-ideology-and-culture-ayatullah-muhammad-taqi-misbah-0

Pelinka, A. (2007). Language as a political category: The viewpoint of political science. Journal of Language and Politics, 61(1), 129–143. doi:10.1075/ 156921507781509626

Pennycook, A. (1994). The cultural politics of English as an international language. Harlow, UK: Longman.

Pulverness, A. (2003). Distinctions & dichotomies: Culture-free, culture-bound. Retrieved from http://elt.britcoun.org.pl/forum/distanddich.htm

Ragab, I. A. (1999). On the methodology of Islamizing the Social Sciences, Intellectual Discourse¸ 7 (1): 27- 52 .

Ragab, I.A. (1995), On the Nature and Scope of the Islamization Process: Towards Conceptual Clarification, pp. 113-115

Reddy, M. 1979. The Conduit Metaphor: a Case of Frame Conflict in our Language about Language, in A. Ortony, ed., Metaphor and Thought. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shujaat A. K. (1999). A critical review of Islamization of knowledge in American perspective. In A. Haque, Muslims and Islamization in North America. MD, USA : AmanaPublisher:

Ragab, I. A. (1996).. On the nature and scope of the Islamization process: towards conceptual clarification. The Islamization of Social Sciences: English Papers. Retrieved from http://www.ibrahimragab.com/ebooks-14

Van Dijk, T.A. 1998. Ideology. London, Sage

Wodak, R. (2007), Editorial: Language and Ideology-Language in Ideology. *Journal of Language and Politics* 6/1, 1-6.

Wodak, R. and Weiss, G. (2004) 'Visions, ideologies and utopias in the discursive construction of European identities: organ-izing, representing and legitimizing Europe'. In M. Pütz, A. Van Neff, G. Aerstselaer and T.A.Van Dijk (eds),CommunicatingIdeologies: Language, Discourse and Social Practice.Frankfurt: Peter Lang. pp. 225–52.

Wodak, R. 2006. Images in/and news in a globalised world. In: I. Lassen, J.Language and Ideology — Language in Ideology Strunck, T. Vestergaard (eds). 2006. Mediating Ideology in Text and Image. Ten Critical Studies. Amsterdam: Benjamins (DAPSAC Series), 1–16.

Youssef, A. & Simpkins, E. (1985). Parent attitudes on Americanization and bilingual education: The Dearborn, Detroit, and Farmington study. Bilingual Review, 12(1).

Connor, U. (1996). Contrastive rhetoric: Cross-cultural aspects of second-language writing. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Zarei, G.R., & Khalessi, M. (2011).Cultural Load in English Language Textbooks: An Analysis of Interchange Series. Social and Behavioral Science, 15, 294-301.

Widdowson, HG (2003) Defining Issues In English Language Teaching. Oxford: OUP

Ghasem Tayyebi, Assistant Professor of English, Islamic Azad University, Kazeroon Branch, Kazeroon, Iran. Email: ghasem_tayyebi@yahoo.com

****
****