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Discourse Representation in the Images of English Textbooks "Prospects" and "Visions": A semiotic Analysis :The Case Study of Ethnicity and Place

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Abstract

The relation between culture and language, features the need to examine the effectiveness of language textbooks. Considering the goal that foreign language teaching is mainly associated with the entry of cultural issues into the learner' knowledge, this need increases especially during learning a foreign language. Due to the today's growing importance of visual communication, this article offers a new perspective on images of English language textbooks in our system of education, based on the semiotic model of Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), which emphasizes the importance of constituent elements of culture and society in analyzing linguistic signs; such as clothing, traditions or customs of cultures and subcultures. Paying attention to limitations of this case study, "ethnicity and location" are analyzed in the images of "Visions" and "Prospects". The present study explains how discourse is represented in these images, based on a scientific background and descriptive-analytical method with the aim of examining the social and cultural functions of language. The results show that the studied textbooks don't have a specific "ethnic-racial" approach and selection of "place" was without bias of the source language or the target language; In this way, the illustrator didn't pay special attention to his or her own language in choosing the images.

Keywords: discourse analysis, English language teaching, education, cultural transmission, semiotics

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1. Introduction

Due to the today's increasing importance of visual communication, the present study has a new perspective to this issue and examines the various forms of visual communication and discourse representation in images of "Visions" and "Prospects"related to place and ethnicity. Sometimes it is not possible to express everything that is presented through the images with a linguistic tool, and the opposite is also true. In this study, in addition to examining the semiotic pattern of Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), we will look at the questions: how discourse is represented in images related to "ethnicity" as well as "place". A deep connection between English language and its related culture and the need to confirm that English language textbooks contain cultural issues in addition to linguistic issues, resulted the researcher into analyze multi-style texts after extracting. In this article, we try to analyze images at the levels of representational, interactive and compositional meaning using descriptive-analytical method. This study is based on the hypothesis that the mentioned English language textbooks, don't have a specific ethnic-racial approach and images related to "place" play a role in conveying concepts without biasing the source language or the target language.

2. Literature Review

It is necessary for images to meet the conditions of representation and communication, sothat they act as a complete communication system. One of the language semiotics' schools is social semiotics, which deals with a social dimension of meaning in the communication media and pictures. Social semiotics has many possibilities for semiotics and is presented with the assumption that signs and messages should considered in the field of social processes (Kress & Van leeuwen, 2006: 6). Studies like Meshkat (2002), Shin & Kubota (2008), Amouzade et al (2013), Wue (2014) and Ahangar & Shirvani (2016) have discussed the discourse representation in multimedia texts. However, the present research is a new study to newly published English

textbooks "Prospect" and "Visions". Although Halliday's theory (1994) is capable of analyzing pragmatic aspects of language, it is incapable of studying multi-style texts. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) improved and generalized his idea to images. Torres (2015) evaluated textbook's social-visual semiotics in the educational system of South Korea based on Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006). His findings indicated that some visual and verbal messages conflict with each other. He also explains that this opposition reveals the purposeful ideology within those images. Rouhani and Saeed Far (2013) worked on a comprehensive study using the grammar model of Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006). They analyzed the images of old high school textbooks. According to their research, images aren't used in the service of language learning completely. With this in mind, let's know the other part of paper.

3. Methodology

This research applies Halliday's theory (1994) and Kress, G. & Van leeuwen (2006) to analyze discourse representation in images of English textbooks "Prospects" and "Visions" which affect the students as learners. In this article, we try to analyze images at the levels of representational, interactive and compositional meaning using descriptive-analytical method.

4. Results and Discussions

By analyzing the data, the initial hypotheses are confirmed. In this way, the studied images show that people having different ethnicity are the same. They tend to show that it doesn't matter what their particular race or skin color is; rather, human beings regardless of these features, can be successful and efficient people if they have necessary competencies. In selecting place-related images, public locations such as the street and the classroom are selected. It has a general aspect and isn't specifically related to a particular language or culture; As a result, no orientation of the source language or the target language plays a role in conveying concepts.

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