


Cultural Knowledge and Values in English Language Teaching Materials: (Multimodal) Representations and Stakeholders

May 2023 – Volume 27, Number 1

<https://doi.org/10.55593/ej.27105r2>

| Cultural Knowledge and Values in English Language Teaching Materials: (Multimodal) Representations and Stakeholders | | |
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| Authors: | Tao Xiong, Dezheng Feng, Guangwei Hu (Eds.) (2022) | |
| Publisher: | Springer | |
| Pages | ISBN-13 | Price |
| 181 pages | 9789811919343 (hardcover) | \$98.80 U.S. |



The study of culture and values in language education is crucial since the cultural identity of speakers may be reflected in how they use the language, and the language itself can be a tool for learning cultures and values. In the context of language learning resources, research has previously shown that language teaching materials potentially mediate sociocultural values (Gray, 2010; Setyono & Widodo, 2019), moral values (Feng, 2019), and ideologies (Curdt-Christiansen & Weninger, 2015; Ulum & Köksal, 2019). Yet, past studies have lacked a focus on cultural issues from the perspective of critical curriculum studies, critical applied linguistics, politics, economy, and multilingualism. Tao Xiong, Dezheng Feng, and Guangwei Hu set out to address these gaps in *Cultural Knowledge and Values in English Language Teaching Materials: (Multimodal) Representations and Stakeholders*. This book contains a collection of prevailing core issues, approaches, and debates in English language education materials design and development by highlighting how to consider the representation of the content critically, the need to integrate other types of learning media (multimodal), and what the stakeholders of language education can contribute to a more inclusive and equal learning environment.

The book consists of nine chapters divided into two parts. The first part of this book discusses the representation of culture and values in language teaching materials and the multimodal analysis of ELT textbooks, casting light on empirical studies of the sociocultural values and language ideology in textbooks situated in English language education for general and specific purposes. In the opening chapter, the meanings of culture and values adopted in this book contain a broad cultural understanding consisting of knowledge and community heritage which can be both material (tools, food, clothes) and intellectual (values, beliefs). Moreover, the multimodal analysis of ELT textbooks here consists of two broad categories, namely (1) studies on the multimodal construction of pedagogical knowledge and (2) studies on the multimodal representation of gender, culture, moral values, and ideologies. Anchored in a multimodal approach, Chapter 2 reveals that the values in texts and images depicted in a mandated business English coursebook for China tertiary students comprise business-, culture-, and society-oriented values. From different methodological lenses rooted in a social semiotic approach, Chapter 3 discovers some possible elements of EFL textbooks that inculcate values: reading passages with problem-solution discourse patterns to deliver values, the lexical choice to convey implicit and explicit meanings, and visualization of expressions of positive values. Considering the broader scope of learning and teaching materials involving introduction videos, coursebooks, and the content of an online English course, Chapter 4 arrives at a conclusion toward western cultural hegemony in China, such as treating native-speaker-like as a norm. In Chapter 5, the textbook analysis echoes the issue of gender bias, such as the relatively disproportionate and stereotypical portrayal of women in workplace environments. The authors suggested designing language textbooks with a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Additionally, a content analysis study of culture in college textbooks is reported in Chapter 6 and portrays the domination of native-speaker-related content.

The second part considers stakeholders or the people involved in the production and consumption of textbooks, such as publishers and their editors, content writers, teachers, and students. Chapter 7 identifies three orientations involved in writing textbooks, namely language orientations, issue orientations, and ideological orientations. A multiple-case study revealed that teachers' beliefs and visions about the business English curriculum, the scope and design of topics, and related activities greatly influence their agency in implementing and designing cultural teaching in the classroom. In Chapter 8, a content analysis was used to discuss the process and rationale for writing ELT materials that are pedagogically, morally, culturally, and ideologically meaningful to learners from the authors' perspective of a series of tertiary EFL textbooks published in China. It revealed that the writing team had internal and external constraints in compiling tertiary English textbooks. The authors pinpointed the challenges and the complexity of combining values in ELT materials in multicultural societal contexts, such as Asian countries, and it needs cautious attention. Finally, Chapter 9 integrates multimodal and ethnographic methods to close the book by presenting two cases in the Uruguayan ELT context regarding the process of producing English textbooks and their use in the classroom. The authors call for methodological innovations considering how textbook writers, teachers, and students negotiate heterogeneous visual representations of gender in textbooks.

This volume does suffer from some drawbacks. As the edited book comprises some cases related to cultural values, namely “sociolinguistics, political economy, and citizenship education” (p. 14), the existing chapters seem to fail to represent specific globally recent issues such as neoliberalism and inclusivity. If there is a second edition, it would be a complete book with additional chapters to cater to neoliberalism, minority groups, and disabled discourses in

ELT classroom materials. Additionally, the studies of countries other than China would offer unique and insightful reports for other language practitioners in the broader region of Asia.

For the book's strengths, the collection of chapters is written concisely and reader friendly. Teachers and student teachers can easily grasp the theoretical considerations and teaching methodology suggestions regarding incorporating cultural values and their selection in the development of language materials. Moreover, for language researchers, some steps in the methodology section of each chapter can be replicable for further similar studies.

Once again, this book is a must-have reference for language practitioners and stakeholders. Some empirical reports of textbook studies can inspire teachers to understand that language materials are value-laden. This book can be a research-based evaluation of sociolinguistics for coursebook authors, revealing other hidden issues beyond the selected written, visual, and audio texts. Additionally, for everyone involved in language education, the book emphasizes the engagement of more inclusive, diverse, equitable, critical, and multimodal global citizens (Gaudelli, 2016; Oxley & Morris, 2013) with language textbooks.

To Cite this Review

Ifadloh, N. & Yonata, F. (2022). [Review of the book *Cultural Knowledge and Values in English Language Teaching Materials* by T. Xiong, D. Feng, & G. Hu (Eds.)]. *Teaching English as a Second Language Electronic Journal (TESL-EJ)*, 27 (1).
<https://doi.org/10.55593/ej.27105r2>

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Acknowledgment

The authors would like to express the deepest gratitude to Lembaga Pengelola Dana Pendidikan (LPDP) for sponsoring their doctoral study and supporting this article's publication.

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