

Critical discourse analysis of English textbooks: a methodological study

Wenjing Zhang

College of Education and Sports Sciences, Yangtze University, Jingzhou, Hubei 434023, China

Keywords: Critical discourse analysis, Research methodology, Textbook research

Abstract: Based on the connotation of critical discourse analysis, this paper examines the evaluation results and re-establishes the theoretical framework applicable to the analysis of domestic English textbooks with the principle of critical discourse. The theoretical framework of this study first analyzes the linguistic strategies of textbook text presentation and confirms the category of epistemology; Secondly, through the summary, elaboration and structure analysis at all levels, different argumentation of textbook text is generated; Finally, Fairclough three-dimensional analysis is used to summarize. This study also cites two common categories of epistemology in English textbook texts as examples: multicultural perspective and communication ability to examine whether English textbooks have the discourse of actively presenting multiculturalism and emphasizing communication ability. This paper aims to provide a basis for English teachers' choice, use and insight into textbook ideology through textbook critical discussion, research integration and reconstruction of methodology.

1. Introduction

Because of its unique social function, textbooks can convey to learners the officially recognized, important and correct human knowledge and culture, so its importance in the education field can not be ignored. Content analysis is the most commonly used research method in textbook research at home and abroad. But "the ideology in the text can not be read completely, because the meaning is generated in the process of interpreting the text, and the text is open and allows multiple interpretations". Fairclough critical discourse analysis (CDA) is an interdisciplinary research method. It aims to deconstruct the concepts of social relations, identity, knowledge and power constructed in the text, and further expose the ideology of language use. Through this methodology, teachers can examine whether the curriculum knowledge in textbooks implies political power, and deconstruct the cultural hegemony, control, power and ideology in textbooks, so as to enable teachers to critically reflect on the text and discourse of textbooks, carry out the "re conceptualization" of textbooks, and bring the power of teaching reflection and educational transformation.

2. Connotation of critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis is the product of the typical critical tradition. The topics often

discussed by the textbook research model of critical tradition include race, class, gender and identity. Taking Apple's research as an example, he discusses how textbooks acquire legitimacy and dominance from the perspective of critical theory, criticizes how the production and consumption of textbooks are deeply influenced by cultural hegemony, and reflects the ideology of capitalism. Therefore, from the perspective of critical analysis, the textbook is not an objective textbook, but a text full of value identification. Its content inevitably carries a large number of political, cultural, class and gender ideologies. From the perspective of critical theory, the advocates of critical theory also shoulder the responsibility of revealing the truth in the text and fighting against social injustice. Because the ideology and value identification in the textbook text often define the knowledge of the so-called elite culture in the society, and legalize it so that it can be transmitted smoothly. In addition, the critical connotation of critical discourse analysis can timely expose the potential inequality of the text, promote the individual's critical consciousness, and finally expect to lead to change or change, which shows its far-reaching intention. According to Foucault's concept of discourse practice, knowledge and power will spread and operate at different levels of society. Discourse is a kind of linguistic statement produced by social system. The task of researchers is to analyze the ideology spread by such linguistic statements. Therefore, discourse analysis emphasizes the close relationship between language and knowledge. The discourse analysis should cover: (1) the use of language has many functions and different influences. (2) Language is constructed, and it is also constructive. (3) The same phenomenon can be described in different ways. Therefore, there is no infallible way to deal with these different versions, or to distinguish between the "literal" or "accurate" version and the rhetorical or incorrect version, so that researchers can avoid the problem of variation when dealing with the language of "realism". The core theme of the study should be the constructive and flexible use of language itself. Van Dijk pointed out that the research purpose of critical discourse analysis is to find out the structure, strategy and text characteristics that play the role of reproduction form. Researchers must pay special attention to how the text context reproduces the dominant relationship in the society, or how to challenge this domination behavior, so as to present and discuss its true meaning. Therefore, in the study of textbook ideology, critical discourse analysis can become a suitable research tool, because it is conducive to revealing the choice of knowledge and value beliefs in his text discourse. For example, what skills does the "white superiority discourse" show through? It is like creating confusion, superiority, stereotype, or using language strategies such as metaphor, rhetoric, syntax, etc. Only through the process of language deconstruction can we fully present the form of discourse in the text.

3. Application of critical discourse analysis in textbook research

Luke once pointed out that there is no educational truth or practice without research. Therefore, we must make an in-depth discussion on the political and cultural arguments of the textbook text. Foreign scholar van Dijk analyzes racism in textbooks from the perspective of critical linguistics. There are nine linguistic strategies used by Van Dijk: (1) surface structure; (2) Syntax; (3) Lexicon; (4) Local semantics; (5) Global semantics; (6) Schematic structures; (7) Pragmatics; (8) Dialogical interaction. There are three steps in Wang Yaxuan's critical discourse analysis framework of textbooks in the social field, which are "the choice of epistemology", "the disposal of methodology" and "the derivation of discourse". In the first stage, the choice of epistemology focuses on knowledge, because discourse constitutes the object of knowledge, and its purpose is to understand how textbooks treat knowledge. Weinbrenner also proposed five knowledge categories to reconstruct the structure of textbook research paradigm: epistemological research interest, statement analysis, concept formation, value judgments, and ideologies. The benchmark arrangement of these five knowledge categories is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Epistemological categories and benchmarks of Textbook Research

Category	Benchmark
Epistemological Research purport	-- Research purport as the premise and content of textbooks
Statement analysis	--Language form (oral narration) --Linguistic level (fact statement and concept) --Degree of generalization (special and general statements) --External form (decisive statement and hypothetical statement) --Justiciability (explanation, explicable outline and difficult explanation)
Concept formation	--Actual or nominal concept? --Is concept formation inductive or deductive? --Ideal or practical concept? --What is the definition, explanation, concept content, scope and frequency of use? --Is the concept used consistently?
value judgment	-- Regarding authority, tradition, custom, religion, national moral code, constitution and legal rules, What attitudes and values do textbooks present? --What are the values and attitudes of textbooks towards families, ethnic groups, communities, schools, culture, society and the public sphere? --What types of value judgments are presented in textbooks: primary or secondary value judgments, ontological value judgments, value judgments without normative information content (vague declarations) Value judgment with normative guidance content?
Ideology	--Are there both descriptive and indicative statements? --Is the premise on which the conclusion is based incomplete or incorrect? --Is the underlying assumption implicit in the premise? --How can assumptions be asserted as assertions? --Is an incorrect or one-sided causal relationship established? --Do you present your personal interests as general interests? --Are the discovered facts categorized into unacceptable types?

Source: Weinbrenner, P. Methodologies of textbook analysis used to date. In H. 1992.

On the disposal of methodology in the theoretical framework, wangyaxuan referred to the three procedures of qualitative content analysis of varying: summary, explanation and structure. The part of the abstract is interpreted through the simplified text. The explanation part is to understand the content to be parsed and explain the summary according to the language definition. Structure is to find out a specific framework so that the text can meet the specifications required by the policy after it is formed. These three stages can also cover nine steps: determining the material, analyzing the initial context of the text, understanding the characteristics of the content form, determining the analysis direction, theoretically differentiating the questions to be answered, selecting the analysis technology (abstract, interpretation, structure), defining the analysis unit, conducting content analysis (summary, interpretation, structure) and interpretation. The last part is the introduction of the discussion in order to find out the way of text narration (reisigl & Wodak, 2001:44). It includes referential/nomenclature, predication, argument, inclusion/exclusion and intensification/ limitation. These five discourses all revolve around a core concept in a critical and problematic way: to

examine whether textbooks have the discourse of "positively presenting themselves and negatively presenting the other". In other domestic fields, textbook analysis adopts the relevant research of critical discourse analysis, and many researchers directly take the three-dimensional analysis proposed by Fairclough as the basis (Fig. 1). Fairclough especially emphasizes that discourse, as a social practice, is intertextual with other social factors. In addition to the description of the text content of the textbook, we should also pay attention to the analysis of the process of interpretation and the interaction with the social context. Its so-called three-dimensional analysis is a research framework composed of three aspects: "text analysis", "process analysis" and "social analysis". The analysis strategies adopted are description, interpretation and interpretation. The focus of the analysis between texts is to link the language used in the text with the social context. In the process of analysis, explore the ideology implied in the discourse, and find out the dialectical relationship between the discourse and social conditions. The research structure is shown in. In the way of critical discourse analysis, we should reconstruct the methodology of taking domestic English textbooks as the research object, and the research space to deconstruct the discourse of English textbooks still needs to be carried out.

On the disposal of methodology in the theoretical framework, wangyaxuan referred to the three procedures of qualitative content analysis of marying: summary, explanation and structure. The part of the abstract is interpreted through the simplified text. The explanation part is to understand the content to be parsed and explain the summary according to the language definition. Structure is to find out a specific framework so that the text can meet the specifications required by the policy after it is formed. These three stages can also cover nine steps: determining the material, analyzing the initial context of the text, understanding the characteristics of the content form, determining the analysis direction, theoretically differentiating the questions to be answered, selecting the analysis technology (abstract, interpretation, structure), defining the analysis unit, conducting content analysis (summary, interpretation, structure) and interpretation. The last part is the introduction of the discussion in order to find out the way of text narration (reisigl & Wodak, 2001:44). It includes referential/nomenclature, predication, argument, inclusion/exclusion and intensification/ limitation. These five discourses all revolve around a core concept in a critical and problematic way: to examine whether textbooks have the discourse of "positively presenting themselves and negatively presenting the other". In other domestic fields, textbook analysis adopts the relevant research of critical discourse analysis, and many researchers directly take the three-dimensional analysis proposed by Fairclough as the basis (Fig. 1). Fairclough especially emphasizes that discourse, as a social practice, is intertextual with other social factors. In addition to the description of the text content of the textbook, we should also pay attention to the analysis of the process of interpretation and the interaction with the social context. Its so-called three-dimensional analysis is a research framework composed of three aspects: "text analysis", "process analysis" and "social analysis". The analysis strategies adopted are description, interpretation and interpretation. The focus of the analysis between texts is to link the language used in the text with the social context. In the process of analysis, explore the ideology implied in the discourse, and find out the dialectical relationship between the discourse and social conditions. The research structure is shown in. In the way of critical discourse analysis, we should reconstruct the methodology of taking domestic English textbooks as the research object, and the research space to deconstruct the discourse of English textbooks still needs to be carried out.

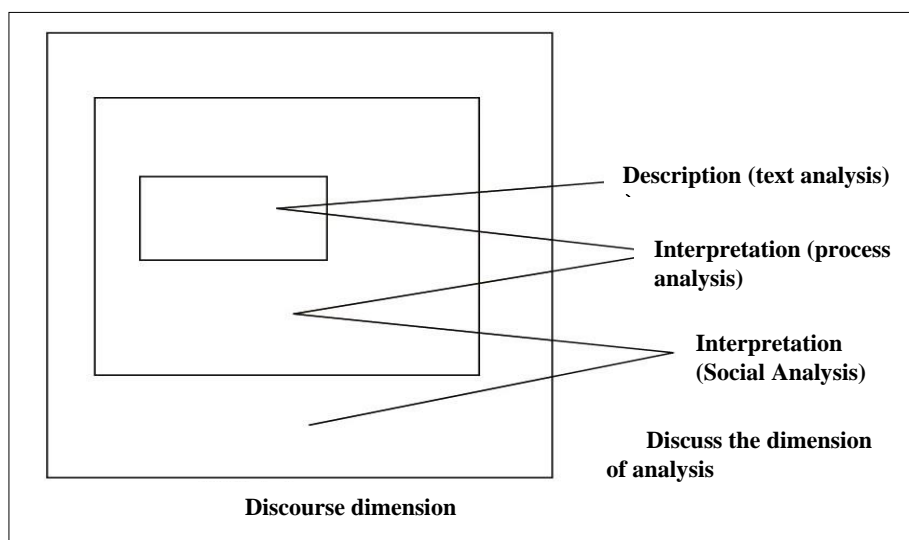


Figure 1: Three dimensions of Fairclough's critical analysis

Source: Fairclough, N. Media discourse [J]. London: Edward Arnold. 1995.

4. Research methodology and theoretical framework formation

Based on the principles and Strategies of critical discourse analysis, this paper establishes the analytical framework of English textbooks. In terms of the description of basic abilities emphasized in textbooks, the abilities of "expression, communication and sharing" and "cultural learning and international understanding" appear repeatedly in the syllabus of each volume. Therefore, taking the "multicultural perspective" and "communicative competence" commonly presented in domestic English textbooks as examples, and based on the benchmarks of the five epistemological categories listed in Table 1, Using the approaches and principles of critical discourse analysis, a contextualized textbook analysis tool is established. The thematic outline of epistemology is analyzed as shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Theme outline of multicultural views and communication skills in English textbooks

Category	Benchmark
Research purport of Epistemology	-- Classification of Multiculturalism --Presentation of communication skills
Statement analysis	-- Presentation of foreign / national culture --Minority / majority view --Description of communication function
Concept formation	-- The formation of multicultural views --Relationship between social economic status and communication ability
value judgment	-- Attitudes towards multicultural traditions and customs --Claim of communication ability / basic ability
Ideology	-- How the multiculturalism recognized by most ethnic groups is strengthened (e.g. local traditions, online communities Festivals of various countries, my nationality / other nationalities) --Ethnic minorities face the dilemma of multiculturalism (e.g. daily life, customs and habits)--Results required for basic communication skills

The introduction of the discussion, analyzes the way of the textbook text narration, in order to summarize the textbook discussion and strategy. Marying's three procedures for qualitative content

analysis can be adopted: summary, elaboration and structure. Keep the essence of the text and faithfully reflect the essence of the original documents; Explain the definition of language, understand the content to be parsed, and explain the summary; Structure is to find out a specific structure, so that the text can conform to the specifications required by the syllabus, including form, content, object, etc. More specifically, these three stages cover nine steps: determining the material, analyzing the initial situation of the text, understanding the characteristics of the content form, determining the analysis direction, theoretically differentiating the questions to be answered, selecting the analysis technology (abstract, interpretation, structure), defining the analysis unit, conducting content analysis (abstract, interpretation, structure) and interpretation. The last part is to draw out the discussion and find out the way of text narration. Textbook analysis in the field of English can cover five discourses: reference / naming discourses, reference discourses, argument discourses, inclusion / exclusion discourses, and strengthening / weakening discourses. These five discourses all revolve around a core concept: to examine whether English textbooks have the discourse of "actively presenting multiculturalism and emphasizing communicative competence".

Based on the above methodology, this paper constructs a "critical discourse analysis framework" for English textbooks. This theoretical framework first makes a linguistic strategy analysis of the written language presented in the textbook text, because the essence of English textbooks is the presentation of foreign languages. The premise of critical discourse analysis is that the text carries ideology as discourse, and examining the presentation and formation of language is the primary task. In addition, according to the essence of Halliday's systemic functional linguistics, researchers must also be concerned about how language systematically relates and interacts with social functions or ideology. Therefore, the theoretical framework begins with the linguistic analysis strategy advocated by van Dijk. Its disciplinary linguistic strategy can effectively analyze the language related elements of the textbook text, such as syntax, semantics, pragmatics, rhetoric and other different fields to analyze the language itself. Next, in order to confirm the theme of knowledge, we must enter the category of epistemology, which also reflects the focus of critical discourse analysis. Researchers can choose the theme of analysis based on this, and aim at the object to be deconstructed, covering the surface meaning and deep meaning. After determining the theme, the researcher began to find out the problems of the discussion through the analysis program of "abstract elaboration structure", and then criticized the pictures, language, story plot and multi-dimensional analysis. Finally, five different types of discourse are obtained to understand the purport, statement, concept, value and ideology of the discourse, and how to regulate what to say and how to say it in the textbook text. After the introduction of the discussion, Fairclough's three-dimensional analysis must be combined to examine the process of textbook text production and interpretation, discourse practice and social and cultural practice. The two categories of discourse and three-dimensional analysis are connected by double arrows, showing their reversibility, so as to highlight the fluidity and social interaction of discourse in textbooks.

5. Conclusion

This study establishes a theoretical framework of critical discourse analysis with clear analytical procedures in order to deconstruct the knowledge presented in English textbooks. In the course of the study, we take a critical point of view and attach importance to the political nature of textbooks: the relationship between knowledge and power, the relationship between dominant behavior and domination, and the potential ideology in the text. The critical discourse analysis of textbooks should be carried out in the social context, and the thematic, intertextual and interpretive nature should be considered in order to deconstruct the discourse appearance in textbooks and the relevance between politics and society.

References

- [1] Apple, M. *Official knowledge: Democratic education in a conservative age*. New York: Routledge.1993.
- [2] Fairclough, N. *Media discourse*. London: Edward Arnold.1995.
- [3] Luke, A. *Critical discourse analysis*. In L. J. Saha (Ed.), *International encyclopedia on the sociology of education*. Oxford: Pergamon. 1997.
- [4] Apple, M. *Teachers and text: A political economy of class and gender relations in education*. New York: Routledge. 1986.
- [5] Nicholls, J. *The philosophical underpinnings of school textbook research*. *Paradigm-Journal of the Textbook Colloquium*. 2005. 3(3).
- [6] Foucault, M. *The order of discourse*. In R. Young (Ed.), *Untying the text: A post-structuralist reader*. London.1981.
- [7] van Dijk, T. A. *Principles of critical discourse analysis*. *Discourse and Society*, 1993.4(2):249-283.
- Foster, S.. *Dominant traditions in international textbook research and revision*. *Education Inquiry*. 2011. 2(1): 5-20.
- [8] Fowler, R. *Language in the news: Discourse and ideology in the press*. London.1991.
- [9] van Dijk, T. A. *Discourse analysis as ideology analysis*. In C. Schaffner & A. Wenden (Eds.),*Language and peace* . Aldershot: Dartmouth Publishing.1995.
- [10] Weinbrenner, P. *Methodologies of textbook analysis used to date*. In H.1992.
- [11] Titscher, S., Meyer, M. Wodak, R.,Vetter, E..*Methods of text and discourse analysis*.London: Sage. 2000.
- [12] Fairclough, N. *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. London: Longman.1995.
- [13] Halliday, M. A. K. *Spoken and written language*. Oxford University Press.1985.