

The Representation of Iraqi Identity in "English for Iraq" for High School Students: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This research tries to examine The Representation of Iraqi Identity in the Iraqi textbook "English for Iraq" concentrating on the reflection of the Iraqi identity in the contents of the book. The study adopts a critical discourse analysis to analyse the identity representation in this textbook. The researcher hypothesizes that "English for Iraq" contains hidden Iraqi identity representation. This paper aims to reveal the hidden Iraqi identity in the textbook "English for Iraq". The paper adopts a qualitative approach to analyse some samples from the book. The textbook helps with "reconstructing national dignity and rebranding Iraqi identity" in a positive way by telling Hadid's story

KEYWORDS

Representation; critical discourse analysis; ideology.

INTRODUCTION

Critical Discourse Analysis

Definitions and Nature

Scholars working in the field put various definitions and assertions regarding the nature and scope of CDA forth. A definition put forth by Fairclough (1995) examines in a methodical manner any "opaque relationship" of producing texts, discourse, discourse practices, and events within the broader social and cultural processes, relations, and structures, as well as how they are ideologically formed and shaped to embed power, dominance, and hegemony.

Accordingly, Fairclough as a subset of discourse analysis regards CDA, but its goal is to denaturalize discourse and reveal the underlying ideologies in text and speech by identifying and detecting the hidden components of the social system or systems, such as power and hegemony. According to van Dijk (1993), the true goal of CDA is to help individuals recognize, confront, and oppose prejudice and social inequality.

By taking an explicit stance, van Dijk (2001) expands the definition of CDA to include "analytical research" that not only identifies the level above the linguistic dimension but also demonstrates the types, methods, and ways of power resistance during interactions within social, legal, and political contexts. The fundamental concepts of CDA are expanded to include dominance, hegemony, class, gender, discrimination, race, and so on by van Dijk (2000), who questions how discourse is situated in the enactment of social, political, historical contexts and structures.

Aims CDA

Theorists share their opinions on the various goals of this subject. While some of these viewpoints serve as the foundation for the common ground shared by all CDA techniques and approaches, others can be viewed as distinct paths for each technique and approach.

The fact that CDA is an interdisciplinary field of study explains this range of viewpoints. CDA seeks to "show up connections which may be hidden from people, such as the connections between language and power," according to Fairclough (1989). In addition to giving the general public the critical thinking skills and resources they need to identify it, he states that one of the primary goals of CDA is to find and identify any form of ideological deceit and manipulation that are concealed in texts and are missed by the general public.

"Uncover, reveal, or disclose" the hidden structures, features, strategies, and manifestations of social power, dominance, inequality, discrimination, bias, etc. that are employed and exercised by the elite dominating groups over the dominated ones is the primary goal of CDA, according to van Dijk (1995). According to van Dijk (1995), the dominant groups use various linguistic and discursive strategies in an effort to justify, uphold, and hide any displays of control, dominance, and power.

The primary goal of CDA, according to Wodak and Meyer (2001), is to critically examine the social disparity that arises from language use between individuals and groups. According to Fowler and Kress (1979), CDA presents a "powerful tool for the study of ideological processes" of dominance and power and attempts to identify the relationship between power and control.

Accordingly, CDA seeks to provide and elucidate the various power, dominance, and inequality relations that are expressed in spoken and written discourse in a manner that is ambiguous and hidden from other people. To put it another way, CDA provides methods and instruments for examining the discursive causes of power, dominance, inequality, and bias through the study and analysis of many types of spoken and written texts. It critically assesses the ways in which social interaction and activity develop, preserve, and replicate these discursive sources.

Principles

Numerous academics have made an effort to research, define, and explain the key ideas of CDA, which continue to spark contentious debates. Researchers using CDA techniques demonstrate how this is accomplished, work to increase public knowledge of this facet of language use in society, and make clear arguments for change based on the results.

Mayr (2004) asserts that CDA covers a wide range of external issues and concerns, such as ideology, dominance, power, inequality, etc. Based on the notion that "text and talk play a key role in maintaining and legitimizing inequality, injustice, and oppression in society," CDA examines, evaluates, and interprets spoken and written texts using the ideas and conclusions of social theory (van Leeuwen, 2004).

The most frequently held opinion regarding CDA principles is that of Fairclough and Wodak (1997); the following points are directly relevant to the current investigation:

1. Social Problems
2. Power Relations are Discursive:
3. Discourse Causes Ideological Change:
4. CDA Goes Beyond Textual Analysis:
5. Discourse is a Form of Social Practice in Itself:

The Concept of 'Critical'

CDA seeks to "judge and prescribe" as opposed to merely "observe and interpret," according to Breeze (2001). According to Fairclough (1989), the term "critique" does not always have any negative connotations or characteristics because it refers to the ability to identify and reveal relationships that laypeople are unaware of.

According to Wodak and Meyer (2001), being 'critical' entails examining the targeted data in light of their social context in order to identify any potential position or ideology that may be supporting it. This implies that researchers are free to express their own opinions about the evidence they have examined.

As per Fairclough (2001), the term 'critical' signifies that CDA has a linguistic orientation to socio-cultural orientation or dimension, which means it extends beyond merely analyzing and defining the discursive events of the data. In order to address and overcome any social difficulties, Rogers (2003) claims that "critical" analysis examines language use in relation to social and political activities or circumstances.

The Concept of 'Ideology'

Since ideology encompasses a wide range of ideas, it is challenging to define precisely. As a result, numerous academics and researchers have studied ideology in depth but in diverse ways.

Ideology is "a specific basic framework of social cognition with specific social structures and specific and social functions," according to van Dijk (1995). According to him, it shows up when he speaks and engages in dialog.

According to van Dijk (1996), "Ideologies also establish links between discourse and society," Ideologies might be thought of as the cognitive equivalent of power. This indicates that ideologies relate the social circumstances of individuals and groups to the cognitive representation of action and discourse creation. He also adds "Ideology is a complex cognitive framework that controls the formation, transformation, and application of other social cognition, such as knowledge, opinions and attitudes, and social representation, including social prejudices." Van Dijk (2008) further defines ideology as "a form of social cognition, shared by members of a group, class, or other social formation".

Fairclough and Wodak (1997) asserts that "Ideologies are specific ways of representing and constructing society which reproduce unequal relations of power, relations of domination, and relations of exploitation,". According to Fairclough (2003), this connection serves as a mirror for the collection of attitudes, values, ideas, and beliefs that are expressed in conversation. The hierarchical relations of dominance, power, and exploitation in society are created, established, and maintained in part by these beliefs, which are ingrained in people and society's brains. Since the concepts of power, dominance, and discourse are practically collocated in CDA research, the idea of ideology is critically linked to these aspects.

From the definitions given above, it is evident that the term "ideology" refers to the set of human values, standards, and objectives that are founded on the unequal distribution, misuse, and dominance of power as they appear in language and discourse. This kind of ideology use is a way to influence people and impose beliefs or preconceptions on them.

Representation

Definitions and Nature

According to Pasha (2011), representation is a discursive process that politicians and the media employ for specific purposes. As he puts it, representation is "transmitting X via Y, where X is an event, people, place, etc., and Y is the medium through which the X is transmitted" (ibid).

As powerful people have a tendency to "signify events in a particular way," as Hall (1982) notes, elite people use representation to create meanings, values, and norms that are typically

not a transparent copy of the actual reality but rather a modified copy by forcing certain "interpretive frameworks" on others (Poole 2002).

Some people view representation critically as a way of expressing one's identity that is formed on the various linguistic levels of phonological, lexical, grammatical, and semantic relations that are formed stylistically or pragmatically during interaction to express speakers' or writers' ideologies and attitudes within broader socio-cultural dimensions (Fairclough, 2003).

The study of how educators and curriculum designers present and represent *Iraqi Identity in "English for Iraq" for High School Students* is extremely important. Furthermore, examining the many linguistic tactics and forms that are employed, which are driven by their mental models, aids in identifying and exposing any intended ideologies they may be carrying.

Representations as Ideology

According to van Dijk (1998), people's ideologies are a reflection of their basic social, political, economic, and cultural interests as well as the structure of a group schema. Van Dijk (ibid) uses the image of "Self and Others, Us and Them" to explain these ideas.

As they identify: "who we are, what we stand for, what our values are, and what our relationships are with other groups, especially our enemies or opponents, that is, those who oppose what we stand for, threaten our interests, and prevent us from equal access to social resources and human rights (residence, citizenship, employment, housing, status and respect, and so on)," Shojaei et al. (2013) demonstrate how representations are ideologies that govern our actions and reactions toward others.

According to Kuo and Nakamura (2005), representations "tend to construct reality in a manner congruent with their underlying ideological and political functions," which means that they offer a perspective or perspectives that are mostly distinct from reality. Politicians' verbal expressions, tactics, and instruments appear to be some of the most significant tools for creating and reproducing representations.

In order to accomplish specific objectives, such as gaining control, repressing others, influencing the thoughts and behavior of others, or justifying particular behaviors, these depictions are primarily filled with ideas.

The Model of Analysis

Fairclough (1989) Critical Model of Analysis

Scholars can critically study any texts and discourse by using the three-dimensional model that Fairclough (1989) offers. In the subject of CDA, Fairclough is credited with being the first to identify any overt or covert ideologies inherent in these texts and the impact they have on other people.

Although there are three stages in the model, they are connected to one another. The following is how the researcher analyzes internet memes using this model:

The description of the linguistic text/discourse will be the focus of the first stage. As long as the researcher accomplishes the goal(s) of his study, he is free to choose any linguistic devices in any discourse fragment.

The second stage aims to *interpret* the process of production and consumption of the speech contents, for example by using speech acts and their type, presuppositions, and relevance maxims, the second stage seeks to accounting for any contextual information that the text/discourse may provide that could influence the receivers' comprehension and interpretation processes.

In order to comprehend the discursive ideological elements that led to the creation of those internet memes, the third stage of the model attempts to explain critical interpretation while taking into account any historical and sociocultural dimensions, backgrounds, or features of the text/discourse.

Discourse Historical Approach (DHA)

DHA is one of the most well-known critical techniques to discourse analysis, according to Reisigl (2017) with a tendency toward "a problem-oriented perspective," it is "a flexible and productive variety" of CDA techniques.

DHA attempts to systematically analyze the making of situational meaning of discourse within its historical context, despite van Dijk's (2003) definition of context as "mentally represented structures of those properties of the social situation that are relevant for the production or comprehension of discourse" (Reisigl, 2017). Wodak and Ludwig (1999) assert that "Discussion (..) is always historical, that is, it is connected synchronically and diachronically with other communicative events which are happening at the same time or which have happened before,".

In order to get a comprehensive picture of the ideological discourse that is created and its impact on recipients, the DHA approach attempts to utilize whatever background information and historical materials that are available on "the social and political fields in which discursive events" are occurring. Additionally, "wherever integration [that] leads to an adequate understanding and explanation of the research object" is a term that DHA frequently uses.

In order to arrive at a transparent, clear, systematic, and explicit analysis of the intertextual historical dimension of the ideological discursive practices of discourse, Wodak (2011) states that the DHA approach seeks to investigate how discourse "changes over time by integrating the different social theories to explain the socio-cultural context." This causes the recontextualization process to be modified in order to connect texts and discourses in an intertextual and interdiscursive manner throughout time.

Discourse and textual ideologies, techniques, and classifications are not set in stone. The specific problem or problems being studied and investigated determine their suggested framing and goals for each analysis.

The adopted critical model of analysis is explained in Figure (1).

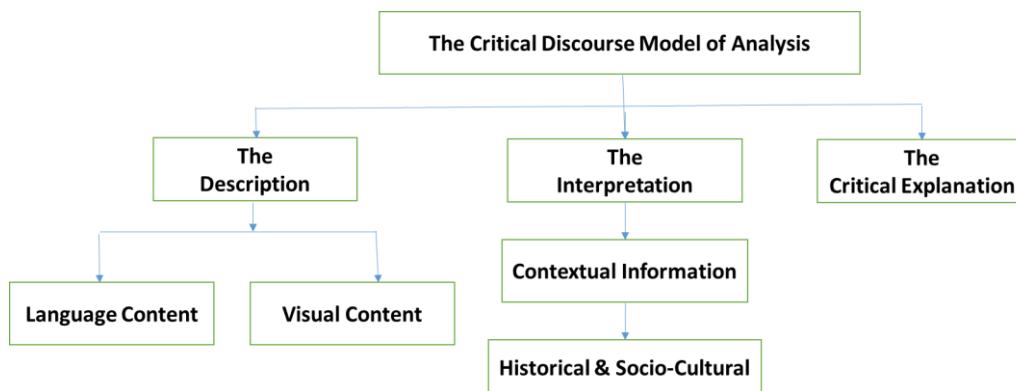


Figure 1. The Adopted Critical Model of Analysis

RESEARCH METHODS

Data selection

The researcher here selects Two dialogues concerning Iraqi issues from the sixth preparatory (12th grade) level of the English for Iraq textbook as data for analysis. To start, the Iraqi Ministry of Education created the comprehensive English language curriculum for the sixth preparatory (12th grade) level of the English for Iraq textbook. In addition to preparing students for the national baccalaureate exam, it seeks to increase their competency in the four essential language abilities of speaking, writing, listening, and reading.

Structure and Content Overview of the Book

Lessons and Units: Each of the eight units in the textbook is focused on a different theme. For example, Unit 1 covers "Health Services," and there are readings, written assignments, and terminology associated with this subject. Ten lessons are usually included in each unit:

Lesson 1: Introduces key vocabulary.

Lesson 7: Focuses on writing skills.

Lesson 8: Provides writing exercises.

Lesson 9: Offers comprehensive unit review exercises.

Lesson 10: Contains a reading passage designated for memorization.

Units 4 and 8 serve as revision units and contain fewer lessons than the others.

Writing Practice

Ten of the forty-two writing assignments in the textbook must be memorized. The remaining tasks help pupils improve their writing abilities.

Supplementary Materials

A teacher's guide, audio CDs, and an activity book are included with the textbook. These materials are intended to strengthen the content and provide users more speaking and listening practice.

The researcher adopts the qualitative approach rather than quantitative to show how critical theories are applied to such tales and to what extent such analysis can produce sound, deep, valid, and productive analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Excerpt No. 1:

Unit 6 Lesson 6

Conversation P. 106

Banker : Good morning. Can I help you?

Customer : Yes, I don't know what to do. I've lost my handbag. My wallet, with all my money and bank cards, was in it.

Banker : Are you sure you've lost it? Couldn't you have just left it at home?

Customer : No. I definitely had it when I was at the café. I was talking to my friend when we left and I think I left it on the table.

Banker : Did you go back to look for it?

Customer : Yes, it wasn't there. If I hadn't been in such a hurry, I wouldn't have left it there!

Banker : Don't worry. If we cancel your cards now, no one else will be able to use them. New ones will be sent to you very soon.

The Critical Discourse Analysis

Fairclough Approach

Textual Analysis (The Description Level of Fairclough's)

As this level focuses on the linguistic features of the text, the analysis will be as following:

Vocabulary and Grammar

- The vocabulary echoes middle-class financial concerns" (e.g., *wallet, money, bank cards*).
- The banker routinely uses modal verbs and conditional constructions: "*If we cancel your cards now...*" and "*New ones will be sent...*"
- The customer's emotional state is indicated through modal uncertainty: "*I don't know what to do*" and the past modal: "*If I hadn't been in such a hurry...*"

Speech Acts and Politeness

- The banker starts with a standard institutional greeting: "*Good morning. Can I help you?*"
- The discourse features indirectness and politeness, upholding formal but empathetic distance.
- The use of conditionals (e.g., "*If we cancel your cards now...*") demonstrates careful, procedural reassurance.

Discursive Practice (The Interpretation Level of Fairclough's)

This level analyzes how the interaction is both produced and interpreted, including intertextuality and institutional conventions.

Genre and Discourse Type

The conversation follows the traditions of the genre of institutional banking discourse as it reflects a service-based, bureaucratic interaction, reflecting the sort of dialogue students might face in real-life bank settings and interaction.

Power Relations

The banker holds institutional power but exercises it both politely and supportively. The customer is offered as both dependent and emotionally stressed, invoking a position of vulnerability. However, there is no coercive and intimidating language; instead, the discourse stresses cooperation and reassurance ("*Don't worry*", "*New ones will be sent to you*").

Educational Mediation

This dialogue models communicative competence in formal institutions, part of the textbook's aim is to prepare students for real-world situations that encounter in English.

Social Practice (The Explanation Level of Fairclough's)

This stage deals with the ideological and cultural implications of the text.

Ideological Representation

The goal of the writing is to create *an idealized image of public institutions (banks are responsive, safe, helpful, and protective)*. Additionally, it seeks to foster confidence in

financial modernity systems, which is consistent with neoliberal principles and the government's goal of having a globally integrated, financially literate populace.

Identity and Social Roles

Based on the reference to a purse, it is likely that the customer is female. In contrast to the banker, who is unidentified but represents rational institutional authority that is probably male-coded by speech patterns but isn't expressed directly, women are seen as emotionally expressive, in charge of handbags, and in charge of managing personal finances.

National Identity and Modernity

By subtly aligning Iraq with global financial practices, the discussion portrays Iraqi society as a component of the contemporary global economy. The "urban middle-class experience" implied by the scenario of losing a wallet at a café and visiting a bank may exclude pupils from rural or economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

To sum up, the subtle promotion of trust in institutional efficiency, the need for individual responsibility, and gendered emotional expression makes this conversation anything but neutral. An aspirational view of Iraqi identity is also suggested, presenting Iraqis as participants in international banking standards. As a result, Iraqi identity is represented in a modernized, urban, and institutionally integrated manner, reflecting the larger objectives of educational policy.

Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA): Historical Context, Intertextuality, And Discursive Strategies

Wodak's approach emphasizes on historical context, intertextuality, and discursive strategies used to construct and build social realities.

Interdiscursivity and Intertextuality

The conversation is based on media portrayals of banking, *interdiscursive elements* of public sector communication, and ELT (English Language Teaching) discourse in schools. It *reflects societal narratives* about financial literacy, modernization, and the security of digital banking.

Discursive Strategies

Nomination: The customer is covertly framed as *a woman and a victim of loss*; the banker as *a helper and authority figure*.

Predication: Organizations are associated with efficiency and care. The customer's inaccuracy is acknowledged but not judged severely.

Argumentation: The logic behind canceling cards and supplying new ones reflects procedural rationality, reinforcing systemic trust.

Historical and Political Context

The scenario reflects Iraq's post-2003 socio-political context, where state establishments were being rebuilt, re-legitimized and re-authorized.

By depicting smooth banking services, the book projects a positive image of public infrastructure, contributing to nation-building discourse.

Excerpt No. 2:

Unit 3 Lesson 3

MEET ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR ARCHITECTS IN THE WORLD!

This week Latifa Ahmed interviews Zaha Hadid, London-based Iraqi architect

When did you decide to be an architect?

It has been my dream since childhood.

Why?

I am fascinated by the design and structure of buildings. I wanted a career that I would enjoy and that would be useful.

Can you tell me more about your background?

I was born in Baghdad and studied mathematics at the American University of Beirut. Then I moved to London and studied architecture. I opened my own practice there in 1979. I also started to teach architecture students in famous universities like Harvard.

What kind of buildings are you famous for?

I like very modern designs, so probably my most futuristic buildings.

Have your designs won any prizes?

Yes, the Pritzker Prize in 2004 — was the first woman ever to win this -- and the Stirling Prize in 2011.

Can Iraqi women always be as successful as men in their careers?

Of course. Any Iraqi woman can succeed in her chosen career if she works hard enough.

The Critical Discourse Analysis

Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model (1995)

Textual Level (Description)

Lexical Choices: Phrases such as “very modern designs,” “most futuristic buildings,” and “famous universities like Harvard” construct and create Zaha Hadid as an authoritative, internationally respected figure.

Pronouns and Modality: The usage of “I” and “my” signals personal agency, while “Any Iraqi woman can succeed” uses modal verbs (“can”) to imply and infer potential and empowerment.

Grammar: The interview is framed and put with simple, declarative sentences and present-perfect tense (“It has been my dream”) to link and relate past experience with present achievement, promoting a narrative of continuity and aspiration.

Discursive Practice (Production and Consumption)

The interview is put and embedded in a school textbook, which shapes and forms its didactic purpose: it not only conveys factual information but models a national success story and serves as a linguistic and ideological exemplar for students. The reader/receiver is interpolated into an aspirational Iraqi subject position: one who can be modern, global, and successful.

Social Practice (Contextualization)

The text contributes in recontextualizing Iraqi identity amid global discourses of success, meritocracy, and gender equality. Hadid becomes and converts into a symbol of Iraq's soft power, located against global stereotypes of the Middle East as a region of instability.

Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA); Socio-Political and Historical Contexts

The socio-political and historical contexts in which conversation takes place are emphasized by Ruth Wodak. Her method tracks the construction and contestation of collective identities over time.

Topoi (Argumentative Schemes):

Topos of Authority: appealing to Western and international norms of excellence, Zaha Hadid's legitimacy is built through her institutional ties (Harvard, American University of Beirut) and accolades (Pritzker Prize). **Topos of Possibility and Responsibility:** Her claim that "any Iraqi woman can succeed if she works hard enough" makes reference to the idea that "agency and determination overcome structural barriers. **Nomination Strategies:** Hadid, who represents "intersectional identity" (national + gender), is nominated as both the "first woman" to win the Pritzker Prize and a "Iraqi architect. **Contextualization:** The post-war context of Iraq and the clichéd media portrayals must be taken into consideration when reading the interview. The textbook helps with "reconstructing national dignity and rebranding Iraqi identity" in a positive way by telling Hadid's story.

CONCLUSION

Language as Ideological Tool: In keeping with Fairclough's (1995) theory of discourse as a social activity entwined with power dynamics, the textbook functions as a tool for "ideological reproduction" in addition to being a language learning resource.

Positive Representation of Iraqi Identity: The textbook presents Iraqis as proactive, logical beings by emphasizing *competence, civility, and modernity* in its texts and discussions. Van Dijk's (1998) concept of *positive self-presentation* in conversation is reflected in this.

Globalization and Integration: The inclusion of issues such as banking, credit cards, and foreign achievements implies an aim to link Iraqi identity with global economic and professional discourses, confirming Fairclough's (2003) concept of marketization of discourse in educational texts.

Reconstruction of National Image: By emphasizing success stories like Zaha Hadid's, Wodak's discourse-historical method (2001) shows how the textbook aids in the reconstruction of Iraq's national image, particularly in a post-conflict setting.

Empowerment of Women: In keeping with Wodak's feminist-critical discourse orientation, the portrayal of Zaha Hadid creates an empowered image of "Iraqi women as globally successful professionals," questioning conventional gender norms and advancing gender equality.

Use of Conditional and Modal Structures: According to Fairclough's theory of how grammar enacts social relations and ideologies, the linguistic choices made in the banking talks (e.g., "If I had known..." / "You could get cash...") represent a discourse of "personal responsibility, hypothetical reasoning, and problem-solving."

Education as Nation-Building: The incorporation of internationally significant subjects and well-known Iraqi individuals points to a ideological project of nation-building through education in which fluency in English is associated with opportunity, modernity, and national pride.

Textbook as Discourse Site: All things considered, the textbook serves as a site of discursive struggle and negotiation where students are taught and exposed to a variety of ideologies, including nationalism, modernization, gender equality, and global citizenship.



Strategic Identity Formation: In the textbook, Iraqi identity is deliberately constructed as bifocal—focused on global engagement and achievement while remaining rooted in national pride (such as Zaha Hadid's heritage).

Implications for Critical Pedagogy: The results emphasize the value of critical pedagogy in textbook design and assessment, calling on teachers to be aware of the underlying sociopolitical messages that are presented in language learning resources.

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