Representation of Ideological Assumptions in Iranian EFL Textbooks with Reference to Critical Pedagogy and Critical Metaphor Analysis

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Abstract
This qualitative study aimed at critically analyzing the curricular materials for the teaching of English in Iran. The objective was to evaluate the adequacy of the content and ideological assumptions of EFL textbooks, focusing on the conceptual metaphors related to the concept of success. The study was conducted within the frameworks of Critical Pedagogy and Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA). The spirit of these two approaches lies in their rejection of all forms of domination, establishment of a theoretical discourse that enables social action, and detection of the hidden relationships between language, power and ideology through metaphorical encodings. To achieve the objective of the study, the analytical tools proposed by Chartres-Black were employed. The results of material analysis revealed that preparation and imposition of cultural materials may create situations in which identity conflict and violence are inevitable, and that the avoidance of such situations requires educators to intervene, with a mentality that education is liberating practice.

Keywords: *Critical Pedagogy, conceptual metaphor, discourse, Critical Metaphor Analysis*

Introduction

According to Liu, Zhao and Miller (2014) a textbook is a non-fiction book that offers didactically prepared teaching materials for studying or teaching one course. The textbook is intended to be used in the classroom to help the teachers in their teaching procedures. It enables students to a have a proper understanding of the subject which is presented to them. As for teaching English as a foreign or second language, a textbook possesses a particular prominence in EFL classrooms and is generally regarded as the backbone of English course since the contents and sequence of teaching, subjects, teaching and learning strategies, interaction patterns, and so on are transferred by it.

In terms of critical pedagogy, textbooks play an essential role in reflecting the governors' policy-makings' ideologies and discourses. Therefore, conducting a research that enjoys a socio-linguistic approach can help us evaluate the content of the textbooks taught in Iranian high-school settings. In this connection, analysis of metaphors which carry varied ideologies and discourses is of paramount significance. A metaphor has an important effect on a special role played by

language, thought and discourse. Thus, looking critically at the textbooks and analyzing their conceptual metaphors can shed light on critical pedagogy field. Researchers cannot do such an analysis with a superficial skimming. Conceptual metaphor analysis requires a critical look since metaphors are used in everyday life and are considered as a tool of thought. Therefore, the examination of metaphorical expressions can reflect a particular type of reality on the speakers' part, and their application can formulate specific perceptions for the audience. Accordingly, the significance of the current study lies in trying to meet the following requirements.

-Reconizing the nature and role of the conceptual metaphors in creating a particular conception of reality.

-Providing EFL teachers and learners with an awareness of the effects of hidden metaphors interwoven into the textbook contents, and identifying various related linguistic and non-linguistic elements.

Based on what was stated above, in the current study, which is framed within the general lines of Critical Pedagogy (Freire, 1969 and Giroux, 1992), a text extracted from a the Iranian EFL textbook (*Vision Series*) was analyzed through the procedures proposed in Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA). In fact, lexical, grammatical and discursive levels of the text were analyzed in order to identify the ideological concepts from which it starts, and to discover the representations of the world it creates or evokes. Thus, the following general research question was addressed:

RQ: What are the ideological assumptions that the conceptual metaphors of Iranian EFL textbook materialize?

Literature Review

Metaphorical language in different areas of communication has attracted many researchers. Amouzadeh and Tavangar (2004) studied the metaphorical image in the health and beauty magazine "Woman of the Day" before and after the Islamic revolution of Iran to reflect the politico-social changes, especially the use of the image of woman, and the use of metaphor in advertising. They concluded that the use of women's images was very limited and metaphorical linguistic tools played an alternative role in this process.

EFL textbooks and their non-linguistic contents have also attracted the attention of researchers in critical pedagogy. Cheng, Beigi, and Biglar (2012) tried to delineate the critical pedagogy through content analysis of the Iranian EFL textbooks. They focused on religion and education. They attempted to raise the awareness of the studied community and facilitators concerning the connection between religion and education. In fact, they studied a series of intermediate-level Iranian EFL textbooks to evaluate religious linear and non-linear concepts, and then to analyze the contents due to cultural and religious inclusiveness in the textbooks. They concluded that these textbooks highly rely on religious discourse.

In order to determine the issue of gender in the Iranian EFL textbooks, Amini and Birjandi (2012) analyzed the contents of these textbooks. They attempted to evaluate sexism that is still prominent in many societies particularly in the third-world countries. They evaluated sexism in two of the Iranian typically utilized EFL high-school textbooks, and concluded that awareness-raising in sexist practices in English as a foreign language could benefit material developers, facilitators, and students. In the same line, in a study titled, 'The Depiction of Men and Women within Iranian High School EFL Textbooks, tested against Islamic Custom' Benham and Mozaheb (2013), social identity was clarified based on its ontological construction. In fact, the researchers investigated the representation of males and females in Iranian EFL textbooks (*Vision Series)* to investigate the infiltration of Islamic notions into the content. They concluded that the

nationhood and identity concepts were constructed on religious discourses in Iranian EFL intermediate textbooks.

As for the use of metaphorical language, in a study conducted by Agbo, Kadiri and Ijem (2018), Charteris-Black's (2004) framework (CMA) was used to find out the implied intentions of language-speaking users, the ideological articulations and the patent power relations in political contexts. Their corpus comprised the political speeches of General Ibrahim Babangida (1985) and some other political figures. They came to the conclusion that the lecturers used metaphors as a medium to influence their addressees. In this very connection, Piri and Tafazzoli (2018) conducted a research on Iranian EFL students' cognitive styles as well as their explanations of conceptual metaphors, referring to a probable extent of individual dissimilarities in metaphorization. The results of their study showed that the learners with 'holistic' cognitive styles are more ready to merge their perception of the target domain with the source domain comparing to the subjects with 'analytic styles.

In line with the studies on the 'phenomenological pattern' in analyzing metaphorical representations in educational contexts, Sezer (2018) tried to determine the metaphorical perceptions of teachers according to Turkey's education policies modeled in the 'phenomenological pattern'-- one of the qualitative research methods. The sample was a group of 150 teachers. In order to collect data, the researcher evaluated the usage of metaphor based on the reports that were driven from focus-group interviews.

Descriptive analysis and content analysis were utilized to analyze data. He concluded that the teachers had negative attitude towards the educational policies. Daane, Robertson, Close, Scherr and Rachel (2018) too attempted to look at conceptual metaphors which were used by secondary science teachers. They used content analysis to codify the most common metaphors that they used to conceptualize their key terms on energy. They finally concluded that if teachers identify implicit metaphors in students' science language, they will better perceive students' ideas about energy.

Generally speaking, based on the related literature on conceptual metaphors, it seems that there is a gap in the studies on the use of such metaphors in EFL textbooks as a critical medium within critical pedagogy. Moreover, Iranian EFL textbooks show how Islamic Republic's policy-makers have made use of conceptual metaphors in the form of texts and illustrations in constructing English language textbooks.

Theoretical Frameworks

Critical Pedagogy theory that we follow in this study has been proposed by Giroux (1992). The central point of this theory is the commitment to penetrate the world of objective appearances in order to reveal the social relations that these appearances conceal. It holds a critical and virtually liberating view of education. Its basic precept is to educate for freedom, through awareness and self-reflection.

In line with critical pedagogy, the current study employed Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) which aims to discover the hidden relationships between language, power and ideology in terms of metaphorical encodings. From this perspective, language is constituted as a type of social practice that responds to socially instituted guidelines and conventions. Chartris-Black (2004) believes that the relationship between language and social structures is considered internal and dialectical, meaning that discourse is determined by social structures, while having effects on them and, consequently, contributing to the continuity or transformation of these structures. Thus, CMA deals with the analysis of social problems while its main concern is the forms of social inequality, structures and strategies of dominance and resistance developed in social relations. Its

field of responsibility includes the conflicts that arise in relation to social class, gender, minority communities, sexual orientation, religion, language, etc. Regarding methodology, CMA uses the traditional criteria of descriptive and explanatory observation, but enacts a new dimension of critical adaptation to discourse studies.

Analysis, Results and Discussion

Following the approach of Chartris-Black (2004), we carried out our analysis in three stages: description, interpretation and explanation. According to Chartris-Black (2004), the description of a text must account for the experiential, relational and expressive values of the words and the grammatical structures used. The experiential value is related to the knowledge of the world, beliefs and ideologies and refers to the representation of the social or natural world referred to by the producer of the text, the relational value provides the textual traces necessary for the reconstruction of the social relations embodied in the discourse, and the expressive value is related to the evaluation made by the producer of the text regarding the events, situations and people to which it refers. Expressive value is linked to subjects and social identities.

By analyzing the conceptual metaphors of the textbook (*Vision*), we came up with the following mappings:
Iran as a paradise (1)
Nature as a home (2)
Knowledge as power (3)
Very old scientist as a glory of the world (4)

Also, it was found that to introduce modernism, the authors of the textbook have highlighted foreign and western great figures who overcame harsh conditions to reach their goals. As a matter of fact, invention and discovery were accentuated by the names like Edison, Fleming, etc. Thus, the following key words were found to be repeated more frequently than others in order to emphasize symbolic concepts of success, thereby the mapping below:
Western inventors as success (5)
A) Popular, *famous, great*
B) Very large, intelligent, good food, own house
C) Keep fit no discos or parties, rock climbing, yoga
D) Be alone, watch the sunset
E) Perfect, everything

The use of such terms, which comprises semantically related groups, evokes a reality marked by fame (A), material wealth (B), healthy lifestyle (C) and certain rural elements (D). On Also, behind the choice of perfect and everything (E), the values of perfection and 'having it all' are expressed. Interestingly, to observe the high stance of Iran in the textbook, the authors have introduced the scientist as an Iranian hero. This choice is curious because most of Iranian figures mirrored by the authors failed to pass through dramatic careers, unlike the western ones such as Edison. It should be noted that the concept of hero seems to be based on individual success and directly associated with the popularity and agency as liberalism propagates it.

In connection with the expressive value referred to above, which postulate the evaluation of the producer of the discourse, the use of the indicative mode in the present time by the authors of the textbook, indicates a categorical commitment of them to the authenticity of the presented propositions. The totality of the textbook provides evidences of the positive evaluation of the authors in an idealized way—an open reality that is expressed categorically in Iran as a true paradise. This is the sign of an extremist picture of Iran based on abstract representations,

focusing on Iranian nature and history and maximizing the distance of Iranian audience with the current conditions that they are experiencing.

As for the analysis of the textbook at the stage of interpretation, the aim was to shed light on the processes of production and interpretation of discourse. Thus, the participants of the discursive and context situation (knowledge of the world mentioned above) and the assumptions coming from common sense that nourish the processes of production and interpretation of discourse were analyzed. Here, three essential elements: context, type of discourse, and difference and change, were explored.

Context: What interpretations of situational and inter-textual contexts can discourse participants make?

The authors seemed to have chosen conceptual metaphors that they supposed would stimulate the interest of the readers. In fact, they resorted to a type of discourse that was familiar to the audience of the textbook, and to a subject that constituted a part of mass popular culture. The inclusion of Iran in the text provided another element of common ground. However, paradoxically, what was presented as familiar represented what was absolutely alien to the readers and users of the textbook, not only because of the lifestyle that the text describes, but also because of the idealization that is made out of it

Type of discourse: What types of discourse are evoked in the text? What schemes, frames and scripts does the text activate?

The text under study evokes the discourse of the mass media, especially magazines aimed at teenagers, as well as television programs that revolve around the lives of celebrities in show business. It also refers to the genre of fairy tales to some extent. There is no doubt that our students have the frames, schemes and scripts that the text activates. However, it is worth asking if we do not want the texts of our classes to allude to other types of frameworks and schemes more appropriate for promoting education in terms of freedom and critical spirit.

Difference and change: Have the questions in the text different answers for different participants? Can these answers change as the discourse unfolds?

The discourse in our text does not change. As it develops, the text displays its content consistently and systematically, while the ideological assumptions underpinning it are reinforced by the passage of paragraphs.

As for the analysis of the textbook at the explanation stage, the relationship between the discourse and the social processes of struggle and power relations was investigated. In the first place, it was necessary to situate the curricular materials studied within the socio-historical context in which texts of this type were used; that is, English teaching institutes and public and private schools in Iran. This revealed the conflict that can arise between the culture of students and the culture of educational institutions. According to French sociologists Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), all academic culture is subjective since its validity is given only by its identification with the dominant classes. This subjective dominant culture is imposed on the entire society as an unquestionable objective knowledge. In broader terms, the point we are discussing highlights another worrying situation. In a world context of increasing globalization in which English is imposed as a lingua franca, the discourse of textbooks reproduces the asymmetrical relationship between hegemonic cultures and dominated cultures. This vision puts us in check as educators. Freire's Critical Pedagogy proposes a way out through dialogue and critical spirit. He suggests that the method in education should be active, dialogical and critical.

Dialogue is formed in a horizontal relationship, and is born from a critical matrix, generates criticism and is nourished by faith, humility, trust and hope in oneself and in the other. Consequently, true communication is possible only through dialogue.

Conclusion

In this research, the curricular materials (*Vision*) used in the teaching of English as a foreign language in Iran, were critically analyzed and interpreted in terms of the underlying meanings of conceptual metaphors. The findings showed that the imposition of cultural forms and contents (i.e. ideologically-oriented material) in the textbook results in the creation of situations of identity conflict and symbolic violence. Faced with these situations, educators have the possibility to intervene. But this intervention is not an easy task since it requires a commitment to education understood as a liberating practice. In other words, it should be desirable for teachers and educators to analyze the ideological presuppositions underlying the texts they use in the classroom. Furthermore, they should re-evaluate dialogue, the inescapable relationship between the learners and themselves, because two voices come into play that have their own identity, and therefore, the recognition of others and respect for their identity which are the pillars of educational practice for freedom, need to be observed. This is only possible when the teachers can, depending on the case, approach the material they use from a critical perspective, modify them, substitute them or omit their use.

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