

Analyzing the Representation of Iran and Iranians in Persian Teaching books to the Speakers of other languages based on Critical Discourse Analysis

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

In this research, it has been tried to study and analyze a few books in teaching the Persian language based on critical discourse analysis (CDA) using the concepts discussed in the Fairclough and Van Dijk's approaches. About analyzing the discourse of teaching Persian to the speakers of other languages' texts, no research has not been done before, except a case study and therefore, conducting such studies seems necessary. The main issue in this study is how one single issue – that is Iran, Iranian and Iranian culture – is represented by different authors in various educational books. What are the differences in terms of vocabulary and linguistic structures used in the books? What are the goals and attitudes that underlie these differences, and what messages are conveyed by these differences?

Therefore, the main research questions are:

1. How is the choice of vocabulary, terminology, attributes, predicates and their meanings about Iran and Iranian in the books in question and what does it indicate?
2. What are the concepts, beliefs, attitudes, and ideologies about Iran and Iranian in the reviewed books?
3. Through which linguistic structures are these ideologies and concepts expressed and conveyed to the audience?

2. Theoretical Framework

Fairclough believes that discourse is a concept used by sociological theorists and analysts as well as by linguists. In his view, discourse means "spoken or written language use; it also includes other semiotic activities such as visual images (photos, videos, etc.) and non-verbal communication (like gestures), (Fairclough, 1992, p. 62). Fairclough believes that CDA is the "Analysis of the relationship between the objective use of language and wider social-cultural structures". He considers three aspects for each discourse event: 1. Text: texts may be oral or written, and oral texts

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can only be audio (such as radio) or audiovisual (such as television), 2. Discursive practices and 3. Social practices the components (elements) studied in this study are: 1. Choice of vocabulary and their meanings 2. Predication 3. Transitivity 4. Modality 5. Topics or semantic macro-structures.

3. Methodology

This study was conducted as descriptive-analytical research. The population in the study is Persian teaching materials (books) for the speakers of other languages. The sampling method in this study has been accessible and purposeful sampling. The studied series in the present study are four sets of Persian language teaching books for non-Persian speakers, respectively, *Modern Persian Teaching*, *Let's Learn Persian*, *Farsi Shirin Ast* and *Persian of Iran Today*. Of these four series, the first two have been published in Iran, while the other two series have been published outside of Iran. Given that the two books *Farsi Shirin Ast* and *Persian of Iran Today* are only published for the elementary level and do not have intermediate and advanced levels, only the elementary level of all the series are analyzed in this study. In reviewing and analyzing the books, all the content of books, including the reading part, dialogues, listening, and all types of the exercises and even the review lessons were carefully studied. Then, among them, the reading texts, dialogues, listening and exercises which were related to Iran, Iranian or the Iranian culture were selected for analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

In this research, the elementary level books of four Persian language teaching series was analyzed based on CDA using Fairclough's approach. Reviewing the educational textbooks and determining their discursive structures can reveal the hidden ideologies and their hidden aspects of meaning. The content and subjects presented in these materials play an essential role in creating a logical and real or an unrealistic and wrong viewpoint about the destination language and culture. Thus, there is a great responsibility and burden on material developers and writers in this regard. In the first part of the data analysis, the main and secondary themes related to Iran and Iranians were discussed and analyzed and a summary of the themes were: important places of Iran, Iranian prominent characters, personality traits and attitudes of Iranians, Iranian's culture and customs, Iranian's celebrations, and Iranian's way of life. Most Iranians depicted in the books which are published outside Iran (Group 1), have emigrated from Iran, and their life is closer to the Western lifestyle, they are separated from their parents and their families, and they are interested in the Western lifestyle. On the contrary, the Iranians in the books which are published inside Iran (Group 2), live in Iran and have an Iranian lifestyle; they even maintain an Iranian lifestyle, even if they have migrated; and they care about Persian language and Iranian culture and even teaching it to their children, too. In summary, in Group 2 books, no subject containing negative connotation about Iran and Iranian was found, while in Group 1, books, challenging issues, and even subjects containing negative connotation about Iran and Iranians were numerous.

After the component of the topics, the chosen vocabulary and their meanings and also their predicted formats were discussed and analyzed in these materials. As the given examples show, the vocabulary, terms, and the attributions used to describe Iran and Iranians in group 2 books generally contain a positive connotational meaning and provided a positive, optimistic point of view to the audience. No negative words, terminologies, and traits with a negative connotation were observed in these books; while in group 1 books, some words, terminologies, and traits with negative meanings and connotations were observed, which conveys a negative and pessimistic view from Iran and Iranian to the audience. In the following, the syntactic components were analyzed and discussed. Since the sample was the elementary level books, it is obvious that at this level, the discourse of the books has less structural and syntactic variation. Therefore, only two syntactic components were analyzed in these sources. Regarding these two components, namely, modality and transitivity, there is a difference between the two groups of books. In the group 1 books, the indicative mood in the sense of certainty has been used mostly to express the negative points about Iran and Iranians; while in the group 2 books, the same structure has been used to express positive points about Iran and Iranians. Also, in group 1 books, the subjunctive mode in the sense of compulsion has been used to express negative points in Iran, which can be a kind of expressing the absence of freedom.

5. Conclusion and Suggestions

The results of the data analysis in this study indicate that the discourse of all four sources is an ideological one, and the differences represented, is due to intellectual infrastructure, ideologies, and the goals of the materials developers and writers. In general, the producers of the two series of *Modern Persian Teaching* and *Let's Learn Persian*, compare with the other two series, have tried to construct and present a more positive and optimistic view of Iran and Iranian in the minds of the non-Persian audience; and in their produced discourses, they have emphasized on the positive and honorable points of Iran and Iranians. In the end, it is suggested that quantitative and statistical researches be carried out on the use of discursive components in Persian language teaching textbooks for non-Persian speakers. It is also recommended that Persian teaching materials and resources for the intermediate and advanced levels, be analyzed and discussed from discourse analysis perspective; because of the much more diversity of vocabulary and grammatical and discursive structures at that levels.

Keywords: Critical discourse analysis, Ideology, Persian language learning materials for the speakers of other languages, Iran, Iranian.

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