

Discourse Analysis of Content in Conversation Parts of Headway 2

Ahmad Mojavezi, Nasrin Aslani

Islamic Azad University of Zahedan, Iran

**Corresponding Author: Ahmad Mojavezi, Islamic Azad University of Zahedan, Iran*

ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to analyze English textbooks according to the importance of social inequality, power dominance and gender differentiation. For this study, critical discourse model of Fairclough (1989) was used. This model estimates three dimensions such as content, relations and subject positions. In this study, content was estimated in Headway 2 as an English book was taught in language institutes in Iran. The researcher counted the frequency of content in conversation parts of this text book to collect data. Analyzing the data showed that interpersonal and introspective had the highest rank regarding content in this textbook. This study can improve critical thinking of learners and teachers because it focuses on the relationship between the texts and society and how the texts gives importance to social inequality, power dominance and gender differentiation, so they can change their attitudes towards these factors. Furthermore, the people in the ministry of research and science and education can order language institutes and schools to use specific techniques for teaching English and increasing critical thinking of learners.

Keywords: *Social Inequality, Critical Discourse Model, Power Dominance, Content*

INTRODUCTION

The importance of textbooks in today's trends of language teaching and learning cannot be denied. Although there might be some opponents of the idea of using published textbooks in ELT classes, the majority of people dealing with education, teaching, and learning assert the saliency of published textbooks in ELT classes.

According to Tomlinson (2004), proponents of course book argue that it is the most convenient form of presenting materials, it helps to achieve consistency and continuation, and it gives learners a sense of system, cohesion and progress.

As Richards (2001) puts it, textbooks are key components in most language programs. In some situations, he believes, textbooks serve as the basis for much of the language input learners receive and the language practice that occurs in the classroom. He adds that they may provide the basis for the content of the lessons, the balance of skills taught and the kinds of language practice the students take part in. In other situations, they may serve primarily to supplement the teachers' instruction. For learners, the textbook may provide the major

source of contact they have with the language apart from input provided by their teacher. In addition, textbooks may also serve as a form of teacher training for inexperienced teachers because they provide ideas on how to plan and teach lessons as well as which formats they can use.

Considering the importance of the textbooks in the field of EFL and the numerous English textbooks which are used in Iran, it seems essential that the books should undergo evaluation to find out their suitability. Textbook evaluation is an educational necessity because it shows whether a textbook is suitable for the particular course and particular learners or not. Pennycook (2001) state two main reasons for evaluating teaching materials. First, it provides evidence "which can inform theoretical disputes about directions to be followed in language teaching or in teacher education" (p. 11). Second, it is a tool to indicate the suitability of particular approaches or techniques under given conditions and whether they meet the claims made for them.

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The rise of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has influenced most branches and sub-branches

of humanities sciences in general, and applied linguistics in particular. CDA views language as a powerful means through which specific ideologies, identities, and culture become dominant in a society. CDA scholars believe that the choice of language interlocutors reflects their intentions, ideology, and thought. This is an effective means for polarizing power in the society. Critical discourse analysts identify and study specific areas of injustice, inequality, racism, danger, suffering, prejudice, and the like.

Discourse is a form of language use, and Discourse Analysis (DA) is the analytical framework which was created for studying actual text and talk in the communicative context. Fitch (2005) believes that the early DA focused on the internal structure of texts. With the emergence of Systemic-Functional Linguistics (Halliday, 1978), the DA has started to affect such disciplines as sociolinguistics with an internal focus on the ways through which personal and social processes are encoded in the text. Halliday has been an influential figure in the field. He introduced a tripartite model (tenor, mode and field) consisting of phonology, lexicogrammar and semantics. He maintains that texts are a process and a product which are created, embedded, and interpreted in a specific social context. Halliday's framework has now become the foundation of a variety of discourse analysis models. Texts are analyzed according to three inseparable elements: language use, communication and interaction (Van Dijk, 1997) or description (text), interpretation (pragmatics) and explanation (the social and cultural context) (Fairclough, 1999). The modern DA is an interdisciplinary approach, operating at two macro and micro levels, incorporating both linguistic and social analysis. Discourses are viewed as communicative events, which encompass certain beliefs, ideologies, identities, politics, and the like (Chilton and Schaffner, 2002). Communication is obviously something beyond simply transferring a message from the sender to the receiver; discourse analysts frequently speak of interpretative work (Wodak and Cilla, 2006). Sometimes textualized or verbalized statements of people aim more than conveying what they say at the surface level directly and explicitly. The most important issue is the social information that is usually conveyed implicitly.

Statement of the Problem

Fowler (1991) claims, " anything that is said or written about the world is articulated from a

particular ideological position" (p.101). According to Fairclough (1995b), this is the duty of writers to decide what must be included, what must be excluded, what types and categories must be used to present events, and so on. Gee (1999) declares that when we speak or write we use a special perspective to the world. Also, he expresses that people can be controlled by language and they can control people by language too. Fairclough (2010) expresses that discourse has relations with persons, physical world, power relations and institutions. So, when learners and teachers do not know about these relationships they cannot understand English texts very good and this causes that they do not have motivation for language learning. Due to the importance of CDA, a good study of English textbooks can help learners to understand subject areas better. So, in this study the researcher wants to investigate the groups and power dominance in English textbook (Headway 2) used in Iranian private language institutes.

Research Question

Is the international ELT textbook (Headway 2) biased in case of content in conversation parts?

Research Hypothesis

The international ELT textbook (Headway 2) is not biased in case of content in conversation parts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pedagogical Implications of CDA

The purpose of CAD is to develop an insight about the structures of different texts according to their socio-political effects. Also, CDA wants to increase alertness of the readers and listener. Van Dijk(1997) expressed that discourse analysts want to active readers' critical role not just the "tip of the ideological iceberg". Critical analysis tries to increase consciousness about misinformation, and misinterpretation of the texts. Another implication of CDA is to increase readers' awareness of the writer's socio-political background, the historical setting, and the cultural tendencies. As Reichenbach (2001) asserts these elements are the essential parts of critical thinking. CDA is a powerful method against closed-minded mentalities because texts are not ideologically neutral.

Also, CDA concerns language as a strong device for increasing certain ideologies, institutions, nationalistic self-glorification,

positive self and negative other presentations, specifying religious and political taboos, political conflicts, and the like. CDA promote the idea that critical thinking in a society can cause justice and equality in power among people. This mental ability cause readers and listeners to act against injustice about distribution of power.

Theoretical issues

The term ‘discourse’ is used in various ways of discourse analysis. Two of them are: ‘discourse’ in an abstract sense that is used as the broadly semiotic elements of social life such as language, and body language. Fairclough, Jessop & Sayer (2004) use the term ‘semiosis’ to avoid the mistake of this sense of ‘discourse’ with the second meaning of discourse which is used for designating specific aspects of social life such as problems of inequality, disadvantage, poverty, ‘social exclusion’. The second meaning of ‘discourse’ is defined via its relation to ‘genre’ and ‘style’.

In these studies social structures and social events are related to social reality. Some researchers as Bourdieu & Wacquant (1992) and Bhaskar (1986) express that the relationship between social structures and social events are related to mediating categories that researchers call them as ‘social practices’.

Languages are a particular type of social structure. Foucault (1989), Fairclough (1992, 2003) use the term ‘text’ for the semiotic dimension of the written documents and websites of government and also for interviews and meetings in government. The term ‘text’ cannot really be used because researchers cannot find a good relationship with written texts, but it is very difficult to find a general term.

Social practices and social events are parts of social elements. Social practices included the following elements:

- Activities
- Social relations
- Objects and instruments
- Time and place
- Social subjects, with beliefs, knowledge, values etc
- Semiosis

According to Harvey (1996) these elements are dialectically related but they are fully separated elements. They have distinct characteristics and different disciplines.

METHODOLOGY

Instruments

These instruments were used to collect data for the ongoing study:

- Fairclough’s (1989) model for critical discourse analysis. This model originate from Halliday’s (1985) systemic-functional grammar for analyzing textbooks. This model analyzes ‘content, social relations and subject positions’. Here ‘content’ refers to writer's knowledge and beliefs. Fairclough (1989) defines content as social or natural world like consumer-oriented or interactional, interpersonal values.
- The ELT Headway textbook (John and Liz Soars) was the main instrument in this study. This book and other books used in private language institute in Iran focused on improving speaking skill of learners and by passing these textbooks it is hoped that learners can communicate with native speakers. These textbooks consisted of conversations, reading passages, writing and listening parts. Also, grammatical points were covered in these textbooks.

In this study, conversation parts of this book were chosen to analyze according to Fairclough (1989) model of CDA (contents).

Procedures

In this study, the researcher used Fairclough’s (1989) model for analyzing ELT textbook (Headway 2) to find those dimensions of meaning that emphasize content. The content of textbooks were divided into twelve categories (interpersonal, introspective; discussion; occupational; customer-oriented; cultural contrasts; advertisement; education; asking for information; giving information, entertainment, human interest stories; law enforcement; politics). Then, the researcher counted the frequency of each one.

THE ANALYSIS OF CONTENT

According to the Fairclough’s (1989) model, the content of the textbook (Headway textbook) was classified into twelve categories (Table 1). The frequency results of content are shown in table 2.

Table1. Categories of contents

Category of Content	Category Number
1	Cultural contrasts, festival and customs
2	Entertainment, human interest stories
3	Discussion starters
4	Occupational
5	Consumer-oriented
6	Interactional, interpersonal, introspective
7	Asking for information
8	Giving information
9	Education
10	Law enforcement
11	Politics
12	advertisement

Table2. The frequency of content for conversation parts in the textbook

Category	Headway 2 No	%
1-Interpersonal, introspective	10	21.8
2- entertainment, human interest story	10	21.8
3- discussion starter	2	4.3
4- consumer-oriented	2	4.3
5-occupational	8	16.6
6-cultural contrast, festivals and customs	5	10.4
7-advertisement	-----	-----
8-law enforcement	-----	-----
9-politics	-----	-----
10-education	-----	-----
11-asking for information	6	13.5
12-giving information	5	10.4
Total	48	-----

As it is shown in the Table, interpersonal, introspective and entertainment, human interest story have the highest level in this textbook with value 21.8 but discussion starter and consumer-oriented are in the lowest level with value 4.3. Occupational category is in the second level (16.6). Asking for information, giving information and cultural contrast, festivals and customs are in the third and fourth levels with the values 13.5 and 10.4 respectively.

DISCUSSION

The Research Question: are the International ELT Textbooks (Headway 2) biased In Case of Content in Conversation Parts?

For answering this question, all categories of content (interpersonal, introspective; discussion; occupational; customer-oriented; cultural contrasts; advertisement; education; asking for information; giving information, entertainment, human interest stories; law enforcement; politics) were counted in this ELT textbook. As it was found, Interpersonal and introspective had the highest level but cultural contrast, festivals and customs were in the second level. Entertainment, human interest story and asking for information were in the next level. According

to these findings, this textbook follows the ideas of neo-liberalism and the first research hypothesis must be rejected. The results of this study are in line with Tuchman (1998) because he also showed that content of English textbooks follow the neoliberalism ideas.

CONCLUSION

As it was said, the purpose of this study was to investigate this ELT textbook for measuring the importance of social inequality, power dominance and gender differentiation. Content of this book was divided into twelve categories. By counting the frequency of content and analyzing them, it was clear that interpersonal, introspective and entertainment, human interest story have the highest level in this textbook but discussion starter and consumer-oriented are in the lowest level. Because of some methodological limitations, generalization of the findings cannot be made. However, results of this study showed that this textbook focus on social equals and no exercise of power was observed.

By conducting this study, the researcher wanted to answer the research question and found some implications for English teachers and learners.

So, it can be recommended that teachers must teach critical thinking strategies to learners and provide them with suitable techniques for analyzing their ELT textbooks.

As Ricento (1999) states "formal language policies are by nature political, therefore, we should always be careful and sensitive in case of selecting an authentic textbook to teach a second language and take care that it may not be value-free."

Finally, people in the ministry of research and science and ministry of education must design and provide teachers with specific policies to teach and provide learners with specific techniques and strategies.

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