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## Abstract

Throughout recent years, Cambridge English have expressed a steadfast commitment to fairness in the language testing arena. However, the cultural dimension to this commitment is often left under-defined or subsumed under broader terminology. Despite its commissioning of detailed research in the area, the cultural suitability of the visuals used in Cambridge's actual examination content remains an area of some ambiguity. Informed by the views and performances of a small but representative sample of young Kuwaiti nationals, this pilot study specifically focuses on the cultural orientation of the photographic representations used in Cambridge English's First Certificate in English examination [FCE]. Finding that many such representations do exhibit strong Anglo/American centrality, it seeks to explore the use of more personal and accessible testing alternatives. These alternatives were created with learner authentication and mental representation opportunities in mind, in the hope that deeper sensory engagement and personalisation would minimise the need for explicitly cultural content. In essence, it sought to reorientate the examination around that which all candidates share; namely their senses and past experience. Despite some methodological caveats, sharp increases in output and affective engagement were recorded throughout the pilot, giving every indication of a promising avenue of further enquiry. It is argued that, if Cambridge English are to be truly consistent on grounds of fairness, they need to reconsider the cultural content of their photographic representations when test-writing for such a diverse global audience. The current pictorial format may not meet the standards of neutrality Cambridge English set themselves and alternatives, whether those suggested in this paper or otherwise, demand a closer look.

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