

## Analysis of Life Style Representation in the "Interchange" English Language Teaching Books

Aida Hosseinifar

MA student of University of Tehran - Faculty of social sciences -  
Department of communications (Media and Cultural studies)  
Email: [ahosseinifar@gmail.com](mailto:ahosseinifar@gmail.com)

**Abstract** This paper tries to analyze how ideology presented in the Interchange English language teaching books is reflected. And I was looking for the answer of this question that "How do Interchange English language teaching books, as symbolic images, transfer their ideological meaning? And how are an ideology and particular life style presented in a natural and public form in these books?" For answering these questions, first I studied the four yellow, red, blue and green Interchange books and found the determinants of reflected life styles in these books, then came up with a pattern of the particular life style reflected in the books. These patterns are considered the main strategies of the book for transferring particular views and beliefs.

**Keywords:** Culture, Education, Ideology, Interchange, Life style, Power, Representation

### Introduction

In this paper the manner of transferring ideology through reflecting the lifestyle in the Interchange books are investigated by introducing a theoretical framework comprising of two concepts of ideology, representation and lifestyle. Based on the definition of Thompson of ideology, definition of Bourdieu and Veblen of lifestyle and taste and also the fundamentals of representation, this study is trying to understand how lifestyle in these books is represented through the images and sentences? And, in the second level of meaning, what kind of ideology these representations introduce? The method of context analysis adapted with the ideology study pattern in media texts was applied. This pattern was first introduced in 2007 by Dr. Abdollahian and Leila Monfared about methodology of ideology study in media texts (press) in a paper under title of "Methodology and Analysis of Ideology in Newspapers's Texts in Iran", in which the structure of media texts were examined based on their ideological inclinations. This method is somehow close to Thomson's work in identifying the ways of ideology functions, that in this paper also according to this definition and pattern the ways of ideology functions in Interchange books are investigated. "The new paradigm of power has a unique living and political essence that is being identified in the form of a Bio-power. A Bio-power is a form of power that regulates, absorbs and rejoins the social life from inside" (Negri and Hardt, 2005:48). This power surrounds life completely in a way that controls the production and reproduction of life. The power does this in many ways that one of them is expressing its own ideology. As the kind of power in the world is not tangible, thus, any content from the power is likely potential of having an ideology. Lifestyle reflected in Interchange books is one of the phenomena in the contemporary world that "power" and its establishments distribute their lifestyle among language learners by that, and in that way transfer the particular ideology of a specific person or group. My research question about power and its presence in daily life is that whether power regarding the phenomenon of lifestyle reflected in these books convey ideology or not? And if yes, how the compound phenomenon of power and lifestyle together convey the ideology of these books to language learners? I paid attention to lifestyle as one of the areas of presence and power transfer among language learners, and in the language learning books of Interchange the manner of introducing an American lifestyle with the American cultural features caught my attention more than anything else, therefore, this paper examines how the American ideology is transferred through representation of American lifestyle.

### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this paper is comprised of the two concepts of ideology and lifestyle.

### Ideology

Among scholars who have worked on ideology theories "Mannheim" and "Thompson" are scholars whose theories

contain a type of methodology of ideology analysis. Thus, Thompson's theory and methodology were used in studying Interchange books. Using theories of earlier scholars such as Marx, Lukacs and Mannheim, Thompson made a deeper effort to understand ideology and in his theory he invented a method to identify and analyze ideology. Thompson sees ideology as a set of methods that by supplying ideological meanings tries to sustain and maintain domination relations. According to Thompson these notions are applied through images – which he calls "symbolic images" – that reflects the ideology of the ruling class. A part of his book is concerned with the methods through which the meaning serves to establish and continue domineering relations (take look at Thompson, 1999:73). In fact, the meaning which Thompson is concerned with are "meanings of symbolic images that are rooted in the social contexts and are spread and circulated in social world; a wide range of actions and speeches, are images and texts that are produced by agents (subjects) and recognized as conceptual structures or meaningful inferences by them and others" (Thompson, 1999:73). Thompson sees "linguistic tools" very important in this respect. Of course, in his view symbolic images can have a non-linguistic and quasi-linguistic nature". For analysis of ideology in Interchange books, the structural elements of ideology in the represented lifestyle components in these books were studied. The methodology is based on identifying and extracting the lifestyle components.

### **Lifestyle**

I am seeking to understanding whether teaching language by books and a specific type of lifestyle reflected in the books are effective in causing cultural changes or not? For this end, I used Bourdieu's theory about lifestyle.

In addition to concept of "cultural capital", Bourdieu examines another concept that put him among other lifestyle scholars such as Simmel, Veblen, Lazer, Kluckhohn and Giddens. Bourdieu, in brief, sees "taste" as "displayed preferences". From his point of view taste "is the capacity to produce classifiable activities and products and the capacity to differentiate and understand the importance of these activities and products. Taste is the desire and capacity that a class assigns to itself from classified affairs and classified activities and objects (materially and symbolically). Taste is the formula generating lifestyle" (Bourdieu quoted by Mahdaviyani, 2008). Therefore, from Bourdieu's point of view: taste is a desire, capacity, creativity, choice and preference. So taste has an internal aspect and external things that are considered to be according to the individual's taste (including behaviors and material and spiritual properties) are symbols or in other words the embodiment and realization of taste, not itself." (Bourdieu quoted by Mahdaviyani, 2008). "In Bourdieu's interpretation of taste, it is "Habits" that are completely resulting from the process of socialization and education (including formal and informal) and individual's position in social environment or according to him the area or scope" (Mahdaviyani, 2008). According to Bourdieu "Habits are developed by conditioned habits related to a specific group of life conditions" (Bourdieu quoted by Pen Shohreh and Fonten, 2006:76) that are transferable, that is they can be transferred from a group to another group and from a class to another class. When the middle class intends to relate itself to the upper class by pretentious consumption imitates their habits for this end. Therefore, when the taste is transferable, it is also educable or in a more precise word education shapes taste and lifestyle afterwards. "In Bourdieu's theory lifestyle, which involves the classified and classifying actions of every person in areas such as dividing the hours of the day, type of hobbies and sports, ways of socializing, furniture and house, manners of speaking and walking, it is in fact the incarnation of the preferences. On the other hand lifestyles are ways of consumption of social agents who have different rankings with regard to position and social legitimacy" (Shalchi, 2008). "Bourdieu sees lifestyle as systematic activities that arise from the taste of individual and are more external and concrete and at the same time give the individual a symbolic identity and differentiate among different classes of the society" (Mahdaviyani, 2008).

Joining the two mentioned concepts this study suggests that in these Interchange English language teaching books, power transfers its ideology through reflecting a type of lifestyle with specific features. The lifestyle reflected in these books includes components that were identified while analyzing the findings.

### **Methodology of Text Analysis of Interchange Books from the Perspective of Reflecting American Ideology**

The new method invented by Dr. Abdollahian and Leila Monfared to analyze press texts the strategies of ideology transfer is studied, and the method is explained in the form of symbolic images interactive models, situational interaction model, practical strategies of ideology and ideology structure model.

### **Findings Analysis**

Components of Lifestyle in Interchange Books

By component I mean the things that are concrete applicability of lifestyle. Elements that Simmel, Veblen and Weber mention in their works are: "manner of eating, preening oneself up (type of clothing and pursuing fashion), type of housing (decoration, architecture, and furniture), type of transportation means, ways of spending leisure time and amusement, manners (behaviors showing nobleness and generosity, smoking in public, number of servants and their appearance)" (Mahdaviyani, 2008), even "victuals" (Berelson and Steiner quoted by Mahdaviyani, 2008). Bourdieu sees the "lifestyle study firstly in terms of properties (luxury or cultural), such as house, villa, boat, car, furniture, paintings, books, drinks, cigars, perfumes, cloths, and secondly the activities that differentiates people from each other, such as sports, games, hobbies (walking or mountain climbing, skiing or horse riding, golf or tennis), clothing, paying attention to physical appearance, language and budgeting" (Bourdieu quoted by Mahdaviyani, 2008).

Mahdaviyani suggests that lifestyle elements are classified in four sets: "properties (equity and consumer ones), activities (hobbies, leisure time activities, etc), views and inclinations and human relations (from inter individual to social)". Here summing up the components of American lifestyle reflected in Interchange books I found seven criteria as below:

1. Human relations (A. inter individual, B. inter family relations)
2. Type of consumption (A. clothing, B. product purchase, C. food)
3. Type of ceremonies and social rituals
4. Way of spending vacations and leisure time
5. Way introducing success and successful people
6. Representation and obsession with fitness
7. Type of profession

Each of the above items are reflected in the books in different ways or used to transfer the values of a lifestyle. For example, the primary human relations are A.inter-individual communications that are reflected in the books in four forms: a- heterosexual relations, b- teacher-student relations, c- non-group relations, and d- landlord-tenant relations.

a. Heterosexual relations: having a partner and showing it as natural and even emphasis on having partner aside from marriage and dealing with issues related to it such as individuals' efforts to have a good impression on their partner's family.

b. Teacher-student relations: these relations in the American cultural are not limited to the academic environment and are seen in other informal environments such as restaurants, clubs and parties. It is argued that teacher-student relations are valid only in academic environments and outside it people can play the role of friends. A professor outside school and a boss outside office can be a friend or acquaintance and it is not contrary to their official roles.

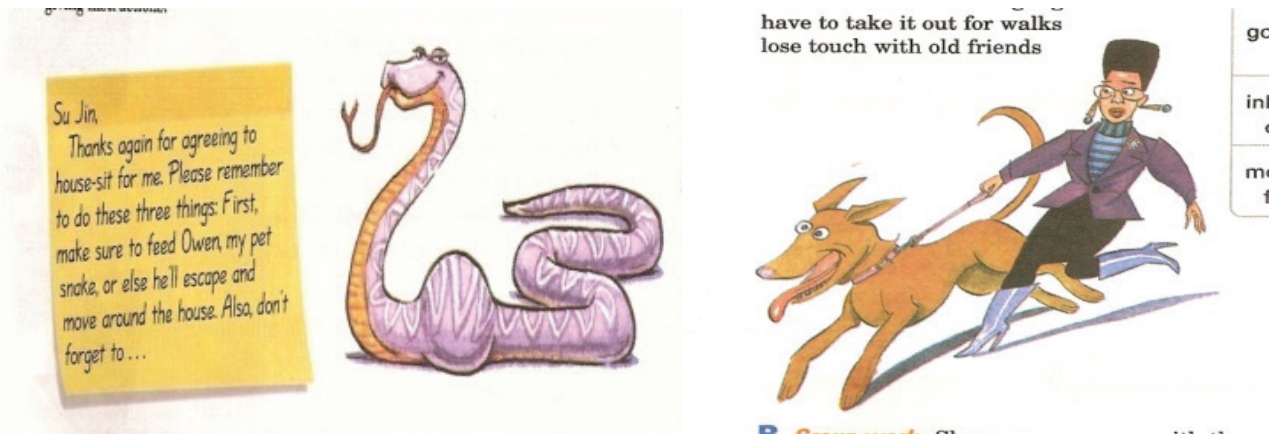
c. Non-group relations: the intimate relations between young people and old people is not bound to giving advice and youth-elder and inexperienced-wise relations. For example, a young adult speaks about life goals and an old person talks about old wishes, their fulfillment and non-fulfillment in a way that there is no distinct difference between their speeches despite the age differences. The only difference between grandson and grandfather is age and experience, which if it is not too strong, would not be an obstacle in the way of communication. In fact, in this kind of presentations being old and experienced is not considered as a criterion of superiority and more importantly a reason for respect (as seen in Iranian culture).

d. Landlord-tenant relations: showing respect to tenant and caring about his/her problems and taking care of the house problems by the landlord/lady even in the smallest issues such as a broken stove. We may consider such rights as human rights, but it is raised in this basic level that a tenant pay rental so s/he has the maximum right to use all facilities with no fault, and the landlord/lady who receives rental is obliged to give service and solve the house problems. Landlord/lady or governor is obliged to respond. The tenant has the right to object and ask. It might be said that democracy in American society is practiced within these small issues of life.

B- The second form of human relations involves family relation.

a- One of them which is directly pointed out is announcing changes in American families that today due to increase in life expenses most women have to work. American families change according to the situation and adapt themselves with life conditions, especially in the new economical situation that financial needs of the families are higher.

b- The second form of family relations is about keeping a pet especially a dog which accompanies family all the time, at home, bedroom, walking outside and even at parties and in the presence of guests. It is dear like other members of the family and is important. When leaving house they give it to a person or pet keeper. Its health is checked by a veterinarian from time to time and when it is ill or gone family members grieve. That is exactly the same aspects and privileges that every family member has. Regarding the prohibition of keeping pets in Iran in recent years, for the audience of these books the difference of a free life in United States becomes evident from these contradictions; keeping dogs is a crime in Iran and is faced with fine and penalty, but in US a dog is like a dear family member.



Picture No 1

c- the importance of house interior design and obsession with furniture arrangement is the topic of many of the discussions suggested in the books that engages language learners with the topics of best house furniture, their suitability with respect to design, color and fashion, putting emphasis to these matters to the extent that suggesting their replacement if they were out fashion.

2- Type of consumption

"Veblen in explaining lifestyle shows these consumption ways in clothing consumption. From his point of view the rule of product pretentious wasting manifests itself by showing off clothes" (Faraji and Hamidi, 2008). In these books we can see that one of the ways of presenting lifestyle is also showing consumer behaviors of people.

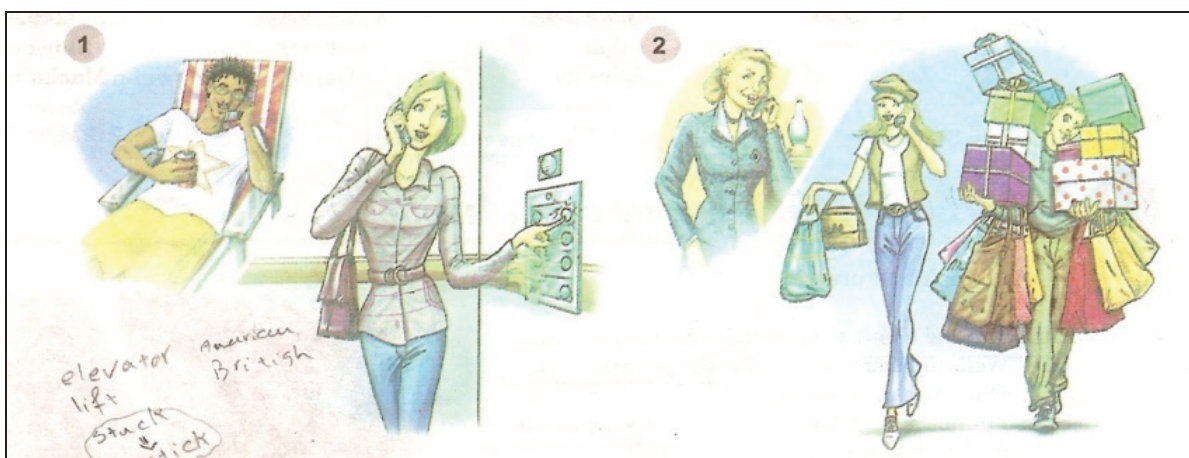
A- Clothing

The obsession of buying clothes and finding a suitable one to extent that the individual spends a lot of time and goes to all department stores. All these show the importance of clothes in introducing the character of a person, even one of the topics in these books begins with "Should we respect people based on their clothe?"

B- Purchase process and product guarantee

All that is important is the product. Establishing facilities such as telephone, internet ordering, receiving at sight and most important having guarantee even for products like bags. All these show the importance of purchasing products and consumption.

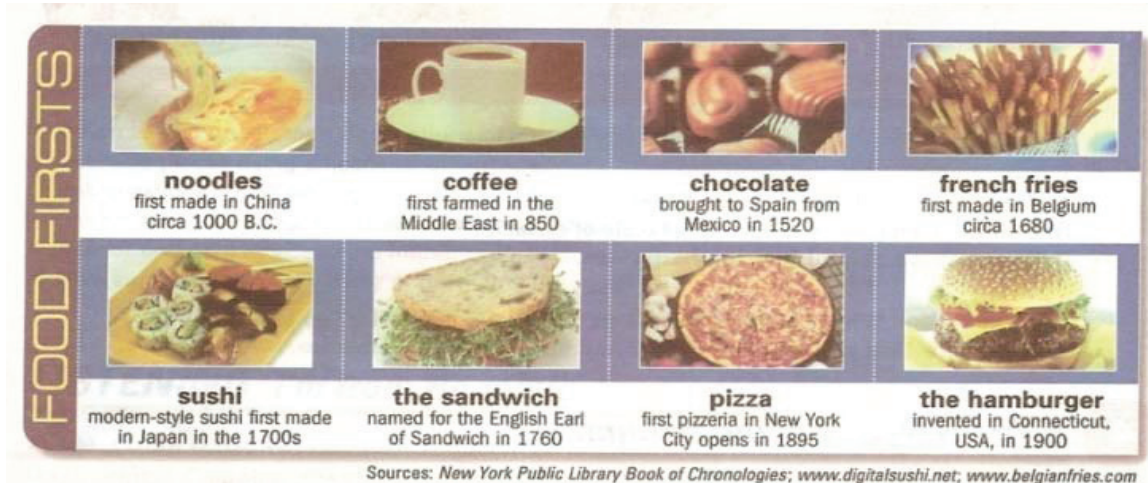
What Friith believes that US itself has become a 'goal for consumerism' that is as a symbol for pleasure, is the thing that comes to mind in the next meaning implication. An individual buys a product and uses it with assured of its quality and guarantee and if it did not work properly s/he can use its guarantee. Facing with such a product and customer oriented system even in books; the audience is unconsciously induced with a satisfaction that sympathizes with the consuming character and sees its satisfaction and pleasure of the product and its consumption important. Here the United States becomes the heaven and knowing American culture gives pleasure.



Picture No 2

### C. Food

One of the inseparable examples of these books is the foods and way of preparing them. The interest of Americans for tasting the dishes of different countries is other points of the discussion. Consuming these dishes has turned to be a symbolic and pretentious move; those who prepare and eat these foods – of course in expensive restaurants – undoubtedly afford it! The more money, the better food.



Picture No 3

Friedman sees consumption as a part of identity "that is people are recognized with eating, drinking, clothing, spending leisure times or in other words by way of living" (Friedman quoted by Gha'eb, 2006:51). Consuming especial foods and drinks takes us closer to the culture and level of people who consume these foods and drinks. Through these presentations especial foods and drinks become symbolic, as Bart believed that eating stake and wine in France is a symbol of nationalism.

### 3- Type of ceremony and social rituals

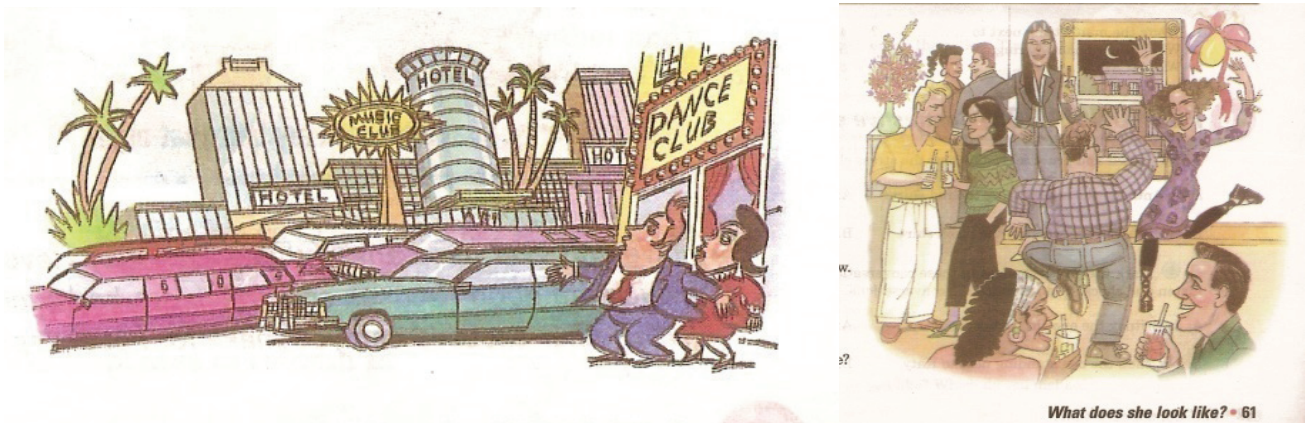
Ceremonies and social rituals stipulated in the books can be divided into main set: a set of them are those that are rooted in the religion of people and includes countries other than US where Christianity is the official religion. Ceremonies such as New Year, Christ Mass, Easter, and other religious ceremonies which are discussed and makes the reader familiar with the religion and culture of Christianity and Christian countries. And the other set are ceremonies and customs that are not religious and are more related to the local culture and are more apt to be transferred to other cultures, in other words are more public like Valentine's Day which is held in February 14<sup>th</sup> which is observed in other countries, too. But in recent years celebrating this day and using its symbols are considered illegal by the government and an example of cultural attack, so we witness its observation in secret.



Picture No 4

#### 4- Spending vacations and leisure times

Parties and showing people dancing in the parties and continues refer to the dance and music clubs as a place to gather and form public spaces to argue, object and make right and fruitful criticisms. We can compare such areas and their strong impact on forming public spaces with Iran where security forces suppress such gatherings and leisure time spending activities.



**Picture No 5**

Spending vacation in abroad such as traveling to India and Hawaii which are very expensive and it is not possible for most of Iranian families to take such trips due to low income.



**Picture No 6**

We can also refer to tours which hold exciting sports programs accompanied by visiting different parts of US while holding such tours and sports in Iran are rarely possible and very expensive. About sports also Bourdieu suggests that class situation defines sports activities and its advantages.

One of the not so unimportant advantages of sports activities is the social values resulting from pursuing specific sports that regarding their class distribution are rare. In other words, in addition to the inherent benefits of sports for the body, we should pay attention to their social benefits, too. These types of benefits result from distinctive trends that different classes have access in an unequal manner. For example, we can see that golfing like expensive dishes and drinks like caviar has a meaningful distribution besides specific health functions (During quoted by Gha'eb, 2006).

#### 5- Ways of presenting success and successful people

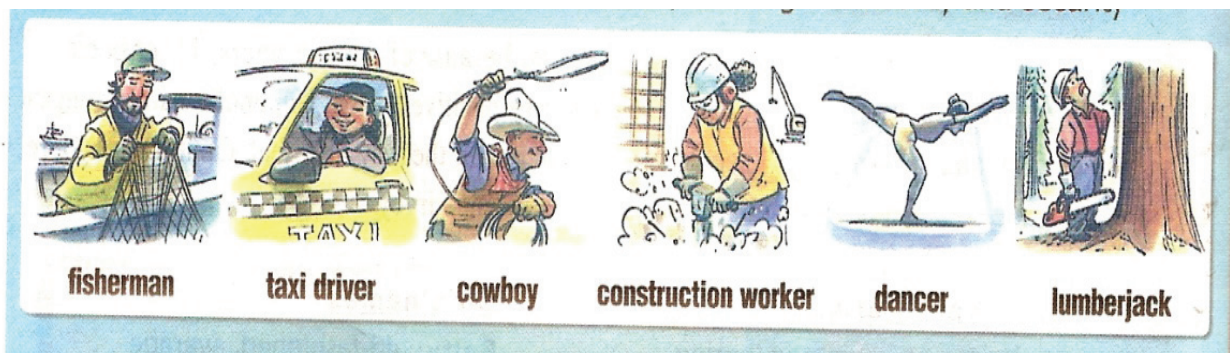
We can see examples of successful people, their goals and desires in the past and fulfillment or failure of them at present, and depicting the details of their success is covered in these books. Of course, in most of the times there is silence about nationality of the successful person, but this silence is accompanied by a western image of the person. Confronting with successful people in this way while makes the reader to wish to be in his/her shoes, it also creates this false notion that the successful person must be from west or US or at least someone who lives in US and has access to the facilities of US. The same notion that the united states are the land of new opportunities.

#### 6- Representation and obsession with fitness

How we can lose weight? What is the proper weight for you? How we can reach the suitable weight? And other similar questions focusing on fitness are raised in class discussions, making it one of the important issues of daily life. Repetition of the issue in different ways makes the readers believe that all people must be fit otherwise they will face problems such as lack of self confidence. We can see that raising this issue makes emphasis on body as a symbol of identity.

#### 7- Type of profession (Business, Modeling, and Dancing)

Business, modeling, and dancing are three professions that are mentioned many times in Interchange books, and even secrets of success of these professions are discussed in details.



Pointing out to these professions makes hints to the smartness of American people in financial matters; in fact, a kind of American economical superiority comes to mind. However, modeling or dancing are not considered professions in Iranian culture and even are not approved of. While in the classification made in the book we see that dancing is considered one of the hard jobs.

It is seen that reflecting American culture in a specific lifestyle depicted in these books, following Baret's semiology system and Umberto Eco's signs chain, suggests that US is the symbol of pleasure, manifestation of development, promotion of consumption, and equalization.

#### Conclusion

The findings of this study show that paper's claim that power has taken different forms in every day life and is not only in hardware form, was not only a claim but is manifested in a soft form through various tools and is not necessarily intentional and conscious. Language is one of the forms of power reproduction, and besides language, education is another form of nonmaterial and intangible power. Getting familiar with other cultures and lifestyles, which are the place of formation of micro-cultures, is a different process in education, which is the subject matter of this study. Education has the power of reproduction of thoughts and rituals that can help shape the taste of individuals.

In the study the ways of transferring ideology through reflection of lifestyle in the books were identified and the results show that these books advocate the following predominant ideologies: American life as a symbol of pleasure; cradle of opportunities, and consumer lifestyle.

The importance and focus on products; paying attention to the body; cloths; ways of spending leisure time with expensive activities and of course preplanned programs that emphasizes on its role in such a lifestyle; symbolic consumption of food that emphasizes on not only the food itself but represents it as something more than just a mere

dish; finally, type of human relationships that in the lifestyle reflected in these books denotes to the determinant quality of people's role at present time that in this way the type of these relations is provisional according to the role and status of people. These are the major elements that are repeated constantly in four grades, namely 3-4 years, to the readers of these books, and gradually depict a pattern of lifestyle that is very different from that of the Iranian lifestyle. It should be noted that the study on language teaching books does not mean that they are the only factors in introducing a lifestyle, but the effects and the role of other media such as satellite channels and internet that open up the Iranian life to the course of globalization are indispensable.

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