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Pedagogy Across Cultures: English and Iraqi Arabic Curriculum Analysis

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الملخص

على الرغم من وفرة الدراسات التي تناولت القيم الأخلاقية في تعليم وتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية، فإن معظم الدراسات السابقة ركزت بشكل رئيسي على تحليل المحتوى البنوي أو الوصفي. وبناءً على ذلك، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى فحص تمثيلات القيم الأخلاقية في كتب اللغة الإنجليزية والعربية المستخدمة في المدارس الابتدائية في العراق، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على اللغة اللفظية وغير اللفظية. تعتمد هذه الدراسة على تحليل ستة نصوص سردية مختارة (ثلاثة من كتاب اللغة الإنجليزية وثلاثة من كتب اللغة العربية) للتحقق من كيفية بناء المعاني الأخلاقية داخل الخطاب التربوي، وذلك من خلال توظيف إطار التحليل النقدي للخطاب لفيريكلاف (١٩٩٥)، بالاعتماد على التحليل متعدد الوسائط لدراسة التفاعل بين العناصر اللفظية وغير اللفظية. ويستند هذا التحليل إلى القيم الأخلاقية العالمية المتمثلة في: الصدق، الاحترام، المسؤولية، العدالة، العناية، والمواطنة، بوصفها معايير عالمية للأخلاق الثقافية تتوافق مع القيم التربوية العراقية. وتُظهر النتائج أن الخطاب التربوي في كلٍّ من كتب اللغة الإنجليزية والعربية يعمل بوصفه تمثيلاً أيديولوجياً، وليس مجرد أداة محايدة لنقل المعرفة. إذ تميل المواد الإنجليزية إلى بناء المعاني الأخلاقية من خلال اختيارات معجمية صريحة وتكرار العبارات، وتتميز بأسلوب أكثر تنظيماً. في المقابل، تركز المواد العربية بشكل أساسي على استراتيجيات الاستدلال السياقي، حيث تتبنى أسلوباً ضمناً قائماً على النص والتحليل. وبشكل عام، تعكس هذه الدراسة أوجه التشابه والاختلاف المهمة في كيفية تمثيل هذه القيم في كلا المنهجين، مما يساهم في فهم أعمق للخطاب التربوي وتداول القيم داخل البيئة التعليمية العراقية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأخلاق الثقافية، اللغة الأخلاقية، التحليل النقدي للخطاب، تعددية الوسائط، الكتب المدرسية، المدارس الابتدائية العراقية

Abstract □

Despite the abundance of studies concerning moral values in teaching and learning English, most previous studies have mainly focused on structural or descriptive content analysis. Accordingly, this study aims to

examine the representations of ethical values in Iraqi English and Arabic textbooks utilized in primary schools, with a special focus on verbal and nonverbal language. This study examines six selected narratives (three from an English textbook and three from Arabic textbooks) to investigate how ethical meanings are built within pedagogical discourse by employing the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis of Fairclough (CDA) (1995), based on multimodal analysis to analyze interactions between verbal and nonverbal elements. This analysis is directed by universal values of character, namely trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship, as being universal standards of cultural ethics that correspond with Iraqi pedagogical values. The findings show how pedagogical discourse in both English and Arabic textbooks acts as an ideological representation instead of unbiased tools of knowledge transmission. English materials have a tendency to establish moral meanings across explicit lexical selections and repetitive utterances. These texts are featured by a more structured approach. Differently, Arabic materials focus mainly on contextual inference strategies. They adopt an implicit, text-based, and analytical style. In general, this study reflects important similarities and differences in how these values are represented in both curricula, playing an important role in understanding pedagogical discourse and sharing value in Iraqi pedagogical environments.

Keywords: cultural ethics, ethical language, CDA, multimodality, textbooks, and Iraqi primary schools

1. Introduction

The history of ethical norms can be traced back to ancient civilizations like Greece, Egypt, India, China, and Iraq (Pradhan, 2009). Ethical values have historically played a central role in society, guiding manners and governing social interactions. According to Banicki (2017), society is evaluated based on how well moral ideals and principles are transmitted across generations. The concept of ethics, according to Audi (1999), is “commonly used interchangeably with ‘morality’ to mean the subject matter of this study; sometimes it is used more narrowly to mean the moral principles of a particular tradition, group, or individual.” According to Annabelle (2017), this concept can be defined as “a branch of philosophy that involves systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct.” Concerning this context, the concept of cultural ethics arises as a fundamental concept, including religious, pedagogical, and social dimensions. Pedagogy across cultures can be comprehended as a means by which pedagogical practices are created by socio-cultural and ideological contexts, showing how these values are transferred across education. Culture can be interpreted as a structure of shared thoughts, values, and practices expressed through generations, in which ethical language functions as a primary tool for communication. So, ethical language contains rules and regulations that steer manners, social engagement, affective expressions, and civic responsibility (Ardichvili et al., 2009). In the present study, the concepts of cultural ethics and ethical language are utilized interchangeably to denote the socially integrated values and rules. A prominent structure for recognizing moral values is the six pillars of character, namely trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship, that are regarded as important in steering human behaviors. These pillars are proposed by Josephson (2002) and widely utilized in academic environments to support ethical traits. Kagan (2001) highlights common values like courage, honesty, and cooperation, mentioning their contribution to constructing ethical and social consciousness. Significantly, these values correspond with the Iraqi cultural system, leading them to an appropriate structure for analyzing academic materials. In academic environments, curricula contribute to transferring an ethical framework across linguistic and non-linguistic elements and contextual elements in which meaning is created across textual and visual resources, which construct learners’ realization of ethical principles. In spite of their significance, previous research has not effectively explored how ethical values are represented across English and Arabic curricula by employing a well-organized comparative structure embedded with verbal and nonverbal analysis; the goal of this study is to offer a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) relied on multimodal comparative investigation of ethical value portraying in selected English and Arabic curricula in Iraqi primary schools. This study aims to employ description and explanation to synthesize the interaction between verbal and nonverbal elements in meaning-making, attempting to answer the following research questions:

1- What are the similarities and differences between English and Arabic curricula in portraying ethical values in Iraqi primary schools?

2- How do verbal and nonverbal elements contribute to the construction of ethical values in English and Arabic curricula?

2. Related Studies

Several studies have analyzed textbook discourse, multimodality, and pedagogy to investigate how academic materials portray social norms and ideological viewpoints. For example, the study of Wodak (2015) investigated academic discourse to discover how cultural values and ideologies are constructed across language. He employed critical analysis of pedagogical texts and learning discourse as a dataset. The results showed how pedagogical texts integrate explicit ideological patterns that create students' comprehension of social norms and strengthen dominant social values. Another study by Rogers (2016) employed CDA in academic studies. This study made a revision for data that were taken from educational settings. The study revealed how CDA is an effective method for identifying hidden meaning, cultural influences, and power in academic materials. Similarly, the study of Machin and Mayr (2016) used a multimodal CDA approach to analyze the data that were taken from media and educational textbooks by identifying verbal and non-verbal elements. The study showed how the selected approaches assist in discovering how meaning is formed across verbal and non-verbal resources. Additionally, Van Dijk (2018) conducted a study for the sake of using cognitive classification of discourse in academic textbooks. He examined textual frameworks in texts as data. The results revealed how academic discourse plays a role in the construction of learners' 'mentality', how to explain social reality, and instill ideological viewpoints. In addition, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2021) explored how meaning is established multimodal in academic materials. The study employed verbal and non-verbal elements in textbooks as data. The results showed how meaning is portrayed across the embedded interactional modes, showing that non-verbal elements contribute to explaining written texts. Apple (2019) examined the cultural nature of textbooks. He employed pedagogy policies and structures as data. The results revealed how these textbooks mirror underlying cultural assumptions and contribute as a means to communicate social knowledge and norms. Moreover, the study of Ali and Ahmed (2020) aimed to investigate the ethical values by analyzing Arabic textbooks. The data involved selected stories in these curricula. The study showed that Arabic textbooks widely depend on implicit linguistic rules to transmit moral values with little usage of visual strategies. Finally, in spite of the study of Hussan (2023), which investigated educational differences between English and Arabic curricula, his study did not supply an accurate analysis of moral values reflection between textual and visual elements. Therefore, the current study addresses this gap by providing more dependence on CDA- based and multimodal contrast of how ethical values are represented in English and Arabic textbooks in Iraqi primary schools, employing intentionally accepted analytical frameworks with pre-determined analytical stages (four, five, and six grades).

3. Methodology

3.1 Data of the study

This study examines the ethical values represented in chosen English and Arabic primary school curricula in Iraqi schools. The analysis depends on the structure of universal ethical values: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. These universal pillars were utilized as a synthesis classification to investigate how standard principles were mirrored in these textbooks. The study depends on two main sources. The first one is "English for Iraq" that is written by Sara McBurnie and published by Garnet Publishing Ltd in the UK in 2018. The second one is Arabic textbooks that were published by the Ministry of Education and produced by a specialized committee. They are authorized for Iraqi primary schools. These textbooks contain several clarified passages designed to enhance different skills of language while focusing on moral values. These selected passages were taken from four, five, and six grades in both English and Arabic textbooks, ensuring a balanced comparison between them at the same academic levels. The English texts are: The Lion and the Mouse (Grade 4), Picnic by the Lake (Grade 5), and Looking after Ammar (Grade 6). At the same time, the Arabic texts incorporate parallel narrative passages taken from reading textbooks of the same grade. These passages were purposely selected because they visualize ethical and social attitudes that are appropriate for examining the ethical values. The selected data act as unbiased samples that allow the researcher to discover the similarities and differences in visualizing the ethical values through the two academic curricula.

3.2 Method

The study implements a qualitative approach rooted in Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to explore how ethical values are reflected in the selected primary school English and Arabic curricula. The study adopts a comparative analysis to highlight similarities and differences in the representation of moral meanings through the selected curricula. The selected six pillars of character - namely trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship- are based to direct interpretative structure to examine ethical values. It is utilized through three levels of analysis: textual, discursive, and social practice levels. Regarding

textual level, the study emphasizes verbal expressions like modality, direct speech in constructing meaning instead of, selection of vocabulary, and syntactic structure. At the discursive level, the study explores the formation of interactional patterns, associations, and roles that are established within passages. Regarding social analysis, the study investigates the wider cultural and ideological significance integrated in the texts, depending on how cultural norms, principles, and power associations are portrayed. Moreover, the study also analyzes non-verbal elements like body movements, facial cues, and gestures that play a role in constructing significances within multimodal texts. The combination of these synthesis levels enables a wider understanding of how these ethical values are transmitted in the English and Arabic textbooks.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Analysis of 4th Grade Textbook

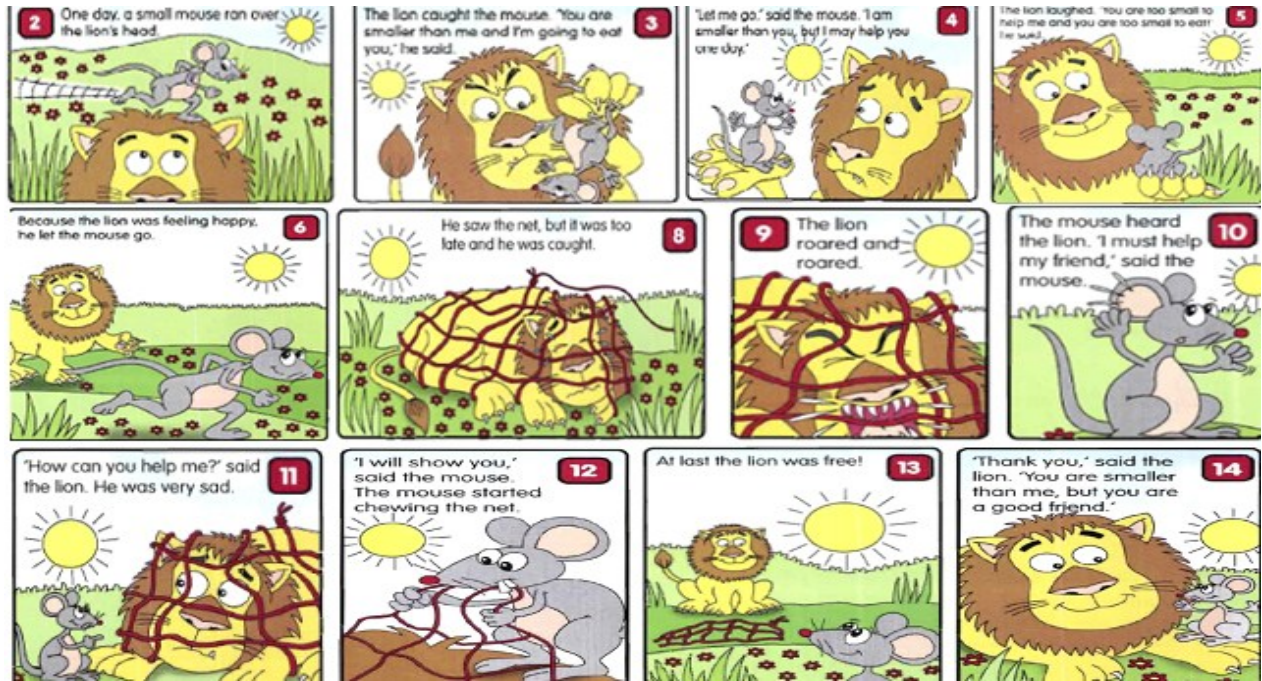


Figure 1: Image of Sample No. 1

Plot

This story, entitled “The Lion and the Mouse,” talks about a lion that was roused by a small mouse that scurried across the lion’s head. In anger, the lion chose to devour the mouse; however, the mouse begged for mercy, so the lion released it. Soon after, the lion was captured by hunters. The tiny mouse determined to help the lion after hearing his roaring by gnawing the ropes with its bite. Doing that, the lion was liberated, and the two ended up as friends.

Analysis

This analysis is based on the framework of Fairclough(1995), which is Critical Discourse Analysis, focusing on three levels: textual, discursive, and social. Concerning textual analysis, the linguistic expressions like “if you let me go, I will help you” and “I must help my friend” denote the meaning of obligation, social duty, and promise, which indicate ethical values like trustworthiness and caring. Additionally, these verbal choices refer to an initial unequal dominance relationship, in which the speech of the lion indicates authority and power, whereas the speech of the mouse indicates politeness and obedience. According to the discursive level, social roles go through a shift, where dominance is fluid and reshaped through action, influencing the reciprocal connection dependent on mutual assistance. Concerning the social level, an ideology of collaboration and equal opportunity can be noticed across these linguistic expressions, indicating that moral manners instead of bodily power describe social value. According to non-linguistic elements, meaning-making can be noticed across postures, body movements, and gaze, for example, the submissive body position of the mouse and requesting gestures portray weakness and surrender, whereas threatening looks and powerful body posture represent control. In the last scenario, the lion displays a peaceful expression and a thankful look, whereas the mouse shows an active gesture to free the lion, encoding caring, responsibility, and trustworthiness. In sum, blending

textual and visual elements shapes a multimodal discourse that portrays ethical values involving trustworthiness, citizenship, fairness, caring, and respect.

4.2 Analysis of 5th Grade Textbook

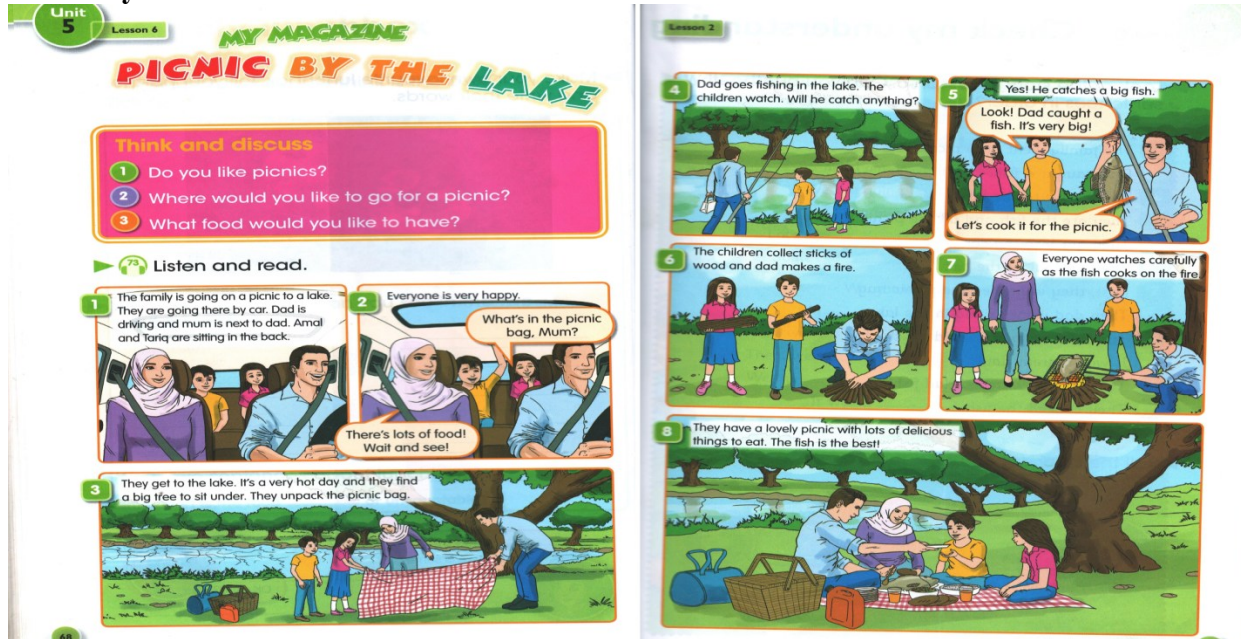


Figure 2: Image of Sample No. 2

Plot

This story, entitled “PICNIC By THE LAKE,” talks about a family who decided to have a picnic next to a lake. When they arrived, the father decided to catch fish, and his children assisted him by gathering timber. They had a good time while eating their food after they had worked together to set up their meal.

Analysis

Based on the framework of Fairclough (1995) that consists of three levels of dimension, the linguistic expression “There is a lot of food, wait and see!” serves as a comforting phrase that shapes the meaning of hope, collaboration, and joint family experience, suggesting ethical values like citizenship and respect. This phrase shows collaborative communication in which the language is utilized to keep the peace instead of struggle. Concerning the discursive level, the ideology of social assistance, unity, and co-responsibility can be reflected across the contribution of each member in achieving their duty, which constructs a cooperative family framework. According to social practice, the discourse portrays family social position shaped by cultural constructions in which the father acts as the protector and leader, while the mother and her children act as supportive members, suggesting an accepted breakdown of family duties. Concerning the nonverbal elements, meaning-making can be noticed through gestures, smiles, and body movements like raising children's hands, which refer to trustworthiness and enjoyment. Additionally, the mother’s observant postures indicate caring and respect, whereas the body movement of the father, such as fishing, making fire, and making food, reflects the value of leadership and responsibility. Moreover, teamwork within a family, like collecting timber and eating together, non-verbally reflects the value of caring and citizenship. The value of responsibility and respect for rules can be noticed by wearing a seat belt. Overall, blending textual and visual elements shapes a multimodal discourse that portrays ethical values involving trustworthiness, citizenship, fairness, caring, and respect.

4.2 Analysis of 6th Grade Textbook



Figure 3: Image of Sample No. 3

Plot

This story, entitled “Look after Ammar,” talks about three members of the family: Wasim, Dania, and Ammar. Each one of them did something, for example, Dania was making food with the help of Ammar, who tried to cut tomatoes, and Wasim, who did homework. However, Ammar hurt himself while cutting tomatoes and started to cry. Dania and Wasim look after him by putting a plaster. Subsequently, the three children told their parents about the accident. The parents told Ammar not to repeat this action again while they continued their meal together.

Analysis

After applying CDA, textual analysis of the story demonstrates that the value of responsibility, trustworthiness, and respect can be noticed in the following linguistic expressions: “I wanted to help you”, “Get a plaster quickly”, and “you mustn’t use a sharp knife” that build the meaning related to obligation, power, intention, and duty. The utterance “I wanted to help you” shows the positive intention of Ammar; however, it results in unforeseen consequences, suggesting the significance of aligning intent with best practice. Family authority structure can be noticed through verbal utterance “Get the plaster quickly” that shows Dania’s responsibility and sense of urgency in managing the situation, and the mother’s utterance “you mustn’t use a sharp knife” that reflects power and social dominance. Concerning the discursive level, the interaction among them reflects familial ideology in which cooperation, guidance, and correction are very important to keep moral manners and social order. According to social practice, the discourse demonstrates that the family acts as a social organization responsible for teaching the children, upholding norms, and disseminating moral values like caring, responsibility, and respect. Concerning non-linguistic elements like Ammar’s crying and wounds, which visually reflect the consequences of risky action and vulnerability, whereas Dania’s action of putting plaster and intention reflect the value of caring and responsibility. Additionally, the gestures of the father and mother reflect dominance with passionate support. The value of citizenship and caring can be noticed through family cohesion and their supportive behaviors. Moreover, the negative behavior can be seen during the use of sharp knives by Ammar, reflecting a lack of awareness and disrespect for the rules of safety. In short, the value of trustworthiness, responsibility, respect, caring, and citizenship with familial ideology is shown during the integration of linguistic and non-linguistic elements.

Analysis of Arabic Textbooks 4th Grade



Figure 4: Image of Sample No. 4

Plot

The story, entitled “The Wall,” is about the boy who assists his father in building the wall. The father clarifies that the wall stays stable since every block holds up its counterparts, focusing on the significance of collaboration and unity. Thus, this clarification helps the boy to understand how unity is derived from the mutual dependence of all parts.

Analysis

According to the textual level, the verbal expression “Each brick supports the other” (kulu labinih tasnad alakhraa) reflects the notion of interdependence within the parts, showing the discourse is informative and pedagogical language. The structural equilibrium is connected with collective collaboration through the verbal expression “ This is why the wall does not fall” (lihadha la yasqut aljidar). Thus, these expressions create the meaning across logical interpretation instead of narrative struggle, integrating cooperation and responsibility values within the text. The structural discourse function can be represented through explicit and educational language use. Concerning nonverbal elements, the arrangement of blocks together denotes unity and strength. The communicative action of the father and son in building the wall symbolizes authority and education, whereas the wall itself acts as an iconic metaphor for community interaction. At the discursive practice level, meaning is created through interpretation, where the father serves as a source of knowledge and the child as receiver of this information. The discourse follows a pedagogical structure depending on guidance and explicitness. Finally, according to the social practice, the story strengthens the ideology of shared responsibility and collaboration. The metaphor of the wall denotes a society in which everyone plays a role in keeping social stability, motivating the value of responsibility, unity, and reciprocal support.

Analysis of Arabic Textbooks 5th Grade



Figure 5: Image of Sample No. 5

Plot

The story, entitled “ The Sheik and His Seven Students, “ talks about a religious man who gives his seven students a lecture about moral values. He asks them to cut an orange secretly. However, most of them obey their teacher by cutting the orange secretly, but Jaafer rejects because Allah is constantly watching him. The Sheik is pleased with his response and announces that Jaafer passes the test.

Analysis

Based on Critical Discourse Analysis of Fairclough’s framework: concerning the textual level, the verbal utterance “ cut the orange without anyone seeing you” (aqtae alburtiqalat dun 'an yarak 'ahadu) reflects external dominance and builds an attitude of secrecy, showing that the discourse is established around an ethical test to evaluate sincerity and obedience. Most of them show surface ethics and hidden compliance because their actions are directed by human Scrutiny. Differently, the verbal utterance of Jaafar, “Allah sees me” (Allah yarany), indicates oversight and internal conscience, turning ethical meaning from superficial control to personal belief. Thus, the text focuses on honesty, trustworthiness, responsibility, and self- control values. Although the discourse is narrative, visual meaning is constructed through symbolic factors, for example, the orange and knife denote moral choice and seduction. Additionally, invisible manner and moral testing can be symbolized

through the action of cutting an orange secretly, whereas rejection of Jaafar's uncut orange denotes probity and self-restraint. The Sheikh's smile in the final scene represents agreement and moral validation, motivating the success of moral realization over physical submission. According to discursive level, the discourse is established as pedagogical moral test, where the religious man represents the shape of power and students acts as educators. The responsible action of students contributes to constructing meaning instead of explicit explanation. The internal thought and conscience can be considered the basis for realizing true morality instead of external oversight. The story motivates moral representation and the internalization of moral values. At the social practice level, the discourse represents a religious moral system centered on internal self-control and divine accountability. It shows how moral manners are meaningful when used without external monitoring. The story motivates the values of sincerity, self-discipline, ethical realization, and responsibility, focusing on the significance of internal intention in directing human manners.

Analysis of Arabic Textbooks 6th Grade



Figure 6: Image of San Plot

The story, entitled “Al-Amanah,” talks about a man who wants to sell his earth and the buyer who discovers a hidden treasure and returns it to him. Both of them refuse to take it, mindful that the judge resolves the conflict by arranging a marriage and dedicating the treasure to help the couple.

Analysis

The ethical meaning is reflected through the frequent utterance “I fear” (ana akhshaa) that focuses on spiritual responsibility to God against personal interest. The frequent utterance acts as discursive technique , strengthening shared moral awareness and ethical interaction through the usage of both curricula. The ideology of social stability can be reflected through non-violent conducts of language instead of struggle. This story shows that the treasure symbolizes moral harmony instead of wealth, turning the text from property rights to moral necessity. Consequently, values of responsibility, integrity, fairness, and trustworthiness are discursively characterized as essential moral standards. Additionally, the integration of verbal and nonverbal factors help in constructing discourse by focusing on values of respect and refusal selfishness, due to reinforcing the general moral message. The open door represents the value of sincerity and integrity whereas the chest symbolizes moral duty instead of material wealth. The minimal spatial distance and comfortable facial gestures of characters represent trust and inner comfort whereas cultural dress shows cultural and moral self- concept. Regarding the discursive level,

the dialogue and collective moral assessment help in forming meaning rather than fight. Both characters help in creating meaning and strengthening supportive relationships, but judge represents social responsibility by giving them the solution for their argument. Thus, this story shows a hidden moral messages, helping learners to encode values instead of obeying direct instructions. Finally, according to social practice, the discourse is based on sincerity, social harmony, and responsibility to reflect faith-based moral ideology. It motivates readers to rely on an inner moral judge rather than self-interest. The resolution supports communal welfare and strengthens responsibility, cooperation, fairness, and trust.

5. Discussion

Based on the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis of Fairclough (1995), the results indicate that pedagogical discourse in the selected curricula acts as an ideological representation instead of a neutral vehicle of knowledge dissemination. By analyzing the selected stories in the English and Arabic textbooks, the findings show how ethical values are methodically integrated with discourse across unique linguistic and non-linguistic strategies, suggesting several educational and cultural orientations. Concerning the textual level, data demonstrates that the stories in the English textbook have a tendency to create moral meanings across manifest word choices and recurrent rhetorical patterns that emphasize moral impacts. Additionally, these repeated patterns are used for both focusing on the events of the story and educating the children about moral lessons. This shows that English includes clear moral encoding, with ethical values expressed and easily interpreted by learners. Differently, stories in Arabic curricula depend on implicit significance strategies in which ethical values are integrated across performance, semiotic representation, and linguistic hints. Instead of explicitly expressing moral messages, the discourse supports an inferential approach, helping learners to create ethical explanations based on behaviors and linguistic hints. This offers a discursive organization that explains involvement as opposed to direct teaching, constructing learners as social actors in meaning-making. According to discursive practice, Arabic textbooks refer to narrative implication and textual integration, whereby ethical values arise holistically across textual engagement, while non-verbal elements play a constitutive role in meaning construction rather than functioning only as supportive elements. In social practice, they consistently emphasize moral lessons, reflecting a broader ideological orientation toward collective identity, social cohesion, and the systematic transmission of cultural and ethical values across narratives. Moreover, English textbooks display ethical values more explicitly and methodically through the integration of verbal and non-verbal elements, but these moral messages are marginal and appear selectively. Each textbook educates values such as responsibility and caring, but English textbooks are characterized as being more direct and learner-centered, whereas Arabic textbooks are characterized as being more indirect and text-based, and emphasize one explanation more. In general, the results demonstrate how ideology and pedagogy contribute to the construction of the distribution and explanation of moral meanings in academic texts.

6. Conclusion

This study aims to explore how ethical values are depicted in English and Arabic textbooks from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis of Fairclough (1995), with a certain attention to verbal and non-verbal elements. The results indicate that textbooks are not unbiased, but a vehicle of knowledge dissemination. In contrast, they are ideologically established, meaning culturally influenced, created, and configured spaces, in which meanings are generated and conveyed. Additionally, the analysis shows how ethical values are fostered, sustained, and disseminated in different forms, and how these strategies vary significantly and contrast powerfully across texts. The results indicate that ethical implications are reflected alternatively across the selected curricula. The ethical values are clearly conveyed through linguistic and non-linguistic elements in English curricula, Relying on learner- centered practices. In contrast, the ethical values are reflected in Arabic curricula through Stories and contextual indicators, explained within a teacher- oriented structure. Generally, Iraq English curricula are multimodal and interactive whereas Arabic curricula increasingly discourse - oriented and symbolize moral direction, demonstrating wider educational and cultural variations.

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