

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Representations of the Other in Arabic Language Textbooks Taught in Elementary Schools in the Middle East and North Africa

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Received: 06 July 2023 Accepted: 19 July 2023 Published: 31 July 2023

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Abstract

This study uncovers the foreign cultures that are most represented in Arabic textbooks, providing an explanation of why specific foreign cultures are more represented in these textbooks than others. The results of the study indicate that only a small number of Arab countries encourage knowing the other through their Arabic language textbooks. The textbooks that do not include representations of the other were found to be rather reactionary as they merely focus on traditional Arabic texts and Arab culture. The Palestinian curricula, however, were found to incorporate many texts that refer to foreign, mostly western, cultures, including American and European cultures. The textbooks that include representations of the other discuss Western cultures in relation to topics such as science, discoveries, inventions, global sports, events, and religious ceremonies, while rarely taking notice of Eastern cultures, such as Chinese, Japanese, or Indian cultures.

Keywords: The Other, School Textbooks, Arabic Language, Elementary Schools, Middle East and North Africa.

1. Introduction

School textbooks express the behavioural skills and values that are put forth in the wider curricula for different school stages (age groups). The elementary stage, however, is of particular importance as it is the basis for all the next stages.

The Middle East and North Africa region is characterized by its ethno national and religious character, with Arabic being the language that connects people in the region and Islam being the religion of the region's majority. These ethno national and religious components have a great impact on the frameworks and values shaped in school textbooks. The Arabic language expresses the national character of the region, while the Islamic religion expresses its cultural features. It is noteworthy to mention here that the Arab region had been subjected to various colonial projects since the Crusades times, which often clashed with the ethno nationalist and religious thought of Arab populations in the region. This has further created

the Other as an existential threat. The resistance that the Middle East and North Africa witnessed during these periods was evidence of Arab's rejection of the Other and its value systems. Despite this, with time, and due to previous historical circumstances and later globalisation efforts, the acceptance of the Other has become necessary.

Representations of the Other, whether positive or negative, are therefore linked to both internal factors – specific to local cultures – and external historical and political factors. For this reason, the authors of Arabic language textbooks in Arab schools are encouraged to present their students with a set of values that express their national and religious identity while at the same time selectively adopting and rejecting the values that distinguish the Other in terms of race/ethnicity, religion, and geographical place.

2. Theoretical Background and Literature Review

Education in the context of this study refers to the

Citation: Dr. Mohammad Hamad. Representations of the Other in Arabic Language Textbooks Taught in Elementary Schools in the Middle East and North Africa. *Annals of Language and Literature*. 2023;7(1): 01-14.

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official public school system – precisely because there are also Arab schools that may not be official, such as nomadic or pastoralist Bedouin schools which are now managed by government and UNESCO bodies; such schools are still not exposed to global Others (Dyer, 2016).

Exposing children in the official public school system to the values of the Other ensures that they do not become intolerant, closed-off, or ethno-centred. Education is indeed one of the most effective means against such intolerance. Therefore, both local and global cultural/civilizational heritage should be incorporated into the different educational curricula, and this should begin from the kindergarten stage (Qurashī, 2021, 95).

Scholars evaluating Arab education systems do so in the midst of a global discourse that accuses Arabs and Muslims of being defective in their methods of education and upbringing. This has been especially true since the events of September 11, 2001, after which Arabs and Muslims found themselves on the defence to proclaim their assimilation to the values of tolerance and acceptance of the Other (Qurashī, 2021, 91). In fact, this global discourse dates back to a period before the events of September 11, 2001, specifically with Samuel Huntington's (1993) thesis about the Clash of Civilisations. The thesis put forth by Huntington (1993) in his *Clash of Civilisations* claims that people's cultural and religious identities will be the primary source of conflict in the post-Cold War era.

Nevertheless, integrating intangible cultural heritage can foster respect for diversity and a sense of interconnectedness between communities, countries, and populations, which are some of the core values that sit at the heart of global citizenship education (UNESCO, 2019).

Such principles are conducive to globalization, as local identities are becoming more and more fused within a global humanist framework. This global humanist framework is based on the inclusion of what is common and harmonious between humans and, at the same time, the exclusion of ethnocentrism. Local identities thus occupy a lesser space in this framework.

Language, with its expressive capabilities, allows the translation of everything that is spiritual and valuable. Therefore, language grants educators the means to incorporate notions of diversity and tolerance into school curricula and textbooks, especially since

language practice is at the heart of the education system. In addition, language is a vehicle for intangible cultural heritage exchange, and, through it, the knowledge and skills for practising intangible cultural heritage are passed on from one generation to the next. For this reason, mother tongue and multilingual education play an important role in supporting the transmission of intangible cultural heritage (Smeets, Rieks, 2004).

This contemporary focus on values and intangible heritage signifies the dominance of the market culture, which came as a result of globalization and economic openness. In this context, educators have come to realise the need to have a place for values in school curricula and textbooks (Pathania, 2010).

Expressing one's opinion politely, respecting other people's opinions, recognizing different people's right to exist, and understanding the factors that lie behind people's differences are some of the main slogans put forward by globalisation. Yet, it must be noted here that such slogans often obscure some of the negative impacts of globalisation, especially in developing and third-world countries ('Ammār, 2009). Nonetheless, globalisation, coupled with the new technological revolution, helps today's children go beyond the confinement of geographical spaces and intensifies their abilities to communicate with other people despite their differences in language, religion, race, colour, or culture (Bilāl, 2006).

The increasing number of local, regional, and international conflicts has proven that the rule of reason and rationality is the best way to provide a sound atmosphere led by understanding and tolerance, and away from violence and force. Hence, critical decisions must be based on reason, and for this to happen, reason must govern the values and behaviours of individuals (al-Marrī, 2021). This is one of the rationales behind UNESCO's establishment of schools after WWII – reaching around 7000 schools in over 172 countries – that are concerned with implementing the Education for Peace program as means to increase local-international cooperation and advocate the values of tolerance and coexistence among and between nations (al-Marrī, 2021).

On promoting the values of tolerance and coexistence in the school curricula in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain, Morocco, and Palestine (Mujāhid, 2017).

In Saudi Arabia, scholars have found that teaching English to Saudi children at an early age is a fruitful way to increase their openness to the culture of the Other. al-Mansour (2009) reports that although the

opponents of teaching English to Saudi children think that learning English might impede the children's Arabic Language proficiency and their Arab culture and identity, teaching English to Saudi children actually has a crucial positive influence on developing their linguistic and cognitive skills, which can further enhance the values of cultural tolerance and coexistence in Saudi Society.

More on this topic, Alothman (2017) mentions that the controversy raised among many parents and educators about the 'dangers' of teaching English to preschool students in Saudi Arabia is based on religious motives – especially since Islam and the Quran are tightly connected to the Arabic language, with Saudi Arabia being the global centre for Islam and Muslims. Alothman (2017), however, argues against this stance. Yet, Alothman (2017) perceives that school textbooks must selectively incorporate western-oriented texts in Saudi curricula. That is, western-oriented texts or curricula must be planned and developed in accordance with the relevant context as to assimilate them to the linguistic features of the Arabic language and the Islamic culture in Saudi Arabia.

In the case of Kuwait, Duwaīlah (2016) reviews five Kuwaiti elementary school textbooks and found that none of the reviewed textbooks integrates globalist humanist values or even indicates information about different cultures (the culture of the Other). Instead, these textbooks only focus on local social, religious, national, and values.

In the case of Algeria, Murād and Fānṭāzī's (2021) study demonstrates the role of Islamic education, further arguing that it is crucial to incorporate humanist notions of tolerance and coexistence with the Other in these classes to combat the rise of school violence in Algerian schools. Nonetheless, there are still opposing opinions in Algeria that stress the importance of focusing on Algerian cultural identity as a post-colonial country, especially since Algeria had long suffered from the glorification of French colonialism and French culture at the expense of local Algerian national culture. This is why the post-colonial reforms in Algerian schools in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century mostly focused on Algerian culture. However, these reforms still displaying openness to the world and the different cultures of the Other (Bin Da'īmah, 2016).

While in the case of Palestine, the political reality, especially the presence of occupation in Palestinian schools, disturbs the teaching of humanist values

such as tolerance and coexistence between religions and nations (Sūbānī, 2012).

In sum, it is clear that there are two currents that direct Arab elementary school curricula, one that acknowledges the culture of the Other and seeks to integrate it, and one that is more conservative and seeks to emphasise only the local national and religious culture. This study argues that it would be more useful for educators to adopt a balanced formula between these two currents.

2.1 The Current Study

Many Arabic language textbooks taught in Arab elementary schools include representations of the Other. The Other here refers to any group of people who are different from the Arab Muslims living in the Arab region in terms of identity, religion, or geographical place. There is educational importance behind shaping school curricula and textbooks in a way that integrates representations of the Other, which is a move supported by many government officials as well as individual educators.

Based on this, this study unpacks the set of values that Arab educators should strive to integrate into elementary school textbooks for children up to the age of 12. That is, this study attempts to understand the extent to which Arabic language textbooks highlight notions of tolerance, coexistence, and openness to the Other in comparison to ethnocentric values.

2.2 Research Aims

This study aims to analyse the representations of the Other, and the different types of Others, in Arabic language textbooks taught in elementary schools in 12 countries in the Middle East and North Africa. The study also examines the different contexts in which these representations appear, in an effort to explain the reasons behind the portrayal of different representations. Additionally, this study looks at how representations of the Other in elementary Arabic language textbooks differ based on country as well as the textbook's targeted age group. Finally, the study analyses these representations in terms of race/ethnicity, religion, and country/geographical area and the impact of such differentiation on how the Other is conceptualised.

2.3 Research Questions

1. Who does the Other refer to in the Arabic language textbooks taught in elementary schools in the Middle East and North Africa? And what are its representations?

2. To what extent is there a relationship between the textbook’s targeted age group (grade year) and how the Other is represented within the textbook?
3. To what extent is there a relationship between the type of text and how the Other is represented within the textbooks?
4. What are the countries from which the Other is frequently represented within the textbooks? And which countries are not represented?
5. What are the different contexts in which the Other is represented within the textbooks?

2.4 Study Hypotheses

The study argues that the representations of the Other appear in many different types and forms in the Arabic language textbooks taught in elementary schools in the Middle East and North Africa. Such representations appear differently in different textual contexts, and they also differ according to the country being represented in the text, the textbook’s targeted age group, and the type of text.

3. Materials and Methods

This study analysed 49 Arabic language textbooks in 12 countries in the Middle East and North Africa.

The analysed textbooks included 992 texts, all of which were reviewed in terms of the type of text or literary genre. The textbooks were also quantitatively reviewed in terms of the number of pages, year and

Table 1. Countries, Grades, Texts represent the other

Country/ Number of Texts	The Other in Second Grade	The Other in Third Grade	The Other in Fourth Grade	The Other in Fifth Grade	The Other in Sixth Grade	Total	Percentage
Palestine 48	8	7	20	37	35	107	75.3%
Algeria	1		7	6		14	9.85%
The West Bank			2	2	8	12	8.45%
Oman					3	3	2.11%
Morocco	2					2	1.4%
Yemen		1		1		2	1.4%
Jordan	1					1	0.07%
Iraq					1	1	0.07%
Total	12	8	29	46	47	142	100%

This was followed by a description of the number of textbooks that include representations of the Other versus the number of textbooks that do not include

place of publication, the targeted age group, how the Other is represented in terms of identity, and the topic or context in which the Other is represented.

The number of texts found to include representations of the Other is 142 texts out of 992 (i.e., 14% of all texts).

The sampled textbooks were published between the years 2004-2020, and the results of the study prove that there isn’t a relationship between the year of publication and how the Other is represented within the textbooks.

3.1 Participations

The textbooks under review are Arabic language textbooks used in 12 countries in the Middle East and North Africa; these are 1948 Occupied Palestine, the West Bank, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Qatar, Morocco, Algeria, Yemen, Syria, Oman, and Saudi Arabia. 27 textbooks out of 49 were Palestinian textbooks (from both Palestinian regions: the 1948 Occupied Palestine and the West Bank), i.e., 55% of all textbooks under review.

3.2 Measures and Procedures

The first data that was collected reviews the number of times in which representations of the Other are present in the sampled textbooks and its relation to the targeted age group that the textbooks address (i.e., students’ school grades) (Table no. 1).

such representations. This was done in relation to the targeted age group that the textbooks address (i.e., students’ school grades) (Table no. 2).

Table 2. *Grades and textbooks*

Grade	Number of Textbooks Representing the Other	Number of Textbooks that Do Not Represent the Other
Second Grade	6	2
Third Grade	5	2
Fourth Grade	7	5
Fifth Grade	8	4
Sixth Grade	9	1
Total	35	14

The study then examined whether there was a relationship between the type of text (literary genre) and the number of times the Other is represented (percentage) (Table no. 3).

Table 3. *Type of texts*

Type of Text	Narrative Texts %	Informative Texts %	Plays %	Religious Texts %	Guide Texts %	Letters %	Creative Texts %
142	44 / 31%	89 / 62.6%	1 / 0.7%	5 / 3.5%	1 / 0.7%	1 / 0.7%	1 / 0.7%

Afterwards, the study listed the countries from which the representations of the Other appear in the sampled textbooks compared to the countries from which the Other is not represented, followed by listing the

number of texts which included these representations compared to the number of texts which did not; all of which were considered in relation to the year of publication (Table no. 4 and Table no. 5).

Table 4. *Text, textbooks per year represent the Other*

Textbooks that Do Not Represent the Other	Number of Textbooks	Number of Texts in the Textbooks	Year
Egypt*	5	70	2008-2015
Qatar*	1	7	2020
Syria*	1	22	2020
Saudi Arabia*	2	23	2010-2018
Yemen	2	68	2014-2015
Iraq	2	80	2010
Palestine	1	10	2017
Total	14	280	

*Countries whose all sampled textbooks did not include any representations of the Other.

Table 5. *Text, textbooks per year do not represent the Other*

Textbooks that Represent the Other	Number of Textbooks	Number of Texts in the Textbooks	Year
Palestine 48*	22	107	2010-2019
The West Bank	4	12	2004-2018
Jordan*	1	1	2015
Iraq	1	1	2010
Algeria*	3	14	n.d.
Morocco*	1	2	2019
Yemen	2	2	2015
Oman	1	3	2018
Total	35	142	

*Countries whose all sampled textbooks included representations of the Other.

The different representations of the Other were then analysed and reviewed in terms of the Other's race/ethnicity, religious, and country/geographic area. The study then calculated the number of times certain identities were represented as a model of the Other (percentage) and the various contexts and forms through which the Other was represented (Table 6).

Table 6. Repetition context

The Identity of the Other	Number	Percentage	Context
United States of America	36	20.5%	Inventions (13), Science (6), Arts (3), Adventures (3), Special Needs (2), Nature, Greetings, Holidays, Gossip, Twins, Hair Wigs, Marriage, National Symbols, and Community.
England	16	9.1%	Science and Technology (5), Discoveries (2), Arts (2), Espionage, Failures, Nature, Natural Disasters, Strength, Adventures, and Philosophy.
China	13	7.4%	Inventions (5), Work Ethics (2), Patriotism, Manners of Speech, Tourism, Holidays, Greed, and Dominoes.
Italy	13	7.4%	Tourism (3), Arts (3), Inventions (2), Sports, Pizza, World Wonders, and Ethics.
Russia	9	5.1%	Science (2), Arts (2), Justice (2), Assistance, Naivety, and Nature.
Spain	8	4.5%	Arts (2), Science, Adventures (2), Sports, Fears, and Olives.
The Christian World	7	4%	Religion (2), Holidays (2), Religious Teachings, Prophets' Miracles, and Religious Monuments.
Japan	6	3.4%	Inventions and Discoveries (3), Natural Disasters, Wisdom, and Nature.
Jewish People	6	3.4%	Prophet Stories (3), Holidays, Wishes, and Responsibility.
Brazil	6	3.4%	Writings (2), Football (2), Environmental Pollution, and Rumours.
Sweden	5	2.85%	Inventions and Discoveries (3), Gardens, and Science.
Greece	5	2.85%	Olives, Science, Arts, Sports (2)
India	5	2.85%	Space, Generosity, Science, Nature, Politics, and Ethics.
Germany	4	2.85%	Inventions and Discoveries (2), Science, and Music.
France	4	2.85%	Inventions (2), Science, and Arts.
Africa	4	2.85%	Cooperation, Work Ethics, Science, and Nature (2).
Scotland	4	2.85%	Inventions and Discoveries (3), and Adventures.
Iran	2	1.14%	Holidays, and Pizza.
Europe	2	1.14%	Science, Inventions, and Space.
Poland	2	1.14%	Science, Inventions, and Communication.
Scandinavian countries and the North/South Poles	2	1.14%	Science, and Weather.
Austria	2	1.14%	Music
Bulgaria	2	1.14%	Natural Disasters
Pakistan	1	0.57%	Natural Disasters
Singapore	1	0.57%	Nature
Ireland	1	0.57%	World Wonders
Portugal	1	0.57%	Olive Trees
Slovakia	1	0.57%	Inventions
Switzerland	1	0.57%	Adventures

The Netherlands	1	0.57%	Adventures
Crusaders	1	0.57%	Enemy
Indigenous People of the Americas	1	0.57%	Commandments
Babylon	1	0.57%	World Wonders
Canada	1	0.57%	Nature
The United Nations	1	0.57%	Children's Rights
Total	175	100%	

3.3 Data Analysis

The study was conducted using the method of content analysis and the descriptive approach. This was done by analysing the different factors and then analysing the relationships between those factors, followed by an analysis of the structural patterns found in the sampled textbooks' content.

The calculated percentages reflect the number of times in which the representations of the Other appear, the countries from which these representations emerge, and the difference in the number of representations in relation to the textbook's targeted age group. The percentages also reflect the discourses underlying certain representations and the extent to which certain representations are based on humanist values, such as tolerating and coexisting with the Other, in relation to the Arab country under study and its willingness to instil these values in its elementary school Arabic language textbooks (Table no. 1). This list demonstrates that some Arab countries do not have any reference to the Other in their elementary school Arabic language textbooks (as shown in Table no. 4).

The data in Table no. 2 indicates the dynamic relationship between the textbook's targeted age group and the number of texts that represent the Other. In other words, the study answered the following questions: Do the textbooks' authors tend to focus on and intensify representations of the Other in the later stages of elementary school more so than in the early stages? And how can we understand the absence of any representations of the Other in first-grade Arabic textbooks?

Moreover, there is a relationship between the type of text and how the Other is represented or depicted, especially since certain types of texts are more common in school textbooks. The texts that represent the Other usually address the topic of values or inform and provide information (Table no. 3).

Comparing the data between Table no. 4 and Table no. 5 gives an idea of the Arab countries in which the Other is not represented in any of their sampled

textbooks, the Arab countries in which the Other is represented in some of the sampled textbooks, and the Arab countries in which the Other is fairly represented in all the sampled textbooks. The number of texts that represent (and do not represent) the Other is also calculated for each country. Besides, the year of publication was calculated, which gives an idea of the time period in which the textbooks were written.

Finally, Table no. 6 demonstrates the different identities of which the Other is represented and their different types and forms. It also shows the most common representations portrayed in the sampled textbooks. Additionally, the table shows the different contexts in which the representations of the Other appear for each country, which explains the selection of certain representations and the considerations behind such selections.

4. Results

4.1 Results related to the Age Group and Country

The study found that none of the first-grade Arabic language textbooks in the sample under study included representations of the Other, while 12 texts representing the Other were found in second-grade Arabic language textbooks (17% = 12/142). The study expected that this number will rise in the textbooks dedicated to the higher grades (older age groups), but in reality, only 8 texts representing the Other were found in third-grade Arabic language textbooks (5.6% = 8/142). As for the fourth-grade Arabic language textbooks, 29 texts were found to represent the Other (20.4% = 29/142). In addition, 46 texts were found to represent the Other in fifth-grade Arabic language textbooks (32.4% = 46/142), and 47 texts were found in sixth-grade Arabic language textbooks (33% = 47/142).

In terms of the textbooks' targeted age group according to each country under study, the study found that the textbooks taught in 1948 Occupied Palestine included representations of the Other for all the different age groups (from second to sixth-grade textbooks), in ascending order. These textbooks were also found to

include the largest percentage of texts that represent the Other (107 texts, or 75.3% of the total 142 texts in the sample). Algeria comes second, with 14 texts representing the Other (9.85%) found in second, fourth and fifth-grade textbooks, in ascending order.

As for the textbooks taught in the West Bank, these comprised 12 texts that represent the Other (8.45%), which were included in fourth, fifth, and sixth-grade textbooks, in ascending order. While the textbooks taught in Oman, Morocco, Yemen, Jordan, and Iraq only included a small number of texts representing the Other, ranging between 1-3 texts.

It is noteworthy to mention here that countries such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Qatar, and Syria do not appear in Table no. 1, meaning that all the Arabic language textbooks that were reviewed from these countries did not include any texts that represent the Other. Whereas in the Palestinian, Yemeni, and Iraqi curricula, the study found that some of the textbooks include representations of the Other while other textbooks do not (Table no. 4 & Table no. 5). The number of textbooks from these aforementioned countries that represent and do not represent the Other is reflected in Table no. 2 (35 textbooks and 14 textbooks, respectively).

Table no. 2 indicates that the third-grade textbooks under review had the least number of textbooks that include representations of the Other (only 5 textbooks). This shows that the number of textbooks that include representations of the Other does not ascend regularly according to the textbook's targeted age group; this assumption is only proven true when considering how the number of textbooks that include representations of the Other ascends from the fourth to the sixth grade (7, 8, 9, see Table no. 2).

The fact that the textbooks reviewed from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Qatar, and Syria did not contain any texts that represent the Other is not sufficient to make conclusions about the curricula taught in these countries; this rather requires more in-depth and comprehensive research into the phenomenon.

4.2 Results related to the Type of Text (Genre)

Informative texts comprise approximately 63% of all texts reviewed in the research sample, while narrative texts comprise 31%, followed by religious texts (3.5%). Texts in the genre of plays, letters, and creative writing, as well as guide texts, comprise 0.7% of all texts (Table no. 3).

Informative texts reflect a scientific content. In these, the Other is frequently represented as an inventor, scientist, or discoverer. Informative texts also reflect a content that is related to various fields such as the arts, geography, tourism, technology, medicine, biology, environment, and sports, as well as topics such as natural disasters (volcanoes, earthquakes, and sunken ships). Most of the content reflected in these texts relates to non-Arab countries, and the inventions and discoveries discussed are often attributed to non-Arab personas. Therefore, the Other in Arabic textbooks is frequently represented as an inventor or a discoverer. These textbooks also highlight specific geographical sites such as the Tower of Pisa or specific people such as the Eskimo. Additionally, when it comes to sports, the textbooks under review discuss the Olympic Games or the World Cup.

The nature of informative texts corresponds to those previous topics, and since most of those topics are lacking in the Arab world, it is sensible that Arabic language textbooks attribute them to non-Arabs.

Furthermore, narrative texts make up 31% of all texts, almost half the number of informative texts, and together they make up 94% of all types of text in the sample. Narrative texts reflect content that is related to morals and values, and these often reflect the morals and values of the Other that impress Arab populations. For example, China is frequently represented as a symbol of patriotism and good morals, and Russia is represented as a symbol of judicial justice. Narrative texts might also include scientific content, such as stories about Bulgarian heroism in the face of natural disasters or American adventures in the sea. These texts also discuss astronomy and space discoveries in relation to non-Arab populations. Such scientific narratives constitute about 6% of all the sampled narrative texts. If these were to be counted as part of informative texts, then that would make informative texts reach about 69% of all texts, which is a very high percentage.

4.3 Results related to the Identity of the Other

In Arabic textbooks, the Other is either represented as a racial/ethnic Other – Americans, Chinese, Indians, or Japanese ($152/175 = 86.85\%$) or a religious Other – Christians, Jewish people, or the Crusaders ($14/175 = 8\%$). The Other is also represented as belonging to different geographical locations/countries, such as Africa, Europe, Scandinavia, and the North/South poles, or the United Nations in general ($9/175 = 5.14\%$) (Table no. 6).

4.4 The Racial/Ethnic Other

The racial/ethnic Other constitutes 86.85% of the different forms of representation. The most prominent of them are Americans, who are mentioned 36 times (20.5%) in the context of inventions (13), sciences (6), arts (3), adventures (3), special needs (2), as well as nature, greetings, holidays, gossip, twins, hair wigs, marriage, national symbols, and community (see Table no. 6).

It is clear in the sampled Arabic language textbooks that scientific development, represented by inventions, sciences, and art, is what distinguishes Americans. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy to mention here that when it comes to morals and values, American representation is limited to Americans' reputation for adventures or Americans' awareness of people with special needs, while gossip is often mentioned as a negative American value.

Representations of English people come in second place, as they are mentioned 16 times (9.1%) in the context of science and technology (5), discoveries (2), arts (2), as well as espionage, failures, natural disasters, the environment, strength, adventures, and philosophy (see Table no. 6). Representations of English people resemble the representations of Americans, especially in their superiority in the fields of sciences, inventions, and arts. Both are also represented as strong and adventurous, but English people are negatively represented in terms of espionage and failures.

Representations of Chinese people and Italians come in third place, as each is mentioned 13 times (7.4%). Chinese people are represented in the context of inventions (5), work ethics (2), as well as in terms of patriotism, manners of speech, tourism, holidays, greed, and Dominoes. As for Italians, they are represented in the context of tourism (3), arts (3), inventions (2), as well as sports, pizza, world wonders, and morals (see Table no. 6). Here, the Other is most distinguished in terms of inventions. Nonetheless, Chinese people are most distinguished in terms of positive morals and values, especially their work ethics, patriotism, and manners of speech. While Italians are also distinguished by their connection to the arts and inventions, they are most distinguished in terms of tourism and cuisine (especially pizza). Hence, the Other, in the Italian case, is mainly represented in terms of geographical place rather than race/ethnicity.

Furthermore, representations of Russians come in fourth place, as they are mentioned 9 times (5.1%) in

the context of science (2), arts (2), judiciary system (2), as well as assistance, naivety, and the environment (see Table no. 6). The sciences and arts occupy the most prominent representations of Russians. Russians are also distinguished in terms of positive morals and values, such as justice and assistance, while naivety is represented as a negative Russian value. In this case, the Other, is also represented in terms of geographical place rather than race/ethnicity.

Representations of Spanish people come in fifth place, and they are mentioned 8 times (4.5%) in the context of arts (2), science, adventures (2), as well as sports, olives, and fears. The arts and sciences are the most prominent representations of Spanish people, followed by adventure and sports, while fear is ascribed as a negative Spanish value. Arabic language textbooks also represent Spain as the landmark of olives.

Lastly, the sampled Arabic language textbooks also represent the indigenous peoples of the Americas as a distinct racial/ethnic group; they are referred to in relation to education, especially the commandments of parents to their children (Table no. 6).

4.5 The Religious Other

The religious Other – Christians, Jewish people, or the Crusaders – are widely represented in Arabic language textbooks. Representations of Christians come in sixth place, recurring 7 times (4%) in the context of world religions (2), holidays (2), religious teachings, miracles, and religious monuments. It is clear that various forms of religious elements characterize Christian representations in the sampled Arabic textbooks.

Religious texts constitute only 3.5% of all texts under study, and it is remarkable that all of them exist in the Palestinian curricula only, wherein Christians, Jewish people, and Druze are represented in a tone of religious tolerance and brotherhood. The Crusaders, however, are described as enemies, without explicitly referring to their religious identity (Table no. 6).

4.6 The Other in terms of Country/Geographical Area

Arabic textbooks also include representations of the Other in terms of country/geographical area. For instance, pizza is ascribed to Italy and olive trees are ascribed to both Spain and Portugal, whereas music is ascribed to Austria. Additionally, the North and South pole are represented to indicate extreme weather, while Babylon is represented to indicate the world wonders. These country representations are actually

small in number, especially since they intersect with the other forms of Otherness. Nonetheless, the country representations that were repeated only once are calculated at a rate of 6.3% (Table no. 6).

The geographical representations found in Arabic textbooks also refer to continents and not just countries. In this sense, the continent of Europe occupies the largest number of representations found in the sampled textbooks (48.6%), followed by the Americas (25.1%), then Asia (16%) and Africa (2.3%).

Table 7. *Identity of the Other*

The Identity of the Other	Number of Times Mentioned	Continent and Total	Percentage
United States of America	36	Americas 44	25.1%
Brazil	6		
Canada	1		
Indigenous Peoples of the Americas	1		
England	16	Europe 85	48.6%
Italy	13		
Russia	9		
Spain	8		
Sweden	5		
Greece	5		
Germany	4		
France	4		
Scotland	4		
Europe	2		
Poland	2		
Scandinavia	2		
Austria	2		
Bulgaria	2		
Ireland	1		
Portugal	1		
Switzerland	1		
Slovakia	1		
The Netherland	1		
The Crusaders	1		
China	13	Asia 29	16%
Japan	6		
India	5		
Iran	2		
Pakistan	1		
Singapore	1		
Babylon	1		
Africa	4	Africa 4	2.3%
The Christian World	7	The Christian World 7	4%
Jewish People	6	Jewish People 6	3.4%
The United Nations	1	The United Nations 1	0.57%
Total	175	175	100%

Furthermore, the total number of countries that were mentioned in these continents is 30 (Table no. 7). The Western world (America and Europe) comprise the largest number of representations, and together they make up 73.7% of all representations. If representations of the Christian world (4%) are added to this ratio, then the percentage would become (77.7%); this is a high percentage when compared to the representations of the Oriental/Eastern Other as found in the sampled Arabic language textbooks.

5. Discussion

The presence of various types of representations of the Other in Arabic language textbooks in the Middle East and North Africa reinforces the idea that education is one of the most effective means against intolerance. This goes along with Qurashī's assertion that there is a need to include local and global cultural and civilizational heritage in the Arab educational curricula, especially at the kindergarten stage (2021), and with Marzūq's (2016) argument that education plays a significant role in achieving and developing a culture of dialogue, co-existence, and tolerance.

The fact that all the sampled Arabic language textbooks were written and published between the years 2008-2020, i.e., after 2001, shows how Arabs and Muslims have been defending themselves from the stereotypes of intolerance which magnified after the events of September 11 (Qurashī, 2021). Nonetheless, this study does not analyse the Arabic textbooks that were written and published before the year 2001, and thus this assumption cannot be validated here.

Having noted this, it is worth mentioning that the sampled Arabic language textbooks that are used in Saudi Arabia do not include any representations of the Other. This is despite the fact that Saudi Arabia has been accused of religious fundamentalism, extremism, and intolerance. As Alothman (2017) asserts, there is a deep controversy within Saudi cultural circles about teaching English to preschool children, and that there is a need to find a compatible and appropriate balance between teaching the Arabic language and Islam and adopting Western curricula (Alothman, 2017). Nevertheless, more recent observations among the Saudi community attest that there is a new interest in understanding the Other at the university level, especially in relation to Islamic conceptions of civilized cross-cultural dialogue and the development of globalised thinking (al-'Aklabī, 2021).

As in the case of Algeria, Murād and Fānṭāzī (2021) assert the important role of Islamic education in incorporating global humanist notions of tolerance and coexistence with the Other to combat the rise of school violence in Algerian schools. Therefore, school violence would actually decrease when Islam is taught in a way that encourages notions of tolerance and acceptance of the Other. Indeed, there are many verses in the Quran that encourage tolerance towards the Other, such as the verse that says, "O people! We created you from a male and a female, and made you races and tribes, that you may know one another"

(al-Hujurat: 13). This confirms the importance of knowing and understanding the Other in Islam, which reassures rational dialogue and renounces violence. Another example of this can be found in the verse that says, "debate with them in the most dignified manner" (an-Nahl: 125).

As aforementioned, Algeria had been under French colonialism for many years, and French culture had become more important than Algerian national and cultural identity. This has pushed post-colonial reforms in Algerian schools in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century to mostly focus on Algerian national culture. However, this focus did not abandon Algerian education's openness to the world (and the Other) (Bin Da'īmah, 2016). The results of this study confirm this, as all the sampled Arabic textbooks from Algeria do, in fact, include representations of the Other.

Furthermore, al-Marrī (2021) demonstrates the positive role of UNESCO's post-WWII establishment of schools that are concerned with implementing the Education for Peace program. This program was introduced in over 172 countries, and as Mujāhid (2017) mentions, countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain, Morocco, and Palestine are among the countries that benefited from this program. This study agrees with the results of Mujāhid's (2017) study, in that the education curricula in Oman, Morocco, and Palestine are open to the Other. However, such openness was not observed in the Arabic language textbooks sampled from Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

When considering the case of Egypt, the Arab Spring cannot be ignored, nor can the political turmoil that occurred after the Muslim Brotherhood seized power and the following military coup. There is no doubt that such a political atmosphere has affected Egyptians in many areas of their lives, including education. Ḥanna (2020) thus suggests a new proposal for Egyptian curricula to be based on cultural pluralism through creative reading, reflecting the dire need for such a proposal.

While in the case of Palestine, this study agrees with Sūbānī's (2012) argument that the political reality in Palestine disturbs the teaching of humanist values such as tolerance or coexistence between religions and nations. Indeed, this study found that while some of the sampled Palestinian textbooks are open to understanding the Other, this is not found in all of them. There is also a difference in dealing with

the religious Other between the Arabic textbooks taught in Palestine 48 (within Israel) and the West Bank (the Palestinian Authority). The textbooks taught in Palestine 48 (within Israel) include more representations of Christians, Jewish people, and Druze, especially since these populations are part of the demographic composition of Israel, while the textbooks taught in the West Bank only include representations of Christians, leaving representations of Jewish people absent due to the Arab Israeli conflict.

Likewise, the textbooks sampled from Yemen, with some of the textbooks including representations of the Other while some do not. This is due to the politics between North and South Yemen, which not only caused the curricula between the two regions to be different but also produced a lack of clear and specific educational philosophies between those two regions (al-Husni, 2019).

Besides, the Arab Spring revolutions may have an impact on some of the textbooks taught in Arab countries, creating a further state of confusion that appears in the form of not representing the Other in those textbooks. Nonetheless, this argument needs further research because the Arabic language textbooks sampled in this study were written and published before, during, and shortly after the Arab Spring.

It is noteworthy to mention here that this study could not reach accurate generalizations with regard to some of the countries whose books were examined. For example, the sampled textbooks from Jordan were found to include representations of the Other, while an earlier study conducted by Abū al-Samīd (2002) found that the Other in Jordanian textbooks included negative representations of the Other, especially by relating the Other to Zionist and European colonialism. Abū al-Samīd (2002) also found that neutral representations of the Other, such as Chinese or Japanese people, were also lacking in Jordanian textbooks. This analysis can be extended to the textbooks sampled from Syria, Qatar, Iraq, Yemen, Morocco, and Oman. Thus, this study could not reach accurate generalizations about how the Other is represented in these textbooks, especially since the sampled textbooks from these countries were very few.

As for representing the Other in terms of country/geographical area, it is clear from the sampled textbooks that the Western world, both European and American, accounts for 73.6% of all representations,

while Oriental/Eastern representations, such as China, India, or Japan, account for only 16% of all representations. In addition, the representations from Africa are almost negligible.

In this regard, the Western Other is represented within a scientific context, especially in relation to inventions, discoveries, technology, music, medicine, and geography. This differs from how the Eastern Other is represented, i.e., as less developed. This demonstrates how the Other is thought of as an example and a role model of what is lacking in the Arab world, and thus the invocation of the Other might reflect Arab's inferiority complex. This is why in the sampled textbooks, informative texts constitute approximately 63% of all texts, while narrative texts constitute only 31%, followed by religious texts at 3.5%.

Narrative texts represent the positive and negative values of the Other, and it is clear from the sampled textbooks that the positive values of the Other prevail greatly, except in certain circumstances. On the one hand, the sampled textbooks represent China with greed, coin Japan, Pakistan, and Bulgaria with natural disasters, ascribe espionage and failure to England, depict the United States of America as a country of gossip, and portray Brazil as a country of rumours and environmental pollution. On the other hand, China is represented as a nation of patriotism and high morale, while the United States of America is represented as a nation of inventions, discoveries, adventures, and victory over nature. England is also portrayed with strength, discoveries, and adventures, whereas Russia is coined with arts and justice, Austria with music, Italy with its delicious cuisine, and Brazil with football. Lastly, Africa is represented in relation to its beautiful nature.

Scientific content prevails in all the representations of the Other, followed by moral values and religious attitudes. The religious Other is either represented as Christians, Jewish people, or Druze, which account for 3.5% of all representations. The religious Other is often portrayed in a positive light, except in the case of the Crusaders, who are represented negatively in the textbooks taught in Yemen. The textbooks taught in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Libya also depict the Crusaders negatively as a religious enemy. Perhaps the Islamic context in Saudi Arabia is what reinforces these negative representations of the Crusaders, while the colonial context in both Egypt and Libya is what fortifies such representations (Determann, 2007).

However, the Crusaders are portrayed positively in the textbooks taught in Palestine, Lebanon, and Tunisia; these textbooks saw that the Crusades opened many doors for trade and knowledge exchange between the West and the East.

Christians, as a religious Other, are mentioned 7 times, while Jewish people are mentioned 6 times. Both of these groups are represented in the context of holidays and/or stories of the prophets without any negative depictions. It is noteworthy to mention that all the texts that represent the religious Other positively are mentioned in the textbooks taught in Palestine 48, indicating the diverse religious demographics in Israel. Whereas the textbooks taught in Saudi Arabia did include negative representations of Jewish people, these representations have been modified in the last couple of years so that they are more neutral and no longer offensive (Padro, 2022).

6. Summary and Conclusion

This study focuses on the representations of the Other in Arabic language textbooks taught in elementary schools in the Middle East and North Africa, and it shows that 35 out of 49 textbooks show openness and tolerance towards understanding the Other; these textbooks are taught in Palestine 48, the West Bank, Oman, Morocco, Yemen, Algeria, and Jordan. The remaining 14 textbooks that do not include representations of the Other are the ones taught in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, and Syria.

The small number of textbooks that do not include representations of the Other is not enough to generalize about the textbooks taught in these countries, and thus there is a need for future studies on the curricula used in these countries.

Moreover, the number of texts that include representations of the Other increase and intensify with respect to the age group, i.e., the number of representations of the Other increase with the older age groups.

Informative and narrative texts are the most common types of texts that represent the Other, constituting 94% of all sampled texts (142 texts out of 992). Informative texts reflect scientific content, while narrative texts reflect value-based content.

The Western world (Europe and America), as well as the Christian world, account for 78% of all representations, while Asia accounts for 16%, and Africa for 2.3%. Representations of the racial/ethnic Other constitute 86.85% of the forms of Otherness

depicted in the sampled textbooks. The most prominent of these are Americans (20.5%), who are represented in the context of inventions, sciences, arts, and adventures. This is followed by English people (9.1%) who are represented in the context of science, technology, discoveries, and arts. Chinese and Italian representations come in third place, with each of them constituting 7.4% of all representations. Chinese people are represented in the context of inventions, work ethics, and patriotism, while Italians are represented in the context of tourism, arts, and inventions. Representations of Russians come in fourth place (5.1%), and they are represented in the context of the sciences and arts.

The representations also include the religious Other, specifically referring to Christians and Jews, who are mostly portrayed in a positive light. Additionally, the Other is also represented in terms of country/geographical area; such representations have mostly referred to natural sites or tourism.

Finally, representations of the Other are affected by contemporary political economies, namely globalization, the increase in cultural conflicts and violence, and Arab's past and present experiences with colonialism. All of these factors influence how the Other is represented, whether positively or negatively.

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