University of Arak

A critical discourse Analysis on Gender Representation In the Iranian English Books 2, 3 And Top Notch 2A, 2B
A Critical Discourse Analysis Perspective

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Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

In
TEFL

January, 2012

Arak, Iran

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Acknowledgements

It is really hard to express my gratitude to all the people who were involved in the completion of this thesis. But my special thanks go to Dr.Yazdani whose helpful comments and fatherly guidance made it possible for me to finish this project. In addition, I would like to sincerely appreciate Dr. Amerian for his innovative opinions about CDA which motivated me to commence this project. I also owe a word of gratitude to Dr.Ahmadian and Dr.Dowlatabadi whose insightful courses on linguistics and critical discourse analysis provided me with a refreshed perspective on this project. Finally, I would like to offer my sincere thanks to all members of the English department of Arak University for their priceless pedagogical efforts.

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List of Abbreviations

CDA: Critical Discourse Analysis

CL: Critical Linguistics

EFL: English as Foreign Language

ELT: English Language Teaching

ILI: Iran Language Institute

KWDI: Korean Women's Development Institute

Abstract

The major purpose of this study was to critically analyze the discourse of two series of ELT materials, namely the Iranian High school English Books 2 and 3 and Top Notch 2A and 2B in terms of how male and female characters are represented and most significantly, to reveal the ideological patterns behind this representation. For this reason Fairclough's three dimensional model of CDA was taken to accomplish this task and the findings revealed that both series of textbooks suffered from gender bias in favor of male characters but, this imbalance in gender representation existed to different degrees in both sets of materials. In fact, the Iranian High school English textbooks are highly contaminated with this kind of bias while Top Notch 2A and 2B have made considerable improvements in this respect. Furthermore, it was discovered that, under-representation of females in the "Iranian High school English Books 2 and 3" follow a religious and cultural ideology while the designers of Top Notch 2A and 2B have tried to represent both genders based on the notion of equality of rights between men and women to the extent possible.

***Key Terms:** Critical discourse analysis (CDA), Gender, Gender under-representation (bias), Ideology*

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. Overview

Several studies on domestic ELT materials have been conducted by several researchers and all these materials have been explored through different approaches and the researchers have made use of various methods for their research purposes. For instance, investigating domestic ELT text books in the country was pioneered by American (1978) who carried out a comparative investigation of two series of ELT materials, namely, Graded English and the Right Path to English. In this study, he focused mainly on the content and methodology and revealed no considerable differences between the two series.

Toolabi(2002) was another researcher who analyzed Iranian High School English Textbooks in terms of language functions based on Tsui's model of "initiation", "follow up" and " response ". Rastegar (1992) also focused on the role of dispreffered seconds and dispreffered markers in ELT dialogues taught in High Schools and Junior High Schools of Iran.

But, with the passage of time, it has become obvious that critical discourse analysis can provide a productive and fertile background for researchers to disclose the hidden ideological layers that govern the manner in which ELT textbooks are designed and produced. For example, in recent years, Nazeri (2010) carried out a comparative study on dialogues of Interchange series and Iranian High School English Textbooks regarding gender representation. Esmaily(2011) also made another comparative study on gender representation in Iranian High School English materials and American Headway series within a critical discourse analysis framework.

Another obvious fact is that the existence of gender biased representation has been substantiated in many ELT textbooks and it has been tried to improve investigated materials to rectify the image of both males and females in those materials, since according to Rifkin (1998), gender biases can shape the thinking system of both genders and subsequently, it may exert negative influence on their learning. In addition, investigating how gender-based issues are depicted in Iranian ELT materials

is undoubtedly useful for both teachers and learners. Because the results of these studies can allow them a critical perspective on gender status in these textbooks. Investigating international textbooks such as Top Notch Series is also fruitful in that, these critical studies and analyses help domestic textbooks publishers and policy makers to be cognizant of the harmful ideologies and viewpoints that the students may go through.

1.2. Statement of the Problem:

The few introductory studies that were mentioned above reveal the fact that domestic and foreign ELT materials have been analyzed and investigated by different researchers who study in different domains of science and follow different viewpoints concerning language education. Moreover, there is no gainsaying the importance of the role that textbooks have in any language course. Put simply, textbooks play a very significant part in both the teaching and learning processes and these textbooks form one of the areas which can affect the opinions and views of learners towards gender either positively or negatively. In other words, the manner in which ELT materials depict gender can influence learners' mental images towards gender issues and consequently, it is necessary that teachers be aware of the deficiencies of the textbooks they are using and apply a critical look at the fundamental values and policies that these textbooks provide. Without a doubt, one of these crucial issues that require a critical investigation is the concept of gender depiction in ELT textbooks.

Considering the above-mentioned issues and the fact that gender representation has not received enough attention within a critical discourse analysis framework, this research project is an attempt to critically analyze two series of ELT textbooks including Iranian High school English textbooks 2 and 3 and the Top Notch series 2A and 2B regarding gender representation. It should also be emphasized that the present research project tries to move within a critical discourse framework with the aim of unveiling the hidden ideologies behind these ELT materials.

1.3. Significance of the Study

Textbooks compose one of the significant areas in education that have a formative role in developing students' perspectives and thinking towards gender-related issues of any kind, whether important or minor. Therefore, if learners are exposed to any sort of gender-based imbalance in their textbooks, it is possible that they mentally absorb the attitude and based on Rifkin's argument (1998), this negative attitude may influence their learning negatively.

One of the least attended issues in ELT textbooks is the issue of gender and how gender is exposed to learners. As a result, a critical investigation of this issue may lead to the ideologies hidden behind the manner in which gender is depicted in ELT materials, particularly in the ELT materials used in Iranian schools of any levels. In addition, due to the political and cultural developments that Iranians, especially the studying portion of Iran's population have experienced after 1979, Iranian ELT materials have undergone a large number of changes including the change in perspectives that the elites have towards males and females' roles and freedom in society. As mentioned before, as Rifkin (1988) puts it, any gender - based bias in ELT materials can affect the learners' learning. Also, according to Esmaily (2010), since textbooks are among the places for injecting any ideologies into a society that not only convey some information about a particular subject but also have a major part in perpetuating the ideologies and perspectives of textbooks designers and producers, evaluating teaching materials within a CDA model requires assiduous attention and is of a lot of significance.

1.4. Research Assumptions:

As it was briefly explained in the preceding sections, ELT textbooks can be used as a means to provide specific social and cultural issues through language, and gender is one the most significant of these issues. This representation of gender may sometimes reflect the thinking and mental images of the authors or the governing elites and authorities of the society in which these textbooks are used. Furthermore, as Rifkin (1998) says, the exclusion of girls and women from FL textbooks may seriously impair their abilities to understand the target language and its culture (P.218).

Taking all these matters into consideration, it is assumed that the designing and development of both Iranian High school English Textbooks and Top Notch series including Top Notch 2A and 3B, follows a particular ideological system. Also related is the assumption that this matter can influence learners' perspectives about the opposite sex.

1.5. Research Questions:

The following questions are to be answered:

1. Are there any cases of gender-based bias in both the Iranian High school English

Textbooks <u>2</u> and <u>3</u> and Top Notch series <u>2A</u> and <u>2B</u>?

2. Are there any similarities between these two sets of ELT materials , namely Iranian High school English Textbooks 2 and 3 and Top Notch <u>2A</u> and <u>2B</u> concerning gender representation?

3. Do these series of ELT textbooks follow any particular ideological patterns in presenting the role of both males and females in them?

1.6. Research Hypotheses:

According to the research questions, the following hypotheses are to be investigated:

1. There are not any cases of gender-based bias in both the Iranian High school English Textbooks <u>2</u> and <u>3</u> and Top Notch series <u>2A</u> and <u>2B</u>.

2. There are no similarities between these two sets of ELT materials, namely Iranian High school English Textbooks <u>2</u> and <u>3</u> and Top Notch <u>2A</u> and <u>2B</u>.

3. No particular ideological patterns are followed by these two series of ELT materials in presenting the role of both males and females.

1.6. Key Terms

Critical discourse analysis: An interdisciplinary form of analysis or according to Fairclough (1995) a transdisciplinary form of analysis that deals with the investigation of dialectical relations between discourse and other objects, elements or moments as well as the analysis of the internal relations of discourse. It has also been defined by Van Dijk (1998) as a type of analytical research that mainly focuses on how social power abuse, dominance, hegemony and social inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context.

Gender: A context-dependent concept that depicts the roles of women and men established by the society (Bloor and Bloor 2007).According to Bell et al, (2006) gender is a concept that contributes various linguistic strategies to males and females. In other words, the concept of gender causes each society to adopt a particular approach towards the roles that are held by men and women and has certain expectations of them. These expectations depend on cultural, political, economic, social and religious factors.

Gender bias: According to Minishima, (2008) and Gouvia(2005) there are two concepts which are usually concerned with gender .One is "gender representation" and the other one is "gender bias" .The former refers to the manner in which either of the male or female characters are depicted in a society while, the latter refers to the unfair manner in which either of the male or female characters are portrayed through misrepresentation compared to the opposite sex .

Ideology: A set of beliefs or attitudes shared by members of particular social group. It also forms the basis of most of the discourses that members of social groups make use of (Bloor and Bloor, 2007). Fairclough(2010) also introduces ideology as a significant element in creating unequal relations of power in a society .Lakoff (1987) believes that , ideologies are the hidden and latent beliefs that appear disguised as conceptual metaphors and analogies and constitute the major area of investigation in CDA studies.

This chapter was an attempt to introduce the main subject of the present study including a general overview on critical discourse analysis which constitutes the main framework of this investigation.

The next chapter tries to take a look at the literature related to critical discourse analysis including theoretical as well as empirical works which have been carried out in this respect. It also tries to introduce the major approaches to CDA such as Fairclough's model, Van Dijk's model and Wodak's model of critical discourse analysis.

Chapter two

Review of Literature

2.1. A Brief History of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

The CDA as a network of scholars was first established in the early 1990s. After a small meeting in Amsterdam which was hosted by the university of Amsterdam in 1991, a number of scholars such as Teun Van Dijk, Norman Fairclough, Gunther Kress, Theo van Leeuwen and Ruth Wodak met for two days and discussed theories and methods of discourse analysis, specifically CDA. This meeting was in fact an opportunity to negotiate different approaches to CDA studies which had undergone significant changes since 1991, but remained relevant in many ways. In this process of negotiation on theories and methods of CDA, the differences and similarities were clarified but some of CDA scholars who were previously aligned with CDA fell apart from this movement and adopted other theories and approaches to CDA (such as Gunther Kressand Ron Scollon). But on the other hand, new approaches to CDA have emerged which are mostly, the result of integrating the traditional theories or of elaborating them (Wodak, 2008).

Despite different theories and approaches adopted by different scholors of CDA studies, CDA as a school of thought has a number of common principles. For instance, all approaches to CDA are problem-oriented and aim at solving a specific problem. Therefore, it is necessarily interdisciplinary and eclectic. Moreover, CDA, in its investigation and demystification of ideologies and power relations, makes use of different approaches and it is accomplished through the systematic study and investigation of semiotic data (written, spoken or visual data which is commonly referred to as discourse). CDA analysts also try to make their own stances and interests clear while following their scientific methods in conducting CDA studies. (Wodak, 2008).

The start of CDA as a network of thoughts and methodologies began by the release of van Dijk's Journal, Discourse and Society in 1990 and the simultaneous publication of several books. Since then, new journals such as Critical Discourse, the Journal of Language and Politics, Discourse and Communication and Visual Semiotics have been published.

We can also have access to several e-journals about CDA, including CADAAD. All in all, CDA has turned into an established interdisciplinary field of study and research in linguistics and institutionalized all over the world (Wodak, 2008).

2.2. Understanding the theory of Critical Discourse Analysis

Nowadays, reading a text or a problem in a deconstructive manner as well as revealing the hidden motivations behind a text is of a lot of significance and it is all due to the enormous amount of information that we are exposed to today .(Ahmadvand 2008)

Surprisingly, ordinary people and even scholars have turned a blind eye to the delicacies and nuances of how we produce and comprehend discourse   because language users often treat the semantic aspects of language very carelessly. Consequently, people including both ordinary people and scholars are unaware of the connotations and side effects of the language that they use in their daily conversations.

Based on these significant facts, critical discourse analysis or CDA is the unveiling of implicit ideologies in texts. It uncovers the underlying ideological prejudices and therefore the exercise of power in texts. (Widdowson 2007).Tuen Van Dijk (1993) also puts it this way," critical discourse analysts want to understand, expose and resist social inequality".

Fairclough (1995.P.20) also maintains that critical theory means "any theory which is concerned with the critique of ideology and the effects of domination."

Bloor and Bloor (2007) define CDA as a branch of Systematic Functional Linguistics that moves from sentential level of texts to supra-sentential level. They say that in the 1970s a group of linguists and literary theorists studying at the University of East Anglia proposed the idea of critical linguistics. This new system of thinking had its foundations on M.A.K Halliday's Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL). This branch of linguistics stresses the importance of social context (which involves both cultural and situational contexts) in the production and development of language. Furthermore SFL, unlike many branches of linguistics has always been concerned not only with words and sentences, but also with longer texts and collection of texts (corpora) above the sentential level.

Norman Fairclough (1995) who is one of the leading characters in CDA studies and whose works in CDA have made great contributions to this field defines it as follows: " It is not analysis of discourse in itself as one might take it to be, but

analysis of dialectical relations between discourse and other objects, elements or moments as well as the analysis of the internal relations of discourse...."

In recent years, according to Bloor and Bloor (2007) professionals from various scientific backgrounds have shown interest in discourse issues. For instance, lawyers, historians, business institutions, politicians and even medical professionals have utilized discourse analysis to study the social problems that are relevant to their personal professions . According to this fact,Van Dijk(1993) has chosen the term critical Discourse Studies(CDS). He describes (CDS) as "a new crossdiscipline that comprises the analysis of text and talk in virtually all disciplines of the humanities and social sciences. But Fairclough (1995) has elaborated on this notion of CDA and has chosen the term a " transdisciplinary form of analysis" since it cuts across conventional boundaries between other related disciplines such as linguistics, politics, sociology and so forth.

Critical discourse analysis also embarks on examining the practices and customs which are common in every country, both to unearth and describe how they function and also to provide a critique of those practices and customs. Critical discourse analysis also tries to identify and study specific areas of injustice, danger, suffering, prejudice and so on, although the discovery of these areas may bring about controversial disputes. (Ahmadvand 2008)

Tuen Van Dijk (1995) argues that CDA is a general label for a special approach to the study of text and talk that has emerged from critical linguistics, critical semiotics and in general from a socio-politically conscious and oppositional way of investigating language, discourse and communication. He also defines CDA as a problem or issue-oriented, rather than a paradigm-oriented approach that tries to effectively study relevant social problems such as those related to sexism, racism, colonialism and other forms of social inequality. He also believes that, in order to study these social problems properly, CDA analysts should take a multidisciplinary approach and focus on the relations between discourse and the society. And when they study the role of discourse in the society, CDA experts, especially focus on relations of power, dominance and inequality and the ways these phenomena are reproduced or resisted by members of social groups through text and talk.

A major objective that is perused in CDA, according to Huckin (2002) is to raise awareness about the strategies used in establishing, maintaining and reproducing asymmetrical relations of power which are enacted by discourse.

Ruth Wodak (2007) describes CDA as an interdisciplinary approach to the investigation of power relations and ideology that challenge issues like reductionism, dogmatism and dichotomies and through the above-mentioned processes, it makes

opaque and hidden structures of power relations and ideologies manifest.

Accordingly, Frohman (1994) states that, CDA, rather than providing a particular method, can be considered a way of approaching and thinking about a problem. Stated more simply, critical discourse analysis is neither a qualitative approach nor a quantitative research method. In fact it is a manner of questioning the basic assumptions of qualitative and quantitative research methodology. CDA will enable us to reveal the hidden motivations behind a text or behind the choice of a particular method of research to interpret that text. In other words, CDA is a deconstructive and interpretive process that helps us unveil the hidden politics within socially dominant as well as other discourses.

Luck (1997) states that "Discourses are means of expressing and asserting power and knowledge and they can be used for resistance and critique. Discourses are also used in everyday contexts for building power and knowledge, for regulation and normalization, for the development of new knowledge and power relations and for hegemony". Therefore, taking the power of written and spoken words into consideration, CDA becomes a necessary tool for describing, interpreting, analyzing and critiquing social life as reflected in discourse.

Van Dijk (1988) also claims that, CDA is concerned with studying and analyzing written texts and spoken words for the propose of revealing the discursive sources of power, inequality, dominance and bias and the way these sources are initiated, maintained, reproduced and transformed within specific social, economic, political and historical contexts.

Fairclough (1993) also stresses the unveiling of power relations and hegemony and believes that critical discourse analysis aims to systematically explore often opaque relations between discursive practices, texts and events and wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes. It also seeks to investigate how these non-transparent relationships are a factor in securing power and hegemony and it draws attention to power imbalances, social inequalities, non-democratic practices and other cases of injustice with the hope that the unveiling of these hidden phenomena encourage people to take corrective actions.

From the viewpoint of Luck (1997), CDA concentrates on how social relations, identity, knowledge and power are constructed through written and spoken texts in communities, schools, the media and the political arena.

According to Fairclough (1989) the main objective of CDA studies is to uncover the ideological assumptions that are hidden in the words of our written texts or oral

speech and interactions in order to resist and overcome various forms of power or to gain an understanding and appreciation of the "power"we are exerting on others without our own knowledge.

Widowson (2007) argued that CDA is "particularly concerned with and (concerned about) the use or abuse of language for the exercise of political power" (P.70). It other words, critical discourse analysis investigates sociopolitical values and norms. It means that this school scrutinizes not only ideational assumptions but also ideological aspects.

According to Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) and Hodge and Kress (1993) central to any CDA studies is Halliday's Functional Linguistics that considers language a social phenomena. Based on this approach, viewing language as a social event is the first assumption in CDA. The second main assumption to CDA is related to the speaker's choice of vocabulary as well as the grammar that based on Fowler's et al. (1979) point of view is "principled and systematic " (P.88).

Fowler et al. (1979) claim that the "relation between form and content is not arbitrary or conventional, but … form signifies content" (P.88). It means that the kind of selections- whether grammatical or lexical-is based on some ideologies.

Luck (2002) and Pennycook (2000) maintain that although some scholars criticize CDA for its attention to linguistic analysis and a "perceived" over-emphasis on micro levels of social structures, CDA effectiveness has been substantiated in its ability to analyze the social structures in conjunction with linguistic micro analysis.

Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) have also emphasized the interdisciplinarity of CDA and have advocated theoretical diversity in CDA. They suggest that researchers should have access to a wide variety of theories and should hold interdisciplinary dialogues with other social theories and methods. They, furthermore, argue that the theory of CDA is an amalgamation of various theories that is inseparable from method. These two components, namely, method and theory, are bilaterally informative and constructive of one anther.

According to Weiss and Wodak (2003) it is useful to consider CDA as a theoretical combination of "conceptual tools". They believe that the multiplicity of theories and methods in CDA does not imply unsystematicity or eclecticism .Instead it can be taken as a strong point of CDA that provides opportunities for innovative theories to emerge. (P.7)

In terms of analytical consideration, Luck (1997, 2002) points out that the application of CDA to research projects by graduate students and to books by

publishing companies is on the rise. A significant reason for this phenomenon is that CDA is being seen as a useful tool to examine questions about normative understandings of curriculum, pedagogy and schooling.

From Jank's (1997) viewpoint , CDA is more than " just analyzing text or just analyzing processes of production and interpretation" .It takes into account the relationship between texts , processes and their social conditions . In fact, it incorporates the "social "and it provides a way for how to focus on the interconnections between discourse and society. (P.329)

Fairclough (1997) also maintains that both discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis focus on ways of using the language, since in CDA, language is seen as a social act and language, discourse and its relation to society cannot be separated.

Chuliaraki and Fairclough (1999) argue that CDA is an approach that comes in various shapes and it is not restricted to one strict method of analysis. That is to say that, CDA is a multidisciplinary approach to language studies that goes beyond the text in its analytical process. Moreover, critical discourse analysis should be regarded as an approach that constantly evolves as it spreads into new disciplines. This is to say that, it is an approach that does not focus its analysis only on textual level of discourse. (P.59)

2.3. The common ground: Discourse, Critique, Power and Ideology

2.3.1. What is meant by discourse?

Bloor and Bloor (2007) describe discourse in its broadest sense as all kinds   of symbolic interaction and communication between people that usually take place through spoken or written language or visual representation. Discourse is also used in contrast with 'text'where it refers to actual written or spoken data while 'discourse ' refers to the whole act of communication involving production and comprehension. The study of discourse then can involve matters such as context of communication, background information or the knowledge shared between the speaker and hearer. They also utilize the term multimodal discourse to refer to those types of discourses that rely on more than one mode of communication. Because nowadays technology enables us to access visual information very easily. For instance, a magazine might make use of words, illustrations and drawings. On the other hand, a science book might incorporate written text with diagrams; a film can utilize pictures, words and music to convey its message.

Fairclough and Wodake (1997) consider the context of language use to be crucial