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THE ANALYSIS OF ELT TEXTBOOKS IN IRAN THROUGH CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS BASED ON FAIRCLOUGH'S FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

The present study attempts to investigate the three facets of meaning namely Subject positions, social relations, and contents through critical discourse analysis in English Language Teaching (ELT) textbooks in Iran based on Fairclough's (2001) framework. In order to investigate the frequency of these facets of meaning the conversations of two series of textbooks in Bahar and Navid Language Institutes (two famous Institutes in Shiraz, Iran) were selected to figure out the ideology behind these series of textbooks. To investigate subject positions, social relations, and contents, Fairclough's (2001) framework was used. Results indicated that, educational and friends related positions were abundant in Navid and Bahar Language Institutes respectively. In both series of textbooks social relations were more or less equal. Content analysis of conversations revealed that the conversations were almost pertained to friendship, sports, and traveling issues. Through the analysis of audio, setting of conversations, tone and intonation in the conversations, it was revealed that the language in the conversations of these two series of textbooks was along with the western culture and ideology. It was concluded that the chosen textbooks had a particular discourse type specifically western ideology and this study was hoped to bring about some degrees of consciousness among people involved in language teaching by rejecting this idea that language textbooks are value free. The study implicated that attempts should be made by text users to acquire a threshold level in critical language awareness in order to understand the central role language can play in structuring human mind.

KEYWORDS: Critical discourse analysis, Subject position, Social relation, Content, ELT Textbooks, Ideology

INTRODUCTION

According to Fairclough (2001) nobody who has an interest in modern society, and surely nobody who has an interest in relationships of power in modern society, can afford to ignore language. As Fairclough (2001) expresses "many people with precisely such interests have believed they could safely ignore language. He posits that, this may not be surprising, because the general level of attention and sensitivity to language has been sorely inadequate, and in particular the teaching of language has to a remarkable extent contrived to ignore its most decisive social functions. Moreover, this cannot be blamed on the teachers, because this is also true in most of the academic work on language which the teachers have been offered as models. According to the functionalist paradigm, the analysis of language cannot be separated from the analysis of the purposes and functions of language in human life. Discourse is consequently seen as a culturally and socially organized way of language (White, 2002). As Richardson (2007) explains, researchers who adopt this definition of discourse 'assume that language is used to mean something and to do something' and that this 'meaning and doing' is linked to the context of its usage. This view of language as action and social behavior is emphasized in CDA, which sees discourse – the use of language in speech and writing – as a form of social practice (Van Dijk, 2011). Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is 'a theory and method analyzing the way that individuals and institutions use language' (Richardson, 2007). Critical discourse analysts focus on 'relations between discourse, dominance, and social inequality' (Van Dijk, 1993) and how discourse (re)creates and maintains these relations of dominance and inequality'. Due to their concern with the analysis of the 'often opaque relationships' between discourse practices and wider social and cultural structures, CDA practitioners take an 'obvious socio-political stance' (Richardson, 2007). CDA therefore addresses broader social issues and attends to external factors, including, power, ideology, inequality, etc. and draws on social and philosophical theory to analyze and interpret written and spoken texts. As Fairclough (1989) puts it:

Although CDA analyses texts and interactions, it does not start from interactions and texts. It starts rather from social issues and problems, which face people in their social lives, issues which are taken up within political science, sociology, and/or cultural studies.

CDA researchers therefore typically examine how the microstructures of language are linked with and help to shape the macrostructures of society (Wodak, 2003). There is not just one way of doing CDA and the various methodologies reflect the philosophical and theoretical orientations of the researchers (Fairclough, 1992; van Dijk, 1993; Wodak, 2001). Fairclough (1992) works from a broadly Marxist perspective arguing that the task of CDA is to identify how relations of inequalities and domination, which arise from neo-capitalist societies, are (re)produced in discourse. Van Dijk (1993, 2001), on the other hand, has devised a socio-cognitive framework which theorizes the relationship between social systems and social cognition. Wodak's (1999, 2003) discourse-historical approach is intent on tracing the intertextual history of phrases and arguments and centers on political issues such as racism, integrating all accessible background information in the analysis and interpretation of the different layers of a text.

Fairclough (1993) argues that every aspect of language use has three dimensions: 'it is a spoken or written language text; it is an interaction between people involving processes of producing and interpreting the text; and it is a piece of social practice. Since CDA is concerned with exposing the often hidden ideologies that are reinforced, reflected, and constructed in everyday and institutional discourse, the concept of ideology is of paramount importance (Van Dijk, 1998). Like the concepts of discourse and power, ideology is probably the one that most challenges precise definition (Hall, 1982). Definitions usually fall into two broad categories: a relativist definition, signifying systems of ideas, beliefs and practices, and a critical definition, along with Marxist theory, which considers it as working in the interests of a social class and/or cultural group. When critical discourse analysts contend that discourse involves ideological assumptions, they use the term ideology in a 'critical' sense. Fairclough (1992) denotes ideologies to be:

Significations/constructions of reality (social relations, the physical world, social identities) which are built into various dimensions of the forms/meanings of discursive practices, and which contribute to the production, reproduction, or transformation of relations of domination.

This critical meaning of ideology, which is based on Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemony (domination by consent), relates it to the process of sustaining asymmetrical relations of power and inequalities – that is to the process of maintaining domination (Fairclough, 2001). As Fairclough (1995) expresses, ideology is 'meaning in the service of power'. According to Wodak (2003) critical discourse analysts see ideologies as serving the interests of certain groups with social power, ensuring that events and behaviors come to be regarded as legitimate and common-sense. As Wodak (2003) posits, ideologies do this, because they inform the way people interpret the world around them.

The question what power is where it is located and how it can be studied in or as language has been an important question in many critical language studies (Adler & Lunghurst, 1994). Social power is defined as power belonging to people who have privileged access to resources, such as education, knowledge and wealth (Van Dijk, 2011). However, analysts do not see power and dominance only as imposed from above on people, but maintain that, in many situations, power is 'jointly produced', for example, when people are susceptible to believe that dominance is legitimate in some way or other (Van Dijk, 2011).

According to Richards (2001, p.114), "curriculum puts emphasis on confirming what knowledge, skills, and values students should learn in school ", but what makes those knowledge, skills and values is highly disputable. Raymond William (cited in Taxel, 1991) claims that curriculum is governed by selective tradition by which knowledge and culture is transmitted to the learner. It should be borne in mind that knowledge passed by the curriculum to students is selected from among huge amount of existing knowledge and this selection is usually fought over by different groups in society, because inclusion of a special kind of knowledge from specified perspective is ideological and will have implications in students' lives and society (Foucault, 1980). As Richards (2001) posits "cultural capital and selected knowledge are packed into the textbooks which are sometimes the only channel for students to get familiar with the world. According to

Richards (2001), textbooks are the key component of language teaching serving as the basis for much of the language input learners receive when learning a language. Moreover, textbook is an instrument to help students to get not only familiar with the linguistic aspects of the language but also with social and cultural aspects embedded in language.

Language textbooks should make learners aware to act against inequalities and injustices (Richards, 2001). In the EFL contexts of Iran, there are a lot of institutes where they use different textbooks as the basis of their curriculum. In this study two famous language institutes namely, Bahar and Navid Language Institutes textbooks were analyzed through critical discourse analysis perspective. They are two famous institutes in Shiraz, Iran. However, no study has so far investigated Navid and Bahar Language Institutes textbooks from a CDA perspective. It is worth mentioning here that both Navid and Bahar Language Institutes in Shiraz, Iran employ internationally produced textbook. The conversations of two series of textbooks at both Bahar and Navid Language Institute were selected to figure out how conversations are constructed with regard to their *contents*, *subject positions* and *social relations* based on Fairclough's (2001) framework.

Fairclough's Framework

While discourse has an incessant power and people get their identity from discourses, it is of paramount importance to investigate the authenticity of these discourses. For this reason, a theoretical framework was adopted from Fairclough (2001) as shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Formal features: Experiential, Relational, Expressive Values (Fairclough, 2001, p. 94)

Dimensions of Meaning	Values of Features	Structural Effects
Contents	Experiential	Knowledge /beliefs
Social relations	Relational	Social relations
Subject positions	Expressive	Social identities

Based on this framework, texts carry *contents*, *social relations*, and *subject positions* and their analysis can disclose the hidden ideology in the texts. As Fairclough (2001) expresses *contents*, as one aspect of meaning, is meant the text producer's knowledge and beliefs or, one's experience of the social or world. Topics of discussions such as going to a trip and buying a house are counted as examples of contents. *Relations* refer to the social relationships as shown in the texts between and among the interactants in the conversations, such as doctor –patient or teacher - student. Subject positions refer to the social identity of interactants such as a teacher or a policeman. In order to investigate the frequency of the three facets of meaning specifically Subject positions, social relations and contents, the conversations of two series of textbooks in

Bahar and Navid Language Institutes (two famous institutes in Shiraz, Iran) were selected to figure out the ideology behind these series of textbooks. Therefore, the study addresses the following questions.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Q1: What are the subject positions in the conversations of the chosen textbooks?

Q2: What contents are mostly included in the conversations of the textbooks?

Q3: What social relations are illustrated in the conversations of the textbooks?

METHODOLOGY

Corpus

This study attempted to classify and describe the conversations in the selected textbooks through critical discourse analysis framework. In this study, 24 textbooks were selected and their conversations were extracted so as to figure out the ideological orientation behind these textbooks through critical discourse analysis. 13 out of 24 textbooks were from Navid Language Institute and the rest were from Bahar Language Institute in Shiraz, Iran. More specifically, conversations of the chosen textbooks were analyzed in terms of contents, subject positions, and social relations based on Fairclough's (2001) framework. Authenticity of the chosen materials is one of the principles that should be taken into account by the researchers.

Procedures

The conversations of the selected textbooks were extracted and analyzed in terms of their *subject positions*, *social relations* and *contents* according to Fairclough's (2001) framework. The first part of this study attempted to investigate the subject positions in the conversations. The second part, aimed at investigating the topics of conversations so as to specify the contents used in the conversations and their ideological orientation. The third part of this study tried to find out what power and social relations were dominant in the conversations of the selected textbooks. After statistical analysis of the three facets of meaning the results were analyzed in order to find out the ideological orientation behind these textbooks.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A statistical analysis of all the conversations in the selected textbooks was done to classify the three aspects of meaning (subject position, social relation, and content) into comprehensible set of data. In other words, the number of occurrences of each aspect of meaning was counted through the selected textbooks and then the obtained data were tabulated to get a picture of the dominant pattern of occurrences of these aspects of meaning. The reason for investigating these dimensions was to see which aspects of meaning were emphasized or de-emphasized since these choices reflect an ideological orientation on the part of the textbook producers.

Also, to make sure that the classification of the data and the resulting categories are reliable, about 40% of the data were categorized by a second rater. Then, Kappa coefficient was used for

each category as a measure of inter-rater reliability. The reliability was almost high. Suffice it to mention here that in no cases were coefficients less than 0.72.

In this part, research questions are stated again and related results will be discussed.

Q1: What are the subject positions in the conversations of the chosen textbooks?

The first research question tries to investigate the Subject positions in the conversations of the selected textbooks. Subject positions more or less are close to social relation, but they are totally different and they should be distinguished from each other. Occurrence of a subject was counted in the conversations. In the analyzed conversations, characters played different roles in which some of them had the same subject position and some others had different subject roles. The subject positions were finally classified into four groups as occupational, friends, educational, and commercial issues, then the percentage of each category was classified as shown in table2.

Table 2: Frequency of subject positions

Subject Positions	Navid Language Institute	Bahar Language Institute
1. Occupational	21.2 %	23.2%
2. Friends	24.9%	21.6%
3. Educational	39.6%	36.3%
4. Commercial	14.3%	19.6%
Total	100%	100%
Inter - rater reliability	0.82	0.73

As it can be inferred from table 2, mostly the frequency of Subject positions in Navid Language Institute textbooks are educational, friends, occupational, and, commercial related issues respectively. Mostly, the Subject positions in Bahar Language Institute are educational, occupational, friends, and commercial related issues respectively. Educational issues are abundant in the textbooks of both language institutes, while issues which are related to commercial or occupation are not that much abundant in comparison to educational issues.

Q2: What contents are mostly included in the conversations of the textbooks?

The second research question deals with the contents or topics used in the conversations of the selected textbooks. The contents of all conversations are grouped into 8 categories as 1) Health 2) Friendship 3) Traveling 4) Inventions 5) physical Descriptions 6) weather 7) Cultural Issues 8) Sports issues. Table 3 shows the percentage of contents or topics in the two series of textbooks.

Table 3: Frequency of topics

Category	Navid Language Institute	Bahar Language Institute
1.Health	8.2%	4.2%
2.Friendship	39.3%	9.5%
3.Traveling	10.2%	19.3%
4.Inventions	2.6%	3.1%
5.Physical Description	2.1%	3.2%
6.Weather	7.2%	16.7%
7.Culture	15.3%	18.9%
8.Sports	15.3%	25.1%
Total	100%	100%
Inter-rater reliability	0.72	0.75

As can be seen in table 3, in Navid Language Institute 39.3% percent of the content is related to friendship issues, whereas in Bahar Language Institute 9.5% of the content is related to friendship. In Bahar Language Institute the most recursive issues are sports ones, whereas the reverse of this is true in Navid Language Institute.

Q3: What social relations are illustrated in the conversations of the textbooks?

The third research question aims at investigating the types of social relations in the conversations of the aforementioned textbooks. For better understanding the social relations are classified based on *equality* and *unequality*. For example the relationship between two teachers is deemed as equal relationship, whereas the relationship between a teacher and a soccer player is supposed to be an unequal relationship.

Table 4: Frequency of social relations

Social Relations	Navid Language Institute	Bahar Language Institute
Equal social relations	73.3%	68.6%
Unequal social relations	26.7%	31.4%
Total	100%	100%
Inter-rater reliability	0.73	0.78

As it is illustrated in table 4, 73.3 and 68.6 percent of conversations at Navid and Bahar Language Institutes have equal social relations respectively.

Discussion

The findings of this study with respect to subject positions illustrated that, in both series of textbooks commercial and educational related subject positions were dominant ones. Through the analysis of audio, setting of conversations, tone and intonation in the conversations, it was found that the language in the conversations of these two series of textbooks was along with western culture and ideology. One possible explanation for this result would be that teachers and learners should be cautious about the hidden ideologies behind textbooks so as not to fall into the trap of dealing with questions of language simply. Another probable explanation is that there is not a neutral medium for the transferrals of knowledge in the textbooks.

Content analysis of conversations showed that, in both Navid and Bahar Language Institute contents were disparate. In Navid Language Institute the most frequent topic was Friendship by 39.3%, whereas the most frequent topic in Bahar Language Institute was sports by 25.1%. It can be inferred from this result that, the frequency of different topics in these textbooks might be regarded as text producers' policy to attract the attention of readers so that they will not be restricted to a small number of topics.

The findings of this study with regard to social relations showed that, in both series of the selected textbooks there was a tendency toward equal social relations in the conversations as it was shown in Table 4. It can be inferred from this result that, the use of equal social relations in textbooks might be the policy of text producers to make the texts more tangible and comprehensible.

CONCLUSION

This study attempted to investigate the three facets of meaning specifically Subject positions, social relations and contents through critical discourse analysis in ELT textbooks in Iran based on Fairclough's (2001) framework. Subject positions in the conversations of both Navid Language

Institute and Bahar Language Institute didn't show any significant difference. Through the analysis of audio, setting of conversations, tone and intonation in the conversations, it was found that the language in the conversations of these two series of textbooks was along with western culture and ideology. It can be inferred from content analysis of conversations that, in both Navid Language Institute and Bahar Language Institute contents were disparate. The frequent use of topics was regarded as the policy of text producers to attract the attention of the readers. The findings of this study with respect to social relations indicated that, both series of the selected textbooks had a tendency toward equal social relations in the conversations. The equal relations might be the policy of text producers to make the texts more tangible.

Insights provided by CDA in general, and the present study in particular, could be useful for text producers, teachers, and learners. More specifically, the findings of the present study can remind text producers that, texts are carriers of ideologies and they should be cautious to act responsibly in presenting appropriate discourses compatible with the cultures.

It seems quite indispensable for students to acquire a threshold level in critical language awareness in order to understand both the hidden ideologies behind textbooks and the central role language can play in structuring human mind. CDA can empower students to figure out problematic language use and it can help them to deal with the problems.

Accordingly, this study and the findings of this study aimed at bringing about some degrees of consciousness among teachers and learners by eliminating the conception that language textbooks are value free. What is important is that textbooks are value laden and the best way to find out the ideology behind these textbooks is through CDA perspective. Critical Discourse Analysis can empower the learners and teachers so as to understand the ideological orientation behind the language use. It seems these two series of textbooks are after the principle of liberalism and western ideology.

Limitations of the study

Although this study informed text users regarding the hidden ideology in the selected textbooks, it suffers from some limitations. First, this study did not explore the relationship between internationally produced textbooks and textbooks produced by Iranian English textbook writers. Moreover, this study was exclusively restricted to investigate the three facets of meaning namely *Subject positions, social relations, and contents* in the conversations of the chosen textbooks; other language skills were not center of attention of this study and could be studied in a separate research. Therefore, other researchers can make use of these issues to fill the gap in literature

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