

A Critical Analysis of International ELT Textbooks Based on CDA Methodology

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ABSTRACT: The researcher is decided to do a critical discourse analysis of international EFL textbooks (based on Fairclough's 1989 Model). In this model, three dimensions of meaning namely relations, subject positions and content are analyzed. The results show that in case of relations, group of friends 36.6, group of monologue 25.5 and the group of classmates 14.28 have taken the first, the second and the third places respectively. Regarding subject positions, societal 72.44, occupational 14.28 and commercial 13.26 ranked first to the third respectively and in regard to content, interpersonal 38.77, entertainment 25.51 and occupational 8.16 took the first to the third places respectively. Based on the gender positioning analysis of the books, male-female group takes the first position showing a 65.30 frequency percentage. Altogether the data gathered reflect a neoliberalism, free market attitude towards writing international ELT textbooks.

Keywords: Critical discourse analysis, ELT textbooks, EFL learners, gender positioning, Neoliberalism ideology.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of CDA is to develop an understanding of the discursive structures of different texts and styles of language in order to scrutinize their social and political influence; furthermore, it tries to raise readers' and listeners' awareness to the hidden aspects of discourse examples. The job of critical discourse analysis is to make their students active when reading or listening to some texts. The audience usually thinks that realities and facts are truly reflected in texts. CDA wants to make the audience conscious and sensitive of what is implicitly said or indirectly manipulated by speakers and writers. CDA studies want the readers to be alert of cultural tendencies, historical setting and political aspect of text production. These points are the basic elements of self-actualization and critical thinking which are the last output of all enterprises in education (Reichenbach, 2001).

In English-dominated educational systems, TESOL remains a key curriculum strategy for ameliorating educational disadvantage. Yet the evidence suggests that mainstream schools and classrooms continue to undervalue and misrecognise first language competence and cultural difference as deficit. At the same time, studies of linguistic and cultural minority learners also document the emergence of student and teacher agency, characterized by emergent forms of identity and blended expression (Kubota and Lin, 2008).

Phillipson located English at the centre of imperialism as a crucial weapon in the oppressors' armoury (Phillipson, 1992). He extended the concept of linguistic imperialism and the imposition of English-only beyond post-colonial settings to Europe (Phillipson, 2003). Indeed, over the last few years English as a discourse of colonialism and resistance to its dictates are themes which have moved centre stage within ELT (Pennycook, 1998; Cangarajah, 1999) and the controversial nature of them accepted. What is different about the issues surrounding English, globalisation and the war today is that the debate has been pushed beyond linguistic or sociolinguistic interpretations into the broader social and political arena.

Theoretical framework

There are as many different approaches to analyses within critical discourse analysis as there are theories and problems to be studied (e.g. Titscher, Meyer, Wodak, and Vetter, 2000; van Dijk, 2001). What is important is that analyses are connected to a theory of the social world and a theory of language that is coherent. Beyond that,

procedures and methods vary. In general, the view of methods of analysis is that one finds a research topic, applies a set of theoretical frames (or allows the frames to emerge from the data) to that research topic, and then selects appropriate methods, depending on the questions being asked and theories being used. Some analysts draw on extensive fieldwork; others collect large corpuses of texts from archives, websites or news sources. There are more and less textually oriented approaches to discourse analysis. Some methods are less linguistically focused and more focused on the context in which the discourse arises. Some foreground micro-level issues, others the impact of global issues on local discourses. Other methods are interested in the historical emergence and evolution of a concept or narrative. Three of the most influential traditions of critical approaches to discourse analysis in educational research are those of Gee (1986; 1991; 1996; 2004), Fairclough (1989; 1992; 1995; 2003), and Kress (1979; 1993; 1996)d. These researchers would all embrace the concept of methodological hybridity; they freely admit that their methods are drawn from a wide range of scholarship, and that they adopt and adapt analytic methods according to the needs of a particular inquiry.

Fairclough's (1989) model of critical discourse analysis, which itself is a practical application of Halliday's (1985) systemic-functional grammar (SFG) to the analysis of the text has been applied to analyze the international English textbooks. This model of analysis examines content, social relations and subject positions and discloses the ideology and power relations exercised in the texts. According to Halliday, SFG incorporates the ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions into analysis of texts and sentence constituents. Content refers to the text producer's knowledge and beliefs or as Fairclough (1989) explains it, one's experience of the social or natural world like consumer-oriented or interactional, interpersonal content values. Relation refers to the social relationships enacted via the text like classmates or colleagues or friends. Subject position refers to the social identity of interactants like businessman or employee or employer. To sum up, content is what is said or done in a dialogue, relation refers to the social relations people assume in the discourse, and subject position, refers to the positions that people occupy in discourse. The following table adapted from Baleghizade (2010) shows how linguistic features are related to dimensions of meaning and structural effect.

Table1. Formal features: Experiential, relational, and expressive values (Fairclough, 1989)

Dimensions of meaning	value of features	structural effect
Content	Experiential	Knowledge and belief
Relations	Relational	Social relationship
Subjects	Expressive	Social identities

Research question and hypothesis

Based on the CDA methodology, the researcher is going to answer the following question; Are international CDA textbooks ideologically biased?

Following the above mentioned question, the researcher is going to testify the following hypothesis;

International CDA textbooks are not ideologically biased.

Significance of the Study

These international English Textbooks may change, degrade or upgrade learners' views towards the social problems mentioned above. A CDA-based analysis of language learners' views in this regard in the general arena of TEFL industry in the country was in fact missing in order to evaluate the degree of the effect the international English textbooks may have on learners' attitudes. Such a study can promote the professional critical thinking of authorities in the realm of TEFL and ultimately of the language learners'.

Therefore, a critical discourse analysis of the textbooks is conducted to investigate the amount of its effect on student's attitudes towards social inequalities. In this regard Wodak (2004) asserts "an important perspective in CDA related to the notion of power is that it is very rare that a text is the work of any one person. Therefore, texts are often sites of struggle in that they show traces of differing discourses and ideologies contending and struggling for dominance" (p. 199).

Instruments

Fairclough's (1989) model of CDA was adopted to find out the properties of those dimensions of meaning that emphasize or deemphasize a particular ideological stance in the textbooks. The data were then quantified and tabulated for further analysis and interpretation.

Dimensions of Meaning

The number of occurrences of each constraint; that is, content, relations and subject positions throughout the textbooks have been counted and tabulated. The rationale was to find out the ideological stance chosen by their writers through the patterns of those dimensions of meaning which have been emphasized or deemphasized.

Content

Content refers to the text producer’s knowledge and beliefs or as Fairclough (1989) explains it, one’s experience of the social or natural world like occupational, festivals, entertainment or cultural contrast. In this regard, the topic of all conversations in all the textbooks were analyzed and classified in the categories mentioned in table 3.2. below based on Taki (2008) and Baleghizade and Jamali (2010) classification of contents. However, in this study the researcher has classified discussion starter category separately because of its importance and significant frequency. Furthermore, two new categories which enjoyed a good amount of frequency namely asking for information and giving information were added to content classification in order to have a more detailed analysis of the conversations in the textbooks.

Table 2. Categories of contents

Category number	Category of contents
1	interpersonal, introspective
2	entertainment, human interest stories
3	discussion starters
4	occupational
5	consumer-oriented
6	cultural contrasts, festival and customs
7	advertisement
8	law enforcement
9	politics
10	education
11	asking for information
12	giving information
13	social problems

Relations

Relation refers to the social relationships enacted via the text like husband-wife or teacher-student or friends. A relation was counted anytime the characters in the conversations were in verbal communication. They are represented either in two words divided by a hyphen such as husband-wife, or the relationship is shown by one word in plural form as in colleagues. In chapter 4 the frequency of dominant social relations in all textbooks will be given.

Subject Positions

Subject position refers to the social identity of interactants like customer and employer. Subject position occurrences were counted throughout all conversations in all textbooks. Then, the subject positions were categorized into three groups: societal, occupational and commercial. Even though there is some kind of confusion in distinguishing subject positions from relations, as Fairclough (1989) declares “all three (relations, subject positions, and contents) overlap and co-occur in practice, but it is helpful to be able to distinguish them” (p.46).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Materials

The ELT textbooks selected were actually designed to be used by non-native speakers of English. The criterions against which the ELT textbooks were selected are as follow:

- a) Internationally popular publishers like Cambridge University Press or Oxford university press have published them.
- b) Some well-known applied linguists like Jack C. Richards have written them, and they are regularly used by most of the English language institutes.
- c) The upper-intermediate levels of the textbooks which contain a sophisticated use of language in context have been selected.

The following textbooks have been selected based on the above criterions:

- 1- McCarthy, M., and McCarthy, J. (2010) Touch stone 4: Cambridge: CUP
- 2- Richards, J., and Barbison C.(2009) Connect 4: Cambridge: CUP.

It is through interaction that participants take part and the dimensions of meaning proposed by Fairclough (1989) model of CDA (relations, contents, subject positions) could be recognized; therefore, the conversations of the textbooks which form the most important part of the units have been selected.

Research Design and Procedure

The recent research is a survey study which follows a library-based data collection procedure. The international ELT textbooks are analysed based on Fairclough’s 1989 model. In this model, dimensions of meaning namely content, relations and subject positions in all of the conversations in the textbooks are deeply scrutinized to find out the ideology hidden in the text.

Findings of the Study

First the researcher wanted to study whether the international ELT textbooks were ideologically biased in case of social inequalities or not. For this purpose the international English textbooks were analyzed based on dimensions of meaning (relations, content, subject positions) introduced by Fairclough’s 1989 model. The ELT textbooks analyses are presented in the following tables.

Relations

The frequency of all relations in each individual textbook is shown in table 4.1. Frequencies for each type of relation is followed by its percentage of occurrence.

Table 3. All relations in each textbook and total number of their occurrence

category	Connect4		Touchstone4		Of total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1- friends	17	35.4	17	34.0	34	34.5
2-speaker-audience						
3-customer-service provider						
4- colleagues			3	6.0	3	3.06
5-supervisor-subordinate						
6-interviewer-interviewee	4	8.3	3	6.0	7	7.14
7-family members	5	10.4	1	2.0	6	6.12
8- wife-husband			7	14.0	7	7.14
9- classmates	9	18.75	5	10.0	14	14.28
10- customer-seller						
11-reporter-audience						
12- neighbors						
13-employer-employee						
14-citizen-police officer			1	2.0	1	1.02
15- strangers			1	2.0	1	1.02
16- citizens						
17-student-teacher						
18-recruiter-job applicant						
19- monologue	13	27.08	12	24.0	25	25.5
20-plane crew-passengers						
total	48		50		98	

As it is shown in Table 3, in the textbooks, and among all the relations, just friends 34.5, monologues 25.5 and classmates 14.28 are outstandingly significant. Touch stone 4 shows the most variety of relations, representing 9 various relations occurring 50 times. In Connect 4, friends 35.4 takes the first place, while monologues 27.08 ranks the second. Here ranking of classmates 18.75 in the third place is noticeable. In Touch stone 4, again friends 34.0 takes the first place, and monologues 24.0 the second, and wife-husband the third place respectively. The Findings of relations in ELT textbooks will be presented in Chapter Five of the study.

Subject Positions

Subject positions were generally divided into three categories: occupational, societal, and commercial based on Fairclough’s model (1989). For each textbook, the frequency of occurrence with the percentage for each category were listed, in addition to the subject positions for all the textbooks. The results are presented in table 4.

Table 4. Subject positions in the international English textbooks selected and total number of them

Textbooks	Societal		commercial		occupational		Of total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Connect4	39	81.25	5	10.41	4	8.33	48	48.9
Touch stone4	32	64.0	8	16.0	10	20.0	50	51.0
Total	71	72.44	13	13.26	14	14.28	98	100.

Based on Fairclough’s model (1989) the subject positions have been categorized into three general categories as observed in table 4. As is easily visible, societal subject position 72.44 ranks the first in the ELT textbooks . Occupational 14.28 takes the second and commercial 13.26 the third place respectively. commercial position 10.41 ranks the second in Connect 4, while Occupational 2.4 takes the third place. In Touch stone 4, occupational 20.0 ranks the second and commercial 16.0 ranks the third.

Contents

The contents of each textbook and the textbooks in general were classified into thirteen categories. The results are shown in table 5. below.

Table 5. The content frequency in the textbooks and for each textbook separately

category	Connect4		Touch stone4		Of total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1-Interpersonal, introspective	25	52.08	13	26.0	38	38.77
2- entertainment, human interest story	12	25.5	13	26.0	25	25.51
3- discussion starter	3	6.25	3	6.0	6	6.12
4- occupational	1	2.08	7	14.0	8	8.16
5- consumer-oriented	1	2.08	3	6.0	4	4.08
6-cultural contrast, festivals and customs			2	4.0	2	2.04
7- advertisement	2	4.16			2	2.04
8- law enforcement			1	2.0	1	1.02
9- politics						
10- education						
11-asking for information	4	8.44			4	4.08
12- giving information			2	4.0	2	2.04
13- social problems			6	12.0	6	6.12
Total	48		50		196	

As shown in the above table, in Connect 4, interpersonal, introspective content value 52.8 takes the first position, while entertainment, human interest stories 25.0 ranks the second and asking for information 8.33 the third.in Touch stone 4 interpersonal, introspective and entertainment, human interest stories both scoring 26.0 rank the first while occupational 14.0 ranks the second and social problems 12.0 the third. In the ELT textbooks surveyed, interpersonal, introspective 8.77, entertainment, human interest stories 25.51 and occupational 8.16 take the first, the second and the third places respectively.

Gender Positioning

“The social construction of gender produces the inequality in gender perception especially in defining women itself. It caused the inequity for women manifested in many aspects such as education, political right, work position etc.” (Dharma, 2008, p. 13). Thus, having a comprehensive view of all gender positioning in the textbooks will provide a sophisticated interpretation of the ideological philosophy behind it. Table 6 shows the gender classification for all conversations in all textbooks.

Table 6. Gender positioning in ELT textbooks

category	Connect 4		Touch stone4		Of total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male-male	3	6.25	2	4.0	5	5.10
Female-female	2	4.16	1	2.0	3	3.06
Male-female	31	64.58	33	66.0	64	65.30
Gender not specified	4	8.33	9	18.0	13	13.26
Male alone	3	6.25	4	8.0	7	7.14
Female alone	5	10.41	1	2.0	6	6.12
total	48		50		98	

In the above table, the interesting fact is that male-female 65.30 takes the first gender position in the ELT textbooks, while Gender not specified 13.26 and male alone 7.14 take the second and the third places respectively. While male alone 7.14 and female alone 6.12 have almost the same frequency. Male-female 65.30, ranking the first, is indicative of western ideology described in chapter 2. This is in agreement with Pennycook (1994, p. 177) as “EFL material for the international market has been criticized for being too Anglo-centric. In addition, such textbooks may present norms which are in direct conflict with local social and cultural standards. Muslims, for example, may take offence at the way ELT textbooks portray the interaction between men and women.”

CONCLUSION

The current theories of material evaluation which analyze the surface structure of the discourses used in the textbooks are not able to find out the implied and hidden aspects of the textbooks in order to make a comprehensive judgment about them. Breen (1989) argue that what is needed is an analytical framework which can be used to analyze teaching materials as tasks-as-workplans. In the same vein Ndura (2004) suggests five strategies for dealing with stereotypes and other cultural biases in ESL textbooks and other instructional materials.

Strategy 1: Become aware

Strategy 2: Critically examine instructional materials

Strategy 3: Prepare supplementary teaching materials

Strategy 4: Avoid the avoidance game

Strategy 5: Listen to the students

The result of the study has shown that the scholars involved in the field of ELT material development should take into consideration the implications derived by CDA methodology. CDA tries to dig out the hidden aspect of meanings involved in developing ESL textbooks. These ideological implications may encapsulate their ESL learners' minds into a frame which is desired by those who are behind and in power. Ndura (2004) argues that the design and adaptation of ESL textbooks and other instructional materials should reflect multiple perspectives inherent to a pluralistic society in order to engage students in a process of uncovering and confronting cultural biases and facilitate intercultural learning.

The content of the textbooks should be regulated based on the specific context in which they are supposed to be taught and this puts the burden on the shoulder of language policymakers in order to devise or even to establish some specific organizations for developing and publicizing appropriate textbooks in which the social context of language learning is taken care of.

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