# THE NEXUS OF LANGUAGE AND VALUES: A STUDY OF THE INTEGRATION OF MORAL EDUCATION IN EFL TEXTBOOKS FOR BASIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM IN KURDISTAN

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## ABSTRACT

English textbooks serve as a crucial element in ELT programs, not only for delivering subject knowledge but also as vehicles for promoting moral and character development. The integration of moral education is globally emphasized due to its potential in enhancing learners' character, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities alongside language proficiency attainment. In the specific context of Kurdistan, there is a dearth of research examining the potential of ELT textbooks, while the English textbooks 'Sunrise' holds a critical position as the primary source of knowledge for learners and teachers. To address this gap, this study adopts a descriptive-analytical methodology, employing content analysis drawing upon Appraisal Theory (AT), guided by a critical pedagogy perspective to explore the representation of moral education content/moral values embedded in the textbooks. Analyzing six textbooks from Primary 4-6 to Secondary 7-9, demonstrates a clear progressive approach, where personal values like a healthy lifestyle, empathy, hygiene, and happiness are initially prioritized, followed by interpersonal values such as caring, politeness, respect, and collaboration. The textbooks also highlight altruistic values related to environmental and global concerns. However, the focus leans towards cultivating good citizenship rather than fostering critical thinking skills and problem-solving ability, prioritizing student behavior over questioning societal values. Further, the study identified the highest coding frequency of four moral education themes in textbooks: Respect for Self and Others, Lack of Prejudice, Appropriate Values and Attitude, and Environment. Overall, the findings reveal that the textbooks primarily emphasize universal moral values, while offering limited representation of Kurdish moral values. This highlights the need for a more comprehensive approach to incorporate moral values in the textbooks' coverage.

*KEYWORDS***:**  Moral education, EFL textbook, Sunrise program, Critical pedagogy

## I. INTRODUCTION

The term "education" extends beyond the acquisition of knowledge and skills to include the development of one's character, fostering essential values, morals, and ethics (Lovat, 2017; Hawkes, 2018). This implies that knowledge acquisition and character development go hand in hand, and therefore, they should be seamlessly integrated and addressed together.

In the past few decades, moral or character education has emerged as a crucial aspect of education, playing a significant role in shaping individuals' moral and ethical development. In fact, in every human society, moral education should be viewed as an ongoing process that starts with the socialization of children into the shared values and virtues that uphold community (Shaaban, 2005; Arthur, 2014; Barrow, 2015; Lickona, 2004; Nucci, 2002). At school, moral education share the purpose of nurturing students' character by instilling in them the values and beliefs upheld by society (Lickona, 2004). Among the various components of the school curriculum, textbooks hold significant importance as they systematically provide knowledge and skills, playing a crucial role in achieving the intended study objectives (Arthur, 2014; Barrow, 2015).

Educational institutions have varying approaches to teaching moral education. Some schools choose to offer moral education as a distinct subject, while others incorporate it within other subjects. However, research indicates that successful moral education programs are typically integrated into the curriculum rather than treated separately (Nucci, 2002). This integration allows for a more comprehensive and continuous development of moral values among

students. Thus, experts widely agree that the most effective moral education programs are those that are integrated into the overall curriculum, rather than taught as a separate subject (Nucci, 2002; Arthur, 2014; Lickona, 2004; Thongrin, 2018a; Widodo, *et al.*, 2018; Alberta, 2005; Barrow, 2015; Lovat, 2017).

As a result, virtually, every society has prioritized the moral and social development of the upcoming generation, along with fostering a sense of belonging and identity within the community (Kohlberg, 1981; Nucci, 2002; Arthur, 2014). Currently, moral or character education is supported by the majority of nations around the globe, with eight out of ten countries recognizing its importance and implementing it within their school systems (UNESCO, 2020). This highlights the importance of incorporating moral education into the national curriculum across all levels of formal education, where it is taught in every subject.

In view of that, the calls for including moral education into school curricula have also attracted the attention of many ESL/EFL educators (Feng, 2019; Widodo *et al.,* 2018; Thongrin, 2018a; Johnston, 2003; Shaaban, 2005; Barrow, 2015). This recognition stems from the understanding that language learning and teaching cannot be examined in isolation; rather, they form a complex process influenced by broader socio-political and socio-cultural contexts (Widodo et al., 2018). These contexts shape the way values and moral issues are addressed in the curriculum (Pennycook, 1994; Johnston, 2003; Shaaban, 2005). In addition, since these subjects (EFL/ESL) do not have specific content requirements, they provide a great opportunity to use instructional materials and resources that are interesting and beneficial for learners. By combining moral education with language learning, educators can create an engaging and enjoyable learning experience for students (Anbarasu *et al.*, 2020).

Recognizing this interplay is of utmost importance for EFL educators and curriculum developers. It underscores the need to create teaching materials that are not only linguistically effective but also sensitive to these contextual influences. Moreover, it emphasizes the role of language education in promoting cultural awareness, ethical considerations, and the cultivation of global citizens who are mindful of diverse perspectives and ethical principles.

Although, incorporating moral education into ELT is not a clear process. Yet, presently English language is intensely recognized as a vehicle for moral education, especially, in the countries where English is a second or foreign language (Shaaban, 2005; Widodo *el at.,* 2018). Meanwhile, moral education has a longstanding presence in the EFL curriculum of numerous countries, including Japan, China, South Korea, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Iran, Turkey, and select Arab countries like the UAE, Jordin and Algeria (Darmi, Kamaruddin and Jaffar, 2022). This recognition highlights the widespread understanding of the significance of integrating moral aspects into language education. Thus, in the context of EFL education in basic-public schools across Kurdistan, it becomes notably crucial to delve into how moral values are presented within EFL textbooks, given that these books serve as the primary source of learning.

## 1. The Research problem

While there is a global emphasis on integrating moral education into ELT (Johnston, 2003; Shaaban, 2005b; Widodo *et al.*, 2018), the examination of ELT textbooks as instruments for moral and character development remains largely unexplored in context of Kurdistan. Textbooks play a crucial role in the educational process as they shape interactions among students, teachers, and educational resources within the classroom (Sheldon, 1988). Particularly in the context of public schools in Kurdistan, EFL textbooks serve as a unique platform and the main source (Vernez at. el, 2014), in which allowing learners to explore and internalize cultural and values that deeply influence their social interactions and behaviors (Sheldon, 1988).

Moreover, it is recognized that the selection of moral education content or values to be included within EFL education and textbooks may vary depending on the specific educational context, cultural norms, and educational goals (Shaaban, 2005; Widodo, 2018). Given the objective of teaching English as a foreign language in Kurdistan's EFL education, which is focused on developing communicative competence (Vernez, 2014), it becomes feasible to include moral education elements that align with the broader educational goals (Reorganizing the KRG Ministry of Education, 2016). Thus, even though the main emphasis is on language proficiency, examples of cultivated moral education content in this context may encompass fostering respect for cultural diversity, promoting

empathy and understanding in cross-cultural interactions, encouraging teamwork and collaboration, instilling a sense of responsibility towards effective communication, and emphasizing ethical considerations in global contexts such as environmental sustainability, human rights, social justice, and responsible consumption.. These values can be seamlessly integrated into language learning activities, discussions, and real-world scenarios, thereby aiding students in developing not only their language skills but also their moral and social awareness.

Yet another problem associated English language textbooks is their tendency to overlook the importance of instilling values. This is often the case with textbooks that are imported from predominantly English-speaking countries or those developed in collaboration with such companies. These textbooks often concentrate solely on teaching the language itself, overlooking the crucial aspect of integrating values into a nation's education system, which is essential for fostering responsible citizenship in the present and for future generations (Ali, 2016).

Despite, the ministry of education in Kurdistan has taken a commendable step by mandating the inclusion of values in all school subjects, including the English language (Vernez et al., 2016), there is still a pressing need for further understanding and guidance in these areas. Unfortunately, there is currently no official documentation outlining how the school English curriculum explicitly or implicitly addresses the teaching of specific values. This study marks the first step in addressing the issue of the unclear integration of moral education content and values within EFL textbooks.

**1. The Research Objectives**

Textbooks in language acquisition serve a multifaceted purpose, offering vital language resources while also conveying cultural and ideological concepts (Sheldon, 1988). In this regard, the exploration of moral education content and the identification of depicted moral values within EFL textbooks hold significant importance.

In the context of EFL education in basic public schools in Kurdistan, where these textbooks are central to knowledge dissemination, it is crucial to explore the incorporation of moral education and moral values. Therefore, this study is designed to examine the presentation of moral education content in EFL textbooks (Sunrise program) for students aged K4-9.

To simplify the objective, this study aims to explore moral education content in basic school language textbooks and elucidate the integration of moral values into them. The contributions of this study are twofold: firstly, it examines how language textbooks represent moral values and identifies predominant ones. Secondly, not as the main aim but needed. it demonstrates how systemic functional linguistics and educational theory can be employed to analyze these values in both text and visuals.

The study seeks to address two research questions, ultimately providing valuable insights into the moral education landscape within EFL textbooks used in the Kurdistan.

- What moral values are integrated into the EFL textbooks (Sunrise 4-9)?
- How is moral education content represented within the EFL textbooks (Sunrise 4-9)?

The forthcoming discussion will commence with a comprehensive literature review encompassing moral education and ELT, moral education and EFL textbooks, the importance of moral education in EFL textbooks, the ways of integrating moral education in EFL textbooks, and the specific context of the ELT curriculum in Kurdistan. Following that, an analytical framework will be established, focusing on the parameters of moral values and their construction across different communication modes. Subsequently, the study will meticulously present its methodology and the findings. Finally, the study will conclude by highlighting the significance and implications of the study through concluding remarks.

**II. Theoretical Framework and Related Studies**
**1. Theoretical Framework**

This paper investigates moral education content within EFL textbooks, utilizing critical pedagogy as the appropriate theoretical framework. It is argued that moral education and critical pedagogy are not conflicting concepts; rather, they should be harmoniously integrated in examining moral values (Thongrin, 2018). Critical pedagogy among critical theories holds a significant position in ELT and English textbook development, empowering learners to question and analyze moral issues, thus fostering social consciousness and empathy (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Akbari, 2008a). Simultaneously, moral education provides a framework for applying these critical perspectives to cultivate ethical values and promote responsible decision-making in students.

On the other hand, language learning is inherently a social practice intricately linked to cultural norms and collective understandings within a community (Norton and Toohey, 2004). In this perspective, it goes beyond surface-level discussions, shaping learners' perceptions of themselves, their social and historical context, and their potential for the future. Therefore, critical pedagogy enables students to reconstruct their moral identities and gain a deeper understanding of the societal impact of language (Pessoa and Freita, 2012).

Today, there is an increasing awareness that the teaching and dissemination of English encompass intricate moral, social, and political ramifications. For example, according to Pennycook (1994), there is a need to change the way English language teaching (ELT) is approached. Pennycook emphasizes moving beyond a narrow focus on communication skills and instead recognizing how language is socially constructed and undergoes changes in our daily lives. This requires shifting away from superficial content and placing greater significance on understanding the social aspects of language.

Regarding textbooks, they hold a central role in language learning programs, serving as teachers' guide, information sources, and carriers of specific ideologies (Richards, 2010). Consequently, advocating for an expanded understanding of critical pedagogy is essential to effectively incorporate moral considerations within educational materials (Thongrin, 2018). according to critical pedagogy, ELT textbooks should not merely produce instructional materials. Instead, they should challenge learners' ideologies and encourage them to critically analyze and question the world around them (Widodo *et al.*, 2018).

To accurately assess the integration of moral education content in ELT textbooks for Kurdish Basic-school students in Grades 4–9, considering critical pedagogy, a structured and systematic analysis is crucial. Since there is no universally established framework for integrating moral education into the EFL context and textbooks, an approach must be adopted to uncover the moral education content based on existing literature.

Moreover, it is essential to establish a structured framework based on theories for investigating the content of moral education within these textbooks, enabling us to decipher and interpret the values that are communicated both verbally and visually. This framework will provide us with a systematic approach to unravel the intricacies of moral education content, ensuring that we can discern and analyze the values being conveyed through both written and visual elements.

Furthermore, to understand how these values have evolved with age, established theories such as Kohlberg's stages of moral development can provide a strong foundation for the analysis

This method ensures a systematic and methodical exploration, guaranteeing a comprehensive evaluation of the moral values embedded within the ELT textbooks. This systematic procedure not only upholds the integrity of the curriculum assessment but also eliminates the risk of arbitrary exploration, thus yielding valuable and insightful findings.

**a. A Framework for Uncovering Moral Education Content in EFL Textbooks**

While there is no universally popular framework for integrating moral education into the EFL context and textbooks, various frameworks and approaches have been reviewed and examined in the effort to incorporate values into education (Lickona, 2017, Borba, 2002). For example, Borba's framework for moral education focuses on cultivating moral intelligence, which involves the ability to differentiate between right and wrong and act accordingly. The framework emphasizes seven key aspects: empathy, conscience, self-control, respect, kindness, tolerance, and fairness. These elements contribute to the development of individuals with strong moral character and ethical behavior. By nurturing empathy, guiding decision-making through conscience, practicing self-control, promoting respect and kindness, encouraging tolerance, and emphasizing fairness, Borba's framework aims to instill values and virtues that lead to moral growth and responsible actions (Borba, 2002). On the other side, moral education, as emphasized by Lickona (2017), has always been an integral part of schooling. Schools aim to cultivate both intelligence and moral character in students. Lickona identifies ten essential moral values that schools should teach: "fairness, courage, honesty, compassion, self-discipline, helpfulness, cooperation, prudence, tolerance, and democratic values". These values play a crucial role in developing individuals with strong moral character and responsible citizenship. By incorporating these values into education, schools contribute to students' moral growth and foster a sense of ethical responsibility (Lickona, 2017).

Through scholarly sources and best practices, certain themes have emerged as commonly emphasized in EFL education. These themes include respect, open-mindedness, empathy, integrity, collaboration, intercultural competence, prejudice recognition and avoidance, critical thinking skills, environmental responsibility, effective communication abilities, and civic engagement or global citizenship (Thongrin, 2018; Shaaban, 2005; Feng, 2005; Barrow, 2015; Wiyaka, *et al.,* 2017). For example, Shaaban (2005) delineates eight fundamental characteristics of moral education: respect for others, appreciation of diverse cultures, eradication of prejudice, cultivation of appropriate values and attitudes, promotion of peace and human rights, fostering global awareness, effective communication, and environmental consciousness. These themes and values often align with widely accepted principles of moral education across diverse cultural and educational contexts. These values have a significant impact on shaping students' character and providing guidance for their actions in real-life situations. The theoretical framework presented in the study visually represents the role of these characteristics in guiding the research and examining the importance of moral education within the specified context. However, it is crucial to recognize that the selection of values to be included in EFL education and textbooks may differ based on the specific educational context. Each educational context possesses unique cultural, societal, and linguistic factors that shape the implementation and interpretation of moral education.

In fact, the question of integrating moral values into EFL education and instructional materials raises a crucial debate regarding whose values should take precedence (Johnston, 2003; Barrow, 2015; Widodo, 2018). The dilemma lies between prioritizing universal moral principles versus the norms and values specific to particular groups. This becomes particularly complex in diverse national communities comprising multiple subgroups, each with their distinct perspectives and beliefs. According to the Kurdistan Regional Government, education aims to nurture students' holistic development, encompassing their national, physical, and spiritual aspects. The objective is to develop individuals who are healthy, honest, and open-minded, ready to contribute to society (Ministry of Education of Kurdistan Region, 2009). The controversy stems from the desire to strike a balance between acknowledging the importance of universal moral principles that transcend cultural boundaries and recognizing the value of cultural diversity and the unique perspectives held by different groups within a society. On one hand, emphasizing universal moral principles promotes a sense of shared values and common ethical standards. On the other hand, giving priority to the norms and values of specific groups acknowledges and respects the cultural diversity and pluralism within a society.

In this study, the researchers aimed to identify the underlying values present in English textbooks published by the Ministry of Education in Kurdistan (grades K4-9). To accomplish this, the researchers modified the classification of values based on literature and considered the specific educational context of Kurdistan. By combining these approaches, the researchers sought to gain insights into the values embedded within the textbooks and understand how they align with the educational goals and cultural norms of Kurdistan. As a result, stemming from the most popular frameworks, the researchers developed a specific framework that can be adapted to the context of Kurdistan. The framework carefully incorporates values and themes that are highly relevant to moral education and ensures that they align with the specific context of EFL education in Kurdistan.

To achieve this, the researchers developed a checklist consisting of ten themes and forty-five values through an extensive literature review (for the frameworks of moral education content) and considering the educational objective of ELT in Kurdistan (Table 1). These themes and values are based on widely accepted principles of moral education that hold a universal essence, applicable across diverse cultural and educational contexts. However, it is important to note that the specific emphasis and application of these themes and values may differ depending on the educational context. Each educational context is influenced by its own unique cultural, societal, and linguistic factors that shape the implementation and interpretation of moral education. By focusing on that, themes such as respect for self and others, intercultural competence, recognition and avoidance of prejudice, critical thinking skills, environmental responsibility, effective communication abilities, and civic engagement will be the suitable to achieve the goals. However, it is always important to consider local educational policies and guidelines when implementing any

framework. It is recommended to consult with educational authorities and stakeholders in Kurdistan to ensure that the framework aligns with their specific educational aims and requirements.

**Table (1):** The Characteristics of Moral Education in EFL context.

| Themes | Values | Description |
|---|---|---|
| Respect for Self and Others | Respect, Tolerance, Politeness Friendliness/Communication | Treating oneself and others with consideration, acknowledging worth and dignity, demonstrating care and understanding |
| Cultural Appreciation | Cultural Appreciation, Cultural diversity, inclusivity, respect for customs and traditions Open-mindedness, Spirit of Nationality, Love Homeland, social sensitivity | Appreciating and respecting diverse cultures, traditions, and perspectives around the world, being open to different ideas and beliefs |
| Lack of Prejudice | non-discrimination, Democracy, Acceptance, Equality | Rejecting prejudice and discrimination, embracing diversity, promoting inclusivity and equality |
| Appropriate Values and Attitude | Integrity, Ethical Behavior, Responsibility, Discipline, Religiousness, Honesty, Tolerance, Independence, fairness | Cultivating values and attitudes aligned with moral principles, acting with honesty, ethics, and responsibility, accountability, and fairness in actions and decisions |
| Peace and Human Rights | Peacefulness, Human Rights, Justice | Promoting peace, advocating for the protection of human rights, striving for justice and equality |
| Global Concerns | Global Awareness, Social Responsibility, Sustainability, Spirit of Nationality, Love Homeland, Global citizenship, cooperation, intercultural understanding | Fostering awareness of global issues, promoting social responsibility, and sustainability |
| Communication and Active Listening | Effective Communication, Active Listening, Respectful Dialogue | Expressing ideas clearly, actively listening to others, engaging in respectful dialogue |
| Environmental Responsibility | Environmental Stewardship, Conservation, Awareness | Promoting awareness and taking actions to protect the environment, |

**Note:** Some values may align with multiple themes, reflecting their interconnected nature.

### b. Appliable Linguistics Framework: Unifying the Verbal and Visual content

Understanding moral education content requires looking at how they are expressed through different communication strategies. Rather than taking them at face value, we should interpret and analyze the specific features used to convey these values. In this study, we utilized the language appraisal framework developed by Martin and White (2005) to analyze the integration of moral values in basic school language textbooks. These framework is rooted in Hallidayan systemic functional linguistics (SFL) (Puspitasari *et al.*, 2023), which is widely recognized as a suitable linguistic framework for this analysis. SFL offers a comprehensive understanding of how textbook writers construct and convey specific discourses related to moral values through verbal, visual, and multimodal texts.

Appraisal theory (Martin and White, 2005) is a linguistic framework, it focuses on how language is used to express emotions, attitudes, and opinions, and how individuals make subjective evaluations and judgments through their language choices. With support of Appraisal Theory (AT) proposed by Martin and White (2005), we can describe and discuss the ways in which these values are communicated in a more concrete and systematic manner.

This approach increases the reliability and trustworthiness of our analysis by providing a structured framework for interpretation. AT can be applied in various fields, including literature, media analysis, interpersonal communication, and educational research. It helps researchers analyze and understand the ways language

1348

reflects and shapes individuals' emotions, attitudes, and subjective assessments. By examining language use within the framework of appraisal theory, researchers gain insights into the cognitive processes, social meanings, and evaluative stances present in communication. This understanding can enhance our knowledge of how people express and evaluate their experiences, perspectives, and judgments through language.

In their work, Martin and White (2005) developed a comprehensive system known as Attitude, which encompasses three main values: Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation. Affect represents emotional responses, Judgement involves the evaluation of human behavior based on social assessment, and Appreciation relates to the aesthetic qualities of objects and entities (Table 2).

| Categories | Indicator | Brief Description |
|---|---|---|
| Affect | Un/happiness, in/security, and dis/satisfaction | Emotional responses such as happiness, sadness, and fear |
| Judgment | Social esteem and social sanction | Evaluation based on morals and habits, e.g., honesty, friendliness, politeness, and bravery |
| Appreciation | Reaction, composition, and Valuation | Process of evaluation related to aesthetics (elegance) and non-aesthetics (social values) |

**Table (2):-** Categories of Attitudes Identified by Martin and White's Theory.

This study explores moral values, moral values are seen in how individuals perceive and judge different behaviors based on societal standards. Therefore, in this study, particular attention is given to the dimension of Judgment (within Appraisal system). This dimension entails the process of making evaluative assessments and expressing opinions, encompassing indicators associated with moral values, social norms, and habits. For instance, individuals utilize their personal judgments to evaluate behaviors like honesty, friendliness, politeness, or bravery. The process of Judgment involves assessing specific behaviors, qualities, actions, or situations and expressing subjective opinions, serving as an individual's appraisal of what is morally right or wrong, socially acceptable or unacceptable, and desirable or undesirable. Furthermore, Judgment involves the assessment of morals, habits, and behaviors based on personal or societal standards, incorporating the expression of approval or disapproval while considering moral and social factors. This subjective process is influenced by personal beliefs and experiences. By analyzing language use, researchers can gain valuable insights into how individuals articulate their evaluative judgments concerning moral values and social norms.

**c. Exploring the Development of Values Distribution Patterns According to Kohlberg's Theory**

It is important to adapt the selection and presentation of values to the age, maturity level, and cultural background of the learners. Therefore, this study also aims to evaluate the moral values that have been incorporated into EFL textbooks by examining their conformity to the Piagetian Moral Stage Theory. The research findings will offer valuable insights into the level of adherence to these values within the textbooks. To rephrase, it aims to determine how well these textbooks incorporate and reflect the moral values associated with each stage of moral development. This analysis will help educators and curriculum developers in evaluating the effectiveness of the textbooks in promoting moral education and character development among EFL learners. Additionally, it will shed light on any gaps or areas for improvement in the integration of moral values within EFL educational materials.

In order to determine the distribution patterns and specifically the developmental changes in the percentage of different categories, this study utilizes the framework of Kohlberg and Piaget's "Moral Stage Theory (MST)" to examine how different categories are distributed and how they

1349

change over time. The main focus is on analyzing the percentage variations within these categories. By doing so, the study aims to gain valuable insights into the development of moral values within specific EFL textbooks.

Piaget's theory suggests that children's moral development evolves from self-centered thinking to a rational, objective perspective driven by altruism. Building on this idea, Kohlberg outlines three levels of moral development: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional. These levels are further divided into two stages each. Kohlberg's theory of moral development suggests that individuals progress through a series of moral stages as they mature. These stages reflect increasing levels of moral reasoning and ethical understanding. According to Kohlberg, moral development occurs in a sequential and hierarchical manner, with each stage building upon the previous one (Scott, 1987).

The pre-conventional level, observed during infancy and toddler years, initially focuses on satisfying personal needs and later includes consideration of societal norms. In contrast, during the stage of conventional morality, which typically occurs between the ages of 5 and 10, children prioritize the interests of shared relationships (Stage 3) and the well-being of society as a whole. During Stage 3, children acquire the ability to respect and conform to social standards and conventions, primarily driven by the approval or disapproval they receive from others. As they transition to Stage 4, children develop an understanding of the significance of obeying laws and societal norms in upholding a functional and orderly society, with their motivation stemming from this recognition rather than seeking individual approval as in Stage 3. In Stage 4, which typically occurs around Primary 5 or 6 and may extend into secondary levels, children go through moral socialization. They begin to accept and respect the discipline and authority of the group, recognizing the importance of adhering to its rules and harboring a fear of potential sanctions or consequences that may arise. During the post-conventional stage, which generally occurs in secondary school years, teenagers exhibit a greater awareness of and concern for the wider society. They begin to engage in abstract reasoning when contemplating moral judgments and evaluating what is considered "right" and "wrong". At Stage 6, individuals establish a firm perspective by embracing the notion of universal

moral obligations. They consciously apply procedural justice to scrutinize the validity of their moral deliberations (Scott, 1987; Khathi, Govender and Ajani, 2021).

## 2. Related Studies

Moral education, also known as "values education," "ethics and education," or "character education," has gained significant attention in the field of education (Lickona, 2017; Barrow, 2015; Chazan, 2022). Various educational courses and subjects serve as significant channels for imparting moral education content (Barrow, 2015). However English language teaching has recently gained recognition as a medium for imparting moral education (Johnston, 2003; Shaaban, 2005; Widodo et al., 2018).

This shift in perspective signifies a broader transformation within EFL education, extending its goals beyond the mere mechanics of language instruction to address the multifaceted needs of 21st-century learners, encompassing linguistic proficiency, character development, and global competencies (Akbari, 2008; Aghagolzadeh, 2012). Consequently, this change is supported by an increasing body of literature discussing the integration of moral education within the EFL context. Such literature falls into two main categories: conceptual papers and research papers, showcasing influential contributions from scholars including Johnston, 2003; Shaaban, 2005; Widodo, et al., 2018; Thongrin, 2018; Johnston & Buzzelli, 2002; Marahati and Wiedarti, 2019; Feng, 2019 ect..

Several studies have examined how to integrate moral education into English language teaching, emphasizing its importance in EFL classrooms and presenting various strategies and case studies for successful implementation (Widodo et al., 2018; Thongrin, 2018; Feng, 2019; Johnston, 2003). For instance, Johnston (2003) in his work highlights the crucial role of moral education within the realm of ELT. He advocates for a shift away from a sole focus on linguistic competencies, urging educators to integrate character development and global awareness into language instruction. According to Johnston, the inclusion of moral values in ELT fosters the cultivation of virtues, encourages a deeper understanding of diverse cultural viewpoints, and fosters the development of responsible global citizens. This comprehensive approach seeks to produce individuals who not only possess language proficiency but also embody strong ethical principles.

Moreover, Widodo and Marwati (2019) conducted a case study in an Indonesian context, exploring the integration of character education in EFL classes. Their research offers practical insights and activities to foster moral values in writing instruction. Similarly, Feng (2019) investigated the integration of moral education in Chinese EFL instruction, providing valuable insights into its impact on language learning and character development. Thongrin (2018) focused on developing moral judgment in EFL classrooms among Thai students, examining specific classroom activities and instructional approaches that encourage moral reasoning and ethical decision-making.

On the other hand, the integration of moral education into ESL/EFL curricula has received significant attention from researchers, who have provided strong reasons, principles, guidelines, and methods supporting its inclusion in English language teaching and learning (Marahati and Wiedarti, 2019; Shaaban, 2005; Widodo et al., 2018). These papers highlight the suitability of the EFL classroom for instilling moral values and emphasize the alignment between the dynamics of moral education and the nature of the EFL curriculum

In addition to this, various models and frameworks have been proposed to facilitate the integration of moral education into EFL classes. Among them, Shaaban (2005) proposed a notable framework, "A Proposed Framework for Incorporating Moral Education into the ESL/EFL Classroom," which has gained significant recognition. Shaaban (2005) underscores the efficacy of integrating moral education into English language teaching, emphasizing the close alignment between the goals, methods, and activities of contemporary ESL/EFL practices and those of character education. This proposed framework serves as a valuable resource for teachers seeking to incorporate moral education effectively within their language teaching practice.

The endorsement of moral education in ESL/EFL curricula and the availability of frameworks and models provide educators with a solid foundation for implementing moral education in language classrooms. Infusing moral education content into language materials and textbooks can indeed foster a supportive learning environment that contributes to the amplification of students' language proficiency. Moreover, the incorporation of moral education aims, such as nurturing empathy, promoting cultural understanding, and fostering ethical decision-making, can significantly enhance students' holistic development, enabling them to become well-rounded individuals.

Despite these advancements, the explicit integration of moral dimensions into language teaching practices and materials remains largely unexplored in Kurdistan. While students in the region are exposed to moral education through cross-curricular subjects, there has been a lack of focused investigation into its integration within the English language curriculum.

In light of this context, this research is dedicated to exploring the content of moral education, including the portrayal of moral values, in EFL textbooks utilized in Kurdistan, with a specific emphasis on how these themes develop across primary and secondary education levels. The analysis will primarily revolve around the primary Sunrise program K1-9, which is the fundamental resource for English language instruction in Kurdistan. Through an examination of the textbook content, this study aims to shed light on the integration of moral education in the English language curriculum in Kurdistan and its evolution across various educational stages.

English is included in the educational curriculum in schools in Kurdistan, although its emphasis may not be as strong as in some other underdeveloped nations (Sofi-karim, 2015). Despite the presence of necessary components for effective teaching, such as preparation, structured curricula, suitable textbooks, trained educators, and efficient administration, challenges related to skill development can sometimes impede the teaching-learning process, leading to a sense of hopelessness (Hussein Saeed, 2015; Sofi-karim, 2015).

However, the importance of studying foreign languages, particularly English, remains undeniable for facilitating effective interpersonal and intercultural communication. It also plays a vital role in advancing fields such as commerce, technology, science, and a deeper understanding of political and social issues.(Widodo et al., 2018).

The introduction of new English textbooks in Kurdistan's formal education system in 2004 marks a significant departure from previous materials. This transformative shift in content and structure is widely acknowledged, highlighting the progress in the development of English language textbooks in the region (Vernez et al., 2014). Moreover, the new English textbooks in Kurdistan's education system have brought about

1351

a significant change by moving away from traditional approaches such as 'grammar translation' and 'rote memorization'.

The Sunrise program, jointly developed by the MoE and Macmillan, offers a comprehensive English course tailored for Kurdish primary and secondary students that includes a teacher's book, a student's book, an activity book, and CDs. This program seamlessly integrates the essential language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, all within the framework of communicative language teaching (CLT). Its core objective is to enhance the communicative competence of Kurdish students (Vernez et al., 2014).

As highlighted before, the content and structure of such textbooks have a profound impact on learners' values and beliefs (Johnston, 2003; Shaaban, 2005b; Widodo, et al., 2018; Thongrin, 2018). Therefore, the choices made regarding what is taught and how it is taught can have a profound impact on ethical values and norms (Feng, 2019).

In addition to this, given the objective of teaching English in Kurdistan, which is focused on developing communicative competence (Vernez et al., 2014), it becomes feasible to include moral education elements that align with the broader educational goals (Reorganizing the KRG Ministry of Education, 2016). Thus, even though the main emphasis is on language proficiency, examples of cultivated moral education content in this context may encompass fostering respect for cultural diversity, promoting empathy and understanding in cross-cultural interactions, encouraging teamwork and collaboration, instilling a sense of responsibility towards effective communication, critical thinking skills, emphasizing ethical considerations in global contexts such as environmental sustainability, human rights, social justice, and responsible consumption.. These values can be seamlessly integrated into language learning activities, discussions, and real-world scenarios, thereby aiding students in developing not only their language skills but also their moral and social awareness.

Therefore, it is essential to recognize the moral dimensions of published materials and examine the consequences of these choices for learners' moral development. To bridge this gap and rectify the deficiency, it is essential to prioritize and undertake extensive research on moral education within the context of ELT. Research in this area

can help ensure that educational materials promote critical thinking, social responsibility, and cultural diversity, rather than reinforcing biases and stereotypes.

## III. Methodology

This section outlines the methodology and procedures used in the study. It begins with an explanation of the research design, method, data analysis, and procedures. Finally, it discusses the reliability of the study.

### 1. Research Design

This qualitative research study adopts a descriptive-analytical research design to investigate the representation of moral education in six EFL textbooks. The research design allows for a detailed exploration and analysis of the moral education content present in the selected textbooks, providing a comprehensive understanding of what and how moral education is portrayed within these educational materials.

### 2. The Method

The primary research instrument employed in this study was the researchers themselves. They played a central role in the data collection process by actively reading, elaborating on, and carefully analyzing six English textbooks. As experts in the field and with a deep understanding of the research objectives, the researchers directly engaged with the textbooks to extract relevant information and conduct a thorough analysis of the moral values presented within them.

Additionally, content analysis serves as the primary method to analyze the content of selected textbooks. This analysis encompasses both visual and verbal elements, such as narratives, dialogues, exercises, examples, photos, images, and illustrations. The objective is to gain a comprehensive and thorough understanding of how moral education content is represented within EFL textbooks. This methodology provides a structured framework for examining and interpreting the representation of moral values, enabling researchers to draw meaningful conclusions about the state of moral education in the textbooks.

Content analysis is indeed a versatile method that enables researchers to examine and understand various forms of communication. It offers the ability to uncover explicit as well as implicit beliefs, attitudes, values, and ideas held by individuals or groups. This analytical approach can be applied to a wide array of communication mediums, including but not limited to newspapers, radio news, TV advertisements, books, essays, novels, magazine articles,

cookbooks, songs, political speeches, and even visual content like images and photographs. The flexibility of content analysis allows for a comprehensive understanding of the content within virtually any type of communication medium

Content analysis is a systematic and replicable technique employed by researchers to condense extensive textual data into a more manageable set of content categories. This process follows specific coding rules and is commonly referred to as a document analysis method. Through content analysis, researchers can effectively organize and categorize written information to uncover patterns, identify themes, or explore relationships within the data. This approach offers a structured and objective means of comprehending the content contained in written materials (Krippendorff, 2004; Cohen, *et al.,* 2007).

Moreover, content analysis is a cost-effective and unbiased research method that allows for the exploration of social behaviors and perceptions. It offers a dynamic and iterative approach, enriching the depth of understanding and insights gained from the analysis (Cohen, *et al*, 2007; Babbie, 2013).

Accordingly, content analysis is highly relevant to this study as it enables the examination of recorded data from authoritative sources such as the textbooks. Through content analysis, researchers can interpret the content and messages conveyed by this source, which have a significant impact on various aspects of society, including policy implementation and educational curricula (Cohen, *et al,* 2007; Babbie, 2013).

### 3. The Sample

In this study, the researchers examined and analyzed six English textbooks tailored for public basic schools in Kurdistan. These textbooks belong to the Sunrise series and cater to students in grades 4 to 9. Each textbook follows a distinct unit structure. For instance, Sunrise 4-6 consists of eighteen units and includes five review sections, while Sunrise 7-9 comprises seven units and incorporates a farewell unit.

The data collected for this study encompasses visual illustrations and written textual segments explicitly containing moral values. This includes reading materials, passages, dialogues, and sentences, along with accompanying visual illustrations. Notably, names, colors, and genders are excluded from this data.

### 4. Research procedures

The research procedures involved in this study comprised three key steps: To begin with, researchers thoroughly read all the textbooks under study without using any predetermined categories in order to get a complete overview of the moral values presented in the textbooks. Then, through revision of textbooks began to identify moral values. After, the researchers started coding the values within ELT textbooks for streamlined classification; and finally, classifying the moral values to enhance their analysis. To rephrase, the initial step involved condensing the data, which entailed selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, or transforming the collected information. In this study, the researchers specifically chose data from English textbooks, concentrating on texts, words visual illustrations that pertained to moral values.

In this study, Appraisal Theory (AT) was utilized as a valuable tool for interpreting the meaning of moral values found in the textbooks. By employing AT, the researchers were able to analyze and understand the underlying significance and implications of these moral values within the context of the study. After condensing the data, the researcher displayed the information in a table and used checklist marks for analysis. This approach was chosen as it is a common and effective method in qualitative research, allowing for easy understanding and interpretation of the data.

After collecting data from the English textbooks, content analysis was employed to classify and connect the data. Detailed explanations and descriptions were provided based on the classified data, leading to conclusions and results. The subsequent discussion and analysis will examine the findings through the lens of critical pedagogy, considering the role of ELT/EFL textbooks.

### 5. Reliability

To ensure the accuracy and reliability of our analysis, we took careful steps. We selected two well-qualified research assistants for the task: one is an English language supervisor from the Ministry of Education, and the other is an associate professor of linguistics at Soran University.

These research assistants underwent thorough training to prepare them for their roles. They independently examined and categorized the moral values present in the textual materials of our study.

In cases where they had different interpretations, such instances were rare, accounting for less than

9% of the cases. To ensure the highest level of accuracy and agreement, the research assistants engaged in detailed discussions with our research team to resolve any differences in their assessments. This meticulous process not only ensures the reliability of our analysis but also enhances the credibility of our research findings.

## IV. Findings and Discussion

In this section, we present the findings and discussions resulting from our analysis of moral education content and learning activities in the six textbooks. Our analysis aimed to identify moral values within both the written and visual content of the Sunrise 4-9 textbook series and explore how these values are communicated to students through various learning activities. Initially, we highlight the moral values evident in the written and visual aspects of the textbooks. Subsequently, the section shares the outcomes of examining the learning activities, offering insights into their effectiveness and their contribution to moral education through the lens of critical pedagogy.

## 1. Moral values Content

The findings related to moral values content have been firmly established through careful consensus among the researchers. This meticulous procedure has led to the identification of a total of 578 instances of moral values intricately woven into the textbook texts.

The content analysis of each textbook was conducted separately, and the findings indicated the presence of different moral values. These values were further categorized into themes of moral education such as "Cultural Appreciation, Lack of Prejudice, Appropriate Values and Attitude, Peace and Human Rights, Global Concerns, Communication and Active Listening, Environmental Responsibility, Empathy and Compassion, and Critical Thinking and Reflection". The frequency and percentage of each moral value in the textbooks were then calculated and presented in a table to provide a clear overview of their representation in the curriculum (Table 3).

Table 3 presents a clear overview of the distribution of these values among different grade levels, providing valuable insights into their prevalence within the curriculum. This allows us to see the varying emphasis on moral education content throughout the different stages of schooling.

the content analysis also indicates that the moral values in the textbooks are primarily communicated implicitly rather than explicitly, but they receive less frequency and prominence compared to other language learning objectives. Instead of isolating moral values within specific sections, the textbooks integrate them throughout the content. However, despite their integration, in the instances where moral values could be implicitly conveyed, they are not clearly linked to addressing present-day ethical dilemmas or illustrating moral behavior effective. The link between these values and real-life ethical issues or the effective demonstration of moral behavior remains unclear.

Additionally, this section provided a detailed explanation of the observed distribution patterns, particularly focusing on the changes in the percentage of different categories in relation to Moral Stage Theory (MST) (Piaget, 1932; Kohlberg, 1981), as well as critical pedagogy. These theoretical frameworks serve as a valuable tool for understanding the progression of moral development in students as they advance through their educational journey. By applying these frameworks, this analysis aims to gain valuable insights into how moral values evolve and adapt within the educational context.

**Table (3):** The Distribution of Moral Education content on the English Textbooks (Sunrise 4-9)

| Textbooks | Sunrise 4 | | Sunrise 5 | | Sunrise 6 | | Sunrise 7 | | Sunrise 8 | | Sunrise 9 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Themes | Freq | Per % | | Per % | Freq | Per % | Freq | Per % | Freq | Per % | Freq | Per % | Total | Per % |
| Respect for Self and Others | 22 | 29.73% | 30 | 30.30% | 30 | 30.61% | 26 | 26.53% | 30 | 30.30% | 22 | 24.44% | 160 | 28.30% |
| Cultural Appreciation | 6 | 8.11% | 18 | 18.18% | 18 | 18.37% | 10 | 10.20% | 18 | 18.18% | 22 | 24.44% | 92 | 16.21% |
| Lack of Prejudice | 16 | 21.62% | 20 | 20.20% | 20 | 20.41% | 20 | 20.41% | 20 | 20.20% | 16 | 17.78% | 112 | 19.65% |
| Appropriate Values and Attitude | 18 | 24.32% | 30 | 30.30% | 30 | 30.61% | 22 | 22.45% | 28 | 28.28% | 24 | 26.67% | 152 | 26.72% |
| Peace and Human Rights | 0 | 0.00% | 2 | 2.02% | 6 | 6.12% | 4 | 4.08% | 6 | 6.06% | 6 | 6.67% | 24 | 4.21% |
| Global Concerns | 0 | 0.00% | 2 | 2.02% | 8 | 8.16% | 0 | 0.00% | 6 | 6.06% | 2 | 2.22% | 18 | 3.15% |
| Communication and Active Listening | 8 | 10.81% | 18 | 18.18% | 18 | 18.37% | 16 | 16.33% | 22 | 22.22% | 20 | 22.22% | 112 | 19.65% |
| Environmental Responsibility | 10 | 13.51% | 20 | 20.20% | 20 | 20.41% | 8 | 8.16% | 16 | 16.16% | 18 | 20.00% | 92 | 16.14% |
| Empathy and Compassion | 8 | 10.81% | 22 | 22.22% | 22 | 22.45% | 16 | 16.33% | 14 | 14.14% | 14 | 15.56% | 96 | 16.83% |
| Critical Thinking and Reflection | 2 | 2.70% | 4 | 4.04% | 4 | 4.08% | 10 | 10.20% | 10 | 10.10% | 10 | 11.11% | 40 | 7.02% |
| Total | 94 | 100% | 99 | 100% | 98 | 100% | 98 | 100% | 99 | 100% | 90 | 100% | 578 | 100% |

The analysis conducted on the EFL textbooks used in public-basic schools of Kurdistan, reveals several important findings. Firstly, a total of 578 instances of moral education content were identified in these textbooks. This indicates that, there is an emphasis on moral education, aligning with the educational objectives of promoting communication, adaptation, and integration with others.

The Sunrise textbooks for grades 4-9 cover a wide range of themes and topics. However, the analysis suggests that moral values are not extensively integrated into the content. Instead, they primarily appear in the form of textual, reading texts, dialogues, sentences. One interesting observation is that the 6th-grade textbooks had the highest repetition of values related to moral relations, while the 4th and 9th-grade textbooks had the lowest repetition. This suggests variations in the extent to which moral values are reinforced throughout different grade levels.

The moral values covered in these textbooks include concepts such as respect, empathy, help, cooperation, tolerance, friendliness, solidarity, kindness, punctuality, hygiene, healthy lifestyle, empathy towards the disadvantaged, harmonious coexistence with nature, and respect for cultural diversity. It is important to note that these values hold significance not only within the Kurdish tradition but also have universal applicability (Darmi, Kamaruddin and Jaffar, 2022), making them relevant to students beyond Kurdistan. In other words, the values used throughout the textbooks are considered to be universal values as well.

The analysis also indicated that the incorporation of moral values in the materials was primarily implicit, with some values being explicitly incorporated. However, it is worth mentioning that according to Shaaban (2005), not all aspects of an EFL program need to be directly related to moral education. Moral values can serve as a complementary element to the language learning process, fostering a broader perspective and ethical awareness among students.

Furthermore, based on the finding (Figure 1), the moral values incorporated in the EFL textbooks are in line with the Piagetian Moral Stage Theory. The textbooks are designed to promote moral development in a progressive manner. They start by emphasizing personal values such as maintaining good hygiene and leading a healthy lifestyle. As learners progress,

the focus shifts to interpersonal values like being polite and showing respect to others. Eventually, the textbooks address values that cultivate a sense of empathy and compassion for all human beings. This approach aims to guide learners through different stages of moral reasoning and foster their overall moral development in the context of EFL education.

The content analysis revealed an interesting finding. Although the textbooks primarily emphasized universal moral values, there was limited emphasis on Kurdish-specific moral values. This suggests that the creators of the content acknowledged the significance of incorporating moral education into the EFL program. However, they chose to proceed cautiously, following a conservative approach (Akbari, 2008) that assumes a linear and predetermined path for children's moral development, aligning with the Piagetian Moral Stage Theory.

In fact, to enhance the effectiveness of moral education in the EFL program, it is recommended to adopt a more comprehensive approach. This approach should involve incorporating a combination of both universal moral values and local moral values at each stage of education (Darmi, Kamaruddin and Jaffar, 2022; Johnston, 2003; Shaaban, 2005; Widodo, 2018). By doing so, it would acknowledge and respect the diverse cultural and contextual influences that shape moral development in Kurdistan. Moreover, it would cater to the specific needs and values of Kurdish learners, fostering a more inclusive and culturally sensitive moral education within the context of EFL instruction. To rephrase, in addition to teaching universal moral values, the curriculum should incorporate and celebrate Kurdish-specific values and perspectives. This addition would acknowledge the unique cultural background of learners and promote a sense of cultural identity and pride.
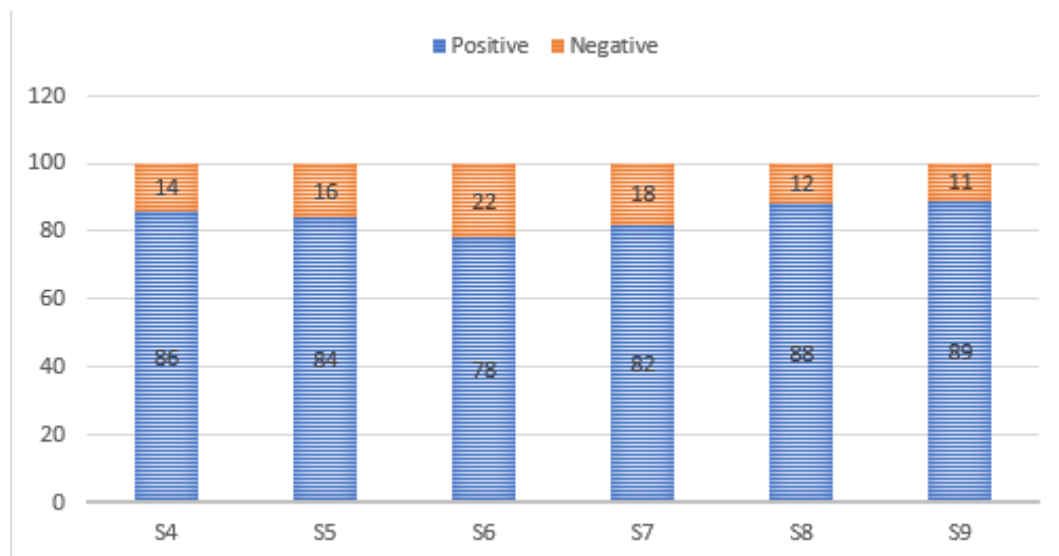


**Fig. (1):** The Distribution of positive and negative values within the textbooks (Sunrise 4-9)

In addition, Figure 1 provides important insights into the distribution of positive and negative values in the textbooks. Three key observations can be made based on the data. Firstly, the textbooks focus on teaching students morally right behavior and discouraging socially unacceptable conduct. This highlights the role of education in shaping students' understanding of moral standards and guiding their behavior. Secondly, the emphasis on positive values is evident in the higher percentage (ranging from 78% to 89%) compared to negative values. This indicates that the textbooks primarily aim to promote positive moral values and encourage students to adopt behaviors that align with social norms and expectations. This emphasis on positive values reflects the influence of role models, both real and fictional, in shaping students' attitudes and conduct.

Lastly, there is a gradual increase in the representation of negative values as students' progress from Stage 4 to Stage 6. This includes examples of behaviors such as littering, poor hygiene, untidiness, delay for school, and laziness. The peak of negative values occurs at Stage 6, where both personal and social behaviors

are depicted. As for the secondary level, there is also a gradual increase in the representation of negative values from Stage 7 to Stage 9. However, there are fewer instances of negative values, because there are fewer examples of personal behaviors in the textbooks. The focus shifts more towards academic and social responsibilities rather than personal behaviors.

In the analysis of values, two distinct categories can be identified: personal propriety and social propriety (Figure 2). Personal propriety refers to moral values and principles that guide individual behavior, encompassing qualities like honesty, integrity, kindness, and respect, which aid in making ethical decisions in personal lives. On the other hand, social propriety pertains to moral values and expectations within a societal context, involving adherence to social norms, conventions, and widely accepted behavioral standards within a community or society. It includes values such as fairness, cooperation, and respect for others (Thongrin, 2018).
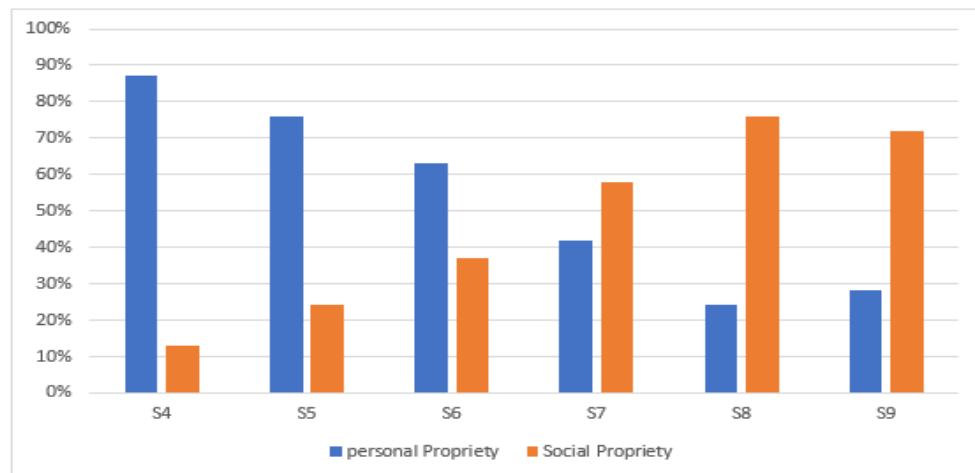


**Fig. (2):** The Distrbution of values interms of Personal propeiety and Social propeiety.

Moreover, it can be noted that, the values in the textbooks undergo a gradual transition from personal behavior to interpersonal relationships. Initially, values are primarily focused on individual conduct, but they progressively expand to include values related to interactions with others. Both personal and social values revolve around aspects that directly impact children's daily lives, such as their friendships, family, school, and community.

The Sunrise curriculum provides examples of this transition. For example, in Sunrise 4, values like punctuality, healthy diet, and taking care of possessions are emphasized. In Sunrise 5, values like daily acts of kindness, friendliness, and punctuality are highlighted. Sunrise 6 introduces characters who demonstrate good citizenship through actions like cleaning, respecting nature, helping others, and showing kindness. There is a shift from personal values to interpersonal values, including respect for others, concern for others, and collaboration.

At the secondary level (Sunrise 7, 8, and 9), the curriculum explicitly addresses some minor social and global issues. For instance, Sunrise 9 highlights the importance of environmental protection in a unit titled "Our Environment is in Danger." Similarly, Sunrise 8, 7, and 9 discuss social issues such as environmental pollution, cultural appreciation, and respect for other species. This shift from personal to social domains aligns with the proposal of the Moral Stage Theory (MST), which suggests that children's moral concerns evolve from self-centered perspectives to considering relationships with others, influence from personal authorities, adherence to social rules, and eventually expanding to encompass universal altruistic concerns and moral values.

Eventually, in the early years of primary school, children's social esteem centers around their abilities and skills, gradually expanding to encompass more abstract qualities like courage and perseverance. As they progress, the focus shifts from personal capabilities to professional and social competence. This progression aligns with the development of children's cognitive capacity, as they transition from understanding values that are concrete and immediate to grasping values that are abstract and connected to the broader social context.

Regarding the presence of visual illustrations in the textbooks spanning from Sunrise four to nine, it is evident that these materials incorporate

a substantial number of images, pictures, charts, and similar visual aids. This aligns with existing literature, which underscores the effectiveness of visual elements in EFL textbooks as they facilitate comprehension and engagement ( Johnston, 2003; Widodo *at el.,* 2018).

In the analysis of these six textbooks, it becomes evident that there is a notable abundance of visual illustrations present. These materials serve as a platform for both implicit and explicit

discussions of moral values (Figure 3). Scholars in the field often contend that the most effective way to impart moral values is by seamlessly integrating them into the visuals themselves, rather than explicitly stating them in text (Richards and Schmidt, 2010). This approach allows for a more immersive and meaningful learning experience, as students can actively interpret and reflect upon the moral messages conveyed through the visuals (Elmiana, 2019).
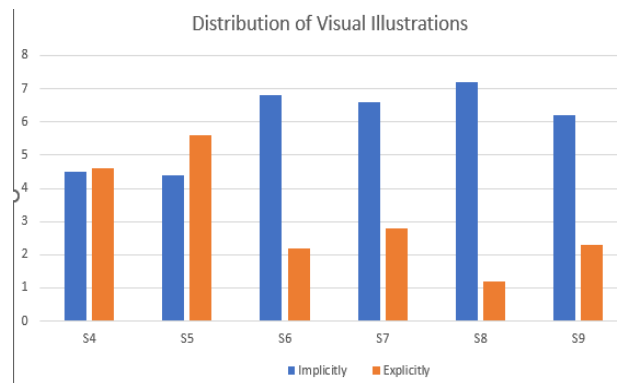
**Fig (3):-** The Distribution of Visual Illustration of moral values.

Throughout the six textbooks, numerous visual illustrations showcase characters from diverse cultural backgrounds engaging in acts of kindness and empathy towards one another (Example 1). These visuals provide opportunities

for fostering discussions on inclusivity, respect for diversity, and the value of empathy. Students can explore how understanding and embracing different cultures and perspectives can lead to a more harmonious and compassionate society.
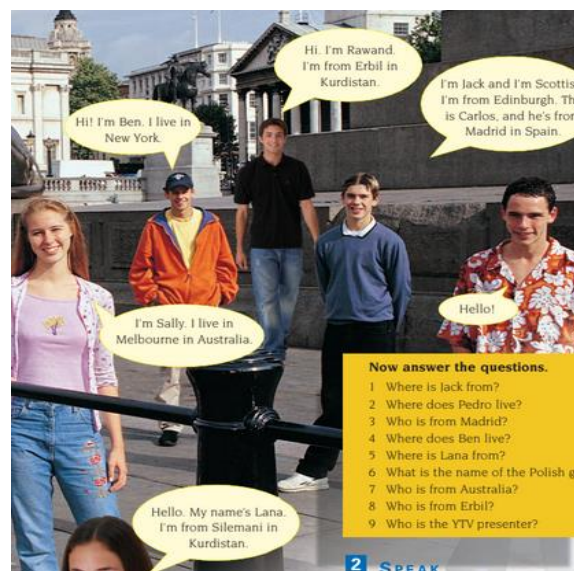
Example (1)

Additionally, several visual illustrations in the textbook depict characters demonstrating honesty, integrity, and responsible behavior in various situations (Example 2). These visuals serve as prompts for discussions on moral virtues

and the importance of ethical conduct. Students can analyze the actions depicted and reflect on the significance of honesty, integrity, and responsibility in their own lives.
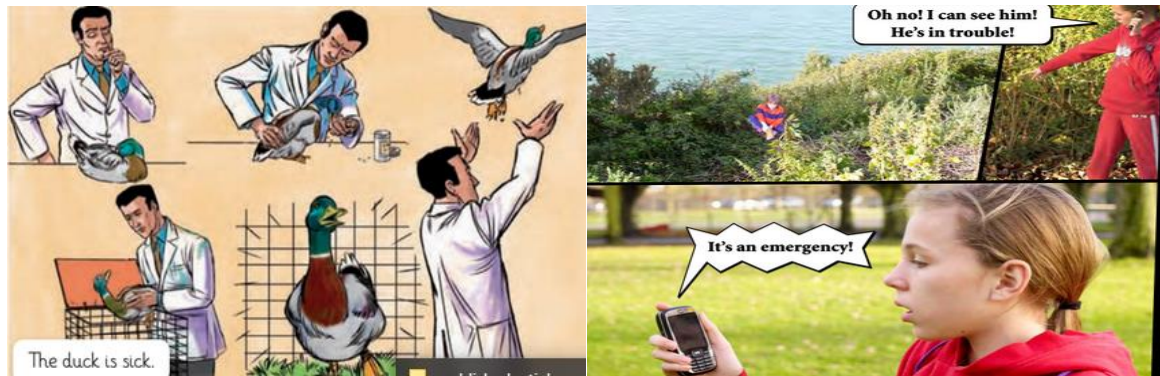
**Example (2)**

Furthermore, an additional visual illustration portrays a group of characters helping each other during a challenging situation, implicitly conveying the value of cooperation and teamwork. This image provides a starting point for discussions on the benefits of collaboration, problem-solving, and mutual support. Students can explore how these qualities contribute to achieving common goals and building positive relationships.



In general, among the many visual illustrations within the six textbooks, these examples offer abundant opportunities for discussions on inclusivity, diversity, empathy, moral virtues, ethics, cooperation, and teamwork, all of which are regarded as crucial elements in moral education.

## 2. LEARNING ACTIVATES

Based on the analysis of various learning activities in the textbooks, it is evident that tasks such as dialogues, reading texts, and exercises predominantly follow a question-answer format. These activities primarily aim to assess students' understanding of factual information conveyed in the text. However, it is notable that the questions typically concentrate on factual details rather than encouraging critical reflection or facilitating discussions about the underlying themes, ideas, or moral values presented in the text. As a result, students are not given the opportunity to develop their critical thinking skills or engage in meaningful discussions about the topics. For instance**, in Sunrise 7, Unit 5, page 60,** after reading the text about **'Flying Saucers'** students are provided with 9 missing words that need to be filled in brackets based on their understanding of word meanings. Additionally, they are given five display questions that require short answers related to the text. **Another example: in Sunrise 5, unit 7, page 34.**

Charities help other people. There are a lot of important charities in England.

WaterAid is a big international charity. The headquarters of WaterAid are in London. They work in 17 countries in Africa and Asia. They help people to have water for drinking, cooking and cleaning.

The RSPCA helps animals. Their headquarters are in London. They only work in the United Kingdom. They make sure that people treat animals well.

## Answer the questions.

1) The headquarters of WaterAid and the RSPCA are in this city.
2) This charity helps animals.
3) This charity works in Africa and Asia.
4) This charity helps people with water.
5) This charity only works in the United Kingdom.



Hence, the learning activities presented in the textbooks leave room for improvement in fostering critical thinking and meaningful discussions among students (Akbari, 2008a). While the focus is primarily on practicing grammar, vocabulary, and language skills, there is a missed opportunity to empower students to express their opinions and engage in thought-provoking conversations (Widodo at. el., 2018).

Likewise, it is worth noting, in the early series of textbooks (Sunrise 4, 5, 6, 7), there is a lack of activities for discussing and expressing. Instead, the focus is on tasks that involve read and say or listen and say, which do not fully emphasize expression. The introduction of dedicated speaking activities seems to occur in the Sunrise seven to nine. However, it appears that these speaking activities may not sufficiently enhance students' critical thinking skills or develop the learner's character. The following example is from **Sunrise seven, unit one, page 27.** This is a speaking activity which ask the students to copy the questions. Another example: **Sunrise eight, unit 3, page 39**. Based on an article of '**Charles Dickens'**, students supposed to ask and answer questions that are already there.

## SPEAKING

**5** Ask and answer questions about the life of Charles Dickens. Use the questions in activity 3 to help you.

Further, there are activities that do not encourage independent thinking and problem-solving. Instead, they provide predetermined actions or answers that students are expected to match with the given problems. For example: in **Sunrise 9, unit 5, page 62**, there is a topic about 'Our environment is in danger'. The activity asks the students to write three sentences about what will happen to the environment based on the given topic. Moreover, in **Sunrise 6, unit 8, page 44,** the activity only asks the students to talk about the problems without discussing the solutions.

② **Read this leaflet. Close your book and talk about the problem of plastic bottles.**

Every hour around the world, we throw away more than 3 million plastic bottles. That means we throw away more than 26 billion plastic bottles every year. That's a mountain of plastic bottles!

People recycle some of those plastic bottles. They make them into clothes and new plastic bottles. But most of the bottles are now on the streets, in the parks, in the rivers and lakes, and in the countryside. Everywhere you look you see plastic bottles.

**Don't throw your plastic bottles in the street! Recycle them!**

## SPEAKING

### 5  Copy and complete the questions.

1  ____'s your name?
2  ____ are you from?
3  ____ old are you?
4  ____'s your birthday?
5  ____'s your favourite sport?
6  ____'s your favourite band?
7  ____'s your favourite film star?

**Now ask another student questions and complete the chart in your notebooks.**

Name _____

Town/City _____

Age _____  Birthday_____

Favourite sport _____

Favourite band _____

Favourite film star _____

The analysis highlights a significant gap in the current textbooks when it comes to fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills among students. While there is a consensus on the importance of including activities challenging students with real-life problems and encouraging independent thought and creativity (Thongrin, 2018; Shaaban, 2005), many activities in these textbooks provide predetermined actions or answers, limiting opportunities for such development.

The activities presented in the textbooks focus mainly on language skills, but they do not go beyond a surface level of accepting norms. They do not empower learners to become reflective moral agents who can make informed decisions and justify their actions based on moral principles. To rephrase, this creates a problem because while the moral values are presented in the textbooks, students do not have enough opportunities to think critically, make decisions, and solve problems based on moral principles. There is a lack of activities that encourage critical thinking, decision making, and problem-solving through reading, writing, observing, debating, role play, and the use of statistical data.

The discussion underscores the critical need for a more comprehensive approach to language education that not only focuses on language skills but also encourages students to become reflective

moral agents capable of making informed decisions and justifying their actions based on moral principles. This can include tasks that prompt students to explore multiple perspectives, generate their own ideas, and engage in meaningful discussions, ultimately fostering a well-rounded and skillful generation (Sheldon, 1988; Akbari, 2008).

Overall, the activities in the textbooks prioritize message exchange without adequately promoting students' individual voices and the development of their identity. This is because the textbooks primarily focus on honing language skills and exchanging information, neglecting to encourage students to express their own thoughts, ideas, and opinions. Consequently, students may find limited opportunities to cultivate their distinctive voices and shape their personal identities throughout the learning journey. Besides, the emphasis remains on transmitting information rather than fostering individual expression and enabling the exploration of personal perspectives. At large, there is a need for activities that encourage critical thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving through reading, writing, observing, debating, and using real-world data.

## V. Conclusion

The study explored the representation and integration of moral education content in six EFL textbooks used in public-basic schools in Kurdistan. The analysis revealed that the current English language textbooks do not prioritize the teaching of moral values. Despite the presence of a significant number of moral values (578) within the textbooks, they are overshadowed by other objectives in English language learning.

Further, the study's implications stress that moral values within the textbooks are predominantly presented implicitly rather than explicitly. They appear to take a back seat to other objectives in English language learning, as they are often subordinated and not given the necessary emphasis required for their effective integration into the educational curriculum. This lack of emphasis creates challenges for students in comprehending and valuing diverse cultures and in building a robust moral framework essential for responsible citizenship.

On the other hand, the analysis of six EFL textbooks demonstrates commendable efforts to incorporate moral values, aligning with the Piagetian Moral Stage Theory's progression from personal to interpersonal and empathetic values. It begins with a focus on personal values like

hygiene and a healthy lifestyle, gradually moving to more complex interpersonal values such as politeness and respect. Finally, it reaches the highest point by addressing values related to empathy and compassion. This sequential approach is intended to guide learners through various stages of moral development within the framework of EFL education.

In response to the second research question regarding how moral education content is depicted within the textbooks, the study scrutinized the inclusion of learning activities and conduct a critical evaluation of the manner in which moral education content was presented in the textbooks. This encompassed an examination of the content's clarity, its alignment with educational objectives, and its efficacy in conveying the principles of moral education and critical pedagogy.

The presentation of activities in the current textbooks highlights a significant gap, as they predominantly prioritize language skills while neglecting opportunities for critical thinking and problem-solving. The activities within these textbooks fall short in empowering students to become reflective moral agents capable of making informed decisions grounded in moral principles. There is a need for a more comprehensive approach to language education that includes tasks prompting students to explore multiple perspectives and engage in meaningful discussions. This shift can foster a well-rounded and skillful generation capable of independent thought and moral decision-making.

Besides, three key issues have been identified. Firstly, the topics covered in the textbooks were usually safe and non-controversial, lacking critical thinking and social issues. Secondly, the textbooks predominantly reflected the target culture, aligning with Western values and beliefs and neglecting the learners' own culture and values to some extent. Lastly, questions arose regarding the validity of the Piagetian stage theory, with concerns about potential overemphasis on promoting civic responsibilities at the potential expense of students' character development and the cultivation of critical thinking skills.

Overall, the findings revealed that there were attempts to incorporate moral values in the textbooks (Sunrise 4-9). However, there is a clear misalignment between the dominant instrumental approach to the English language curriculum and the principles of critical pedagogy. While the prevalent approach prioritizes language

proficiency as a primary goal, critical pedagogy emphasizes the development of critical thinking skills and moral growth alongside language acquisition.

This implies that, the prevalent approach to English language education in Kurdistan primarily emphasizes the development of language skills as a means to an end, without fully embracing the principles of critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy emphasizes not only language proficiency but also critical thinking and moral development. This misalignment poses challenges for students in navigating a multicultural world, which is a significant objective in Kurdistan's foreign language education framework.

## VI. Recommendations

In Kurdistan, it is crucial to remain updated on the current curriculum developments, educational policies, and initiatives in order to have a thorough understanding of the specific practices pertaining to ELT education. The implementation of the Sunrise program in public schools in Kurdistan has been ongoing for over two decades. However, it is noteworthy that the function and objectives of ELT have undergone significant transformations during this time. It is no longer limited to the development of linguistic competency alone; rather, there is now a broader objective of nurturing moral or character development in EFL students. In order to effectively respond to this shift in focus, several recommendations have been proposed.

➤ Development of English Language Textbooks: It is recommended to develop English language textbooks for all educational levels in Kurdistan that explicitly and implicitly incorporate the core values identified in the study. These values should be integrated into the content, activities, and exercises of the textbooks, aligning them with the overarching objectives of education.

➤ Deliberate and Balanced Integration: For the basic stage in Kurdistan, there should be a deliberate and balanced integration of the identified values throughout the content of English language textbooks. This integration should be carefully planned and implemented to ensure that the values are effectively conveyed and reinforced in a cohesive manner.

➤ Developing a holistic approach in ELT, to education that goes beyond linguistic competence. This study suggests for the development of English language textbooks for all educational levels that incorporate moral education within EFL context, to help the students develop not only their language skills but also their character and ethical awareness. It equips them with the necessary tools to become responsible global citizens who can communicate effectively and navigate diverse cultural settings while upholding ethical principles

➤ Professional Development for Teachers: Teachers should receive appropriate professional development and training to effectively teach and promote the identified values within the English language curriculum. This training can help teachers understand the significance of the values, provide strategies for integrating them into their lessons, and foster their own understanding and embodiment of these values.

➤ Continuous Evaluation and Feedback: Regular evaluation of the English language textbooks should be conducted to assess their effectiveness in promoting the identified values. Feedback from teachers, students, and other stakeholders should be sought and considered for further improvement and refinement of the textbooks.

➤ Collaboration with Stakeholders: Collaboration among relevant stakeholders, such as educators, curriculum developers, policymakers, and community members.

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پوختە

سەرەڕای جەختکردنەوەیەکی جیهانی لەسەر تێکەڵکردنی پەروەردەی ئەخلاقی لە ناو فێرکردن زمانی ئینگلیزی، هیچ لێکۆڵینەوەیەک نیە باس لە توانای کتێبی خوێندنی زمانی ئینگلیزی لە کوردستان بکات، بۆئەوەی ببنە ئامرازێک بۆ پێشخستنی گەشەپێدانی ئەخلاقی/کارەکتەری. پرۆگڕامی سەئرایز پێگەیەکی گرینگی هەیە وەک سەرچاوەی زانیاری بۆ فێرخوازان و مامۆستایان لە چوارچێوەی فێرکردن وفێربوونی زمانی ئینگلیزی بۆیە زۆر گرنگە بە وردی لە ناوەڕۆک و گەیاندنی ئەم کتێبە دەرسیانە بکۆڵینەوە. بۆ چارەسەرکردنی ئەم بۆشاییە، ئەم توێژینەوەیە میتۆدۆلۆژیای وەسفیی-شیکاریی دەگرێتەبەر، کە شیکاری ناوەڕۆک بەکاردەهێنێت بە سوود وەرگرتن لە تیۆری هەڵسەنگاندن (AT) و پێداگۆژیی ڕەخنەیی، بۆ ئەوەی بە شێوەیەکی گشتگیرلە بەها ئەخلاقییەکان بکۆڵێتەوە کە لە کتێبە دەرسییەکانی زمانی ئینگلیزی جێگیرکراون. بە گشتی دەرەنجامەکان ئەوە دەردەخەن کە کتێبە دەرسییەکان بە پلەی یەکەم جەخت لەسەر بەها ئەخلاقییە گشتگیرەکان دەکەنەوە، لە هەمان کاتدا نوێنەرایەتییەکی سنووردار بۆ بەها ئەخلاقییەکانی کوردی پێشکەش دەکەن. ئەمەش تیشک دەخاتە سەر پێویستی ڕێبازێکی گشتگیرتر بۆ جێگیرکردنی بەها ئەخلاقییەکان لە ڕووماڵی کتێبە دەرسییەکاندا. جگە لەوەش، توێژینەوەکە بەهرزترین فرێکوێنسییە ستنیشانکردووە کە چوار پێنجەکاتەی پەروەردەی ئەخلاقی پێکهاتووە:ئەوانش ڕێزگرتن لە خود و ئەوانی دیکە، ئەهبوونی پێشوەختە، بەها و هەڵوێستی گونجاو و ژینگە. شیکردنەوەی شەش کتێبی خوێندن لە قۆناغی ٤-٦ی سەرەتایی تا قۆناغی ٧-٩ی ناوەندی، ڕیبازێکی پێشکەوتووی ڕوون نیشان دەدات، کە بەها کەسییەکانی وەک شێوازی ژیانی تەندروست، هاوسۆزی، پاکوخاوێنی و بەختەوەری لە سەرەتادا لە پێشینەدان، دواتر بەهاکانی نێوان کەسی وەک خەمخۆری، ئەهدب، ڕێزگرتن و هاوکاری. وە هەروەها کتێبە دەرسییەکان تیشک دەخەئنە سەر بەها خۆبەخشەکان کە پەیوەندییان بە نیگەرانیە ژینگەیی و جیهانییەکانەوە هەیە. بەڵام، گرنگیدانەکە مەیلی بەهرو چاندنی هاوولاتییبوونی باش دەڕوات نەک پەروەردەکردنی تواناکانی بیرکردنەوەی ڕەخنەگرانە، کە ڕەفتاری خوێندکاران لە پێشینەی کارەکاندایە لەبری پرسیارکردن لە بەها کۆمەڵایەتییەکان. واتە لەم ڕێبازەدا زیاتر جەخت لەسەر پەیڕەوکردنی نۆرمەکانی کۆمەڵایەتی و ڕەفتارکردن بەپێی بەها دامەزراوەکان دەکرێتەوە نەک هاندانی خوێندکاران بۆ پرسیارکردن یان تەحەدای ئەو نۆرم و بیروباوەڕان.