Representation of Class System through English Textbooks in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Classism is prejudice or discrimination on the basis of social class. It includes individual attitudes and behaviours, systems of policies and practices that are set up to benefit the upper classes at the expense of the lower classes. This study highlights class system in terms of cultural discrimination reflected through English textbooks in Pakistan, where cultural discrimination is described in terms of local and foreign culture in different textbooks taught across the country. The study uses Byram et al. and Resigar's models to evaluate two textbooks, i.e. Punjab Textbook Board (PTB) and Marshall Cavendish Education (MCE) Language Arts books of grade five to explore cultural discrimination. Drawing results from qualitative analysis, PTB book reflects the local culture representing the lower class, while MCE book reflects the foreign culture representing the upper class, leading our society towards class system in new generation. This class system is creating communication gap among the upcoming generation and giving the concept of upper and lower class. Hence, these two groups are unable to compete with each other in professional lives.

Keywords: Class system, Culture, Textbooks, Punjab Text Book (PTB), Language Arts   (MCE)

INTRODUCTION

Textbooks ensure both conscious and unconscious cultural shift in society. Individuals consciously learn cultural norms through language while adapt it unconsciously with their local culture. Local culture can be easily studied within the relevant context of local society but for target culture context is absent, therefore, foreign culture transfers through textbooks. Thus, local and foreign dimensions of cultural studies through textbooks produce two different class systems. As Savage (2000) argues,

> If there is still a role for class analysis it is to continue to emphasize the brute realities of social inequality and the extent to which these are constantly effaced by a middle class, individualized culture that fails to register the social implications of its routine actions (p:159).

In Pakistan, language learning and teaching completely relies on textbooks. Textbooks act as a pedagogical tool for students as well as teachers. It forms a link between the culture and language of the society. Besides this, the medium of instruction in our educational institutes is English that's why English is considered a hallmark in learning because English is not a part of our cultural context of the society.

Studies through textbooks are rooted in cultural context of the society. This study is also derived from the detailed cultural analysis of two textbooks, i.e. PTB and MCE by using Byram et al. (1994) and Resigar's(1991) model. This cultural analysis was divided into local and foreign culture that leads towards social inequality or class discrimination in the society at grass root level.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Textbooks have been described as one of the most powerful ways of transmitting standards, values, and ideologies. According to Cook (1994), English is 'the language of international capitalism,' but it is spreading throughout the world through its diverse culture. Every language carries the weight of a civilization. The decision to use a certain language means to support the existence of a given cultural matrix (p:1).

Wenying (2000) argues about the separation of language and culture to be impossible because of their interdependent relationship: language reflects culture and is simultaneously influenced and shaped by it.

Culture studies with reference to text books were studied after World War II to demolish the effects of target culture in native societies. Since then textbooks are considered as a tool to influence and transfer cultural values

of one society to other. Culture transfers from one generation to other both within and out of society to form a different variety of culture.

Culture is largely presented in our society through language and language teaching. Cultures of target and source society are sometimes contrasted or their simultaneous presentation leads to positive cultural awareness

Byram (1994) and Risager (1991), have devised a cultural model for analyzing textbooks. Byram suggested nine point criteria for analyzing and evaluating the content of cultural learning. Risager added two new criteria in his model by visualizing culture both at micro and macro level. Similar model is used for this study to figure out which culture at which level is presented in the textbook.

According to Byram in foreign language learning, successful communication depends on the interlocutors' willingness and ability to try to understand each other, and it is, therefore, obvious that both cultural and intercultural questions are highly relevant ingredients in any foreign language course (Byram 1983; Corbett 2003).

A common procedure in teaching is that language and culture cannot be separated. Hence, teaching cultural knowledge and awareness is a major part of (foreign) language teaching. Byram (2001) also mentions the concept of critical cultural awareness, which the pupils should acquire. Critical cultural awareness means, "an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries." (p:7)

METHODOLOGY:

This study is based on an adaptive model extracted from Byram et al. (1994) and Resigar's (1991) models to highlight different cultural contents. These contents are categorized into eleven different elements where eight points are borrowed from Byram et al. (1994), two from Resigar (1991) and one point is self-suggested in view of the local and foreign cultural representation in society. The study analyses two different books representing two separate class systems of Pakistani society, i.e. PTB book is specified for lower class and MCE book is specified for higher class. The present study is a qualitative study and the method of analysis was descriptive data based content analysis. Each textbook was examined individually and notes were made on a similar basis about each book. This model also facilitates the cultural study at micro level.

DATA REPRESENTATION

S.NO	FEATURES		PTB BOOK			MCE BOOK		
			items	Local	Foreign	Items	Local	Foreign
1.	Social Identity and Social group(441)	Social class	26	100%	0	50	0	100%
		Ethnic minority	3	100%	0	3	0	100%
		Racism	0	100%	0	0	0	0%
		Professional identity	41	100%	0	71	0	100%
		Names	77	100%	0	170	0	100%
2.	Belief and Behaviour (320)	Religion	56	100%	0	2	0	100%
		Holiday	20	100%	0	1	0	100%
		Sports	30	100%	0	60	0	100%
		Eating habits	16	100%	0	80	0	100%
		Shopping culture	4	100%	0	7	0	100%
		Moral beliefs	38	100%	0	6	0	100%

No.	Category	Sub-category						
3.	Socialization and Life cycle(231)	Families	71	100%	0	12	0	100%
		School & education	50	100%	0	32	0	100%
		Employment offices	8	100%	0	1	0	100%
		Military service	0	100%	0	1	0	100%
		Animals	10	100%	0	43	0	100%
		Vehicle	3	100%	0	0	0	0%
4.	History		11	100%	0	24	0	100%
5.	Geography		19	100%	0	72	30.5%	69.4%
6.	Cultural Heritage		20	100%	0	5	0	100%
7.	Stereotype and National Identity (293)	Stereotypical characters	83	100%	0	63	0	100%
		Conventions of Behaviour	62	100%	0	61	0	100%
		Famous monuments	0	100%	0	0	0	0%
		Flag	20	100%	0	0	0	0%
		Famous people	3	100%	0	1	0	100%
8.	Point of view(71)	Author absent	0	100%	0	0	0	0%
		Author present	8	100%	0	2	0	100%
		Authentic Text	2	100%	0	0	0	0
		Expressions of Attitude	14	100%	0	45	0	100%
9.	Social Interaction(104)	Verbal	49	100%	0	15	0	100%
		Non-verbal	22	100%	0	18	0	100%
10	Nature		74	100%	0	1	0	100%
11	Intercultural issues		2	100%	0	79	0	100%
12	Total (1767)		842	100%	0	925	30.5%	69.5%

FINDINGS

Textbooks play a major role in building and representing two distinctive cultures in society. They can be used as tools to reflect a culture highlighting two different class systems. Two different kinds of book are being taught in Pakistani society which shows two extremes of upper and lower class system. Pakistani people are conscious of their prestige and status, which links them to either upper or lower class of the society.

SOCIAL IDENTITY AND SOCIAL GROUP

Social identity refers to an identity given by the society while a group of people when share common culture form social group (Jannarone, 2006). It has been divided into five sub categories: Social class, Ethnic Minorities, Racism, Professional Identity and Names. In comparison Social class, professional identity and names are presented with more foreign cultural representation which suppresses the local culture in society. Racism is totally absent in both books. Social identity and social group are highlighted in both books with a clear

difference in the representation of local (147 items) and foreign (294 items) culture. Naming characters are prominent in this regard according to the ratio of 77:170 where foreign names are leading the local names.

BELIEF AND BEHAVIOUR

Belief and behaviour refer to the attitudes of people towards society. It is divided into six categories: Religion, Holidays, Sports, Eating habits, Shopping culture and Moral beliefs. Moral beliefs and religion are strong in our local culture while rare in foreign cultures, strengthening our culture as a strong body of values and moralities. Sports, eating habits and shopping culture are more frequent in foreign culture reflecting social aspect of their society. Belief and behaviour represent the moral values which are highlighted on second level with difference of 164 local and 156 foreign items. Eating habits across society is represented in ratio of 16:80 of local and foreign culture respectively. In comparison, Food items in MCE book are not representing our culture. Whereas, religion is highlighted in PTB book while it is least bothered in MCE book having the ratio of 56:2

SOCIALIZATION AND LIFE CYCLE

Socialization refers to the connection of an individual with the values of another generation and behavioural guidelines. It may equip the individual with skills necessary to participate in the society and become an active participant. In this study it is divided into six categories: Families, Schools and education, Employment offices, Military service, Animals and Vehicle. Families, school and education, employment offices are highlighted in local culture thus representing a strong social system. Socialization and life cycle reflects living style of common masses with 142 local and 89 foreign culture representations. In this category families have 71:12 and school and education have 50:32 ratios which show the equal representation of both characters in this developing society.

NATIONAL HISTORY

History plays a very important role for a nation as it shows its national ideology. Local culture embodies a weak history while it is strong in foreign culture having the ratio of 11:24 respectively. Local history focuses on cultural heritage and national heroes while foreign culture focuses on technology development and its establishment in society.

GEOGRAPHY

Geography reflects geographical figures to strengthen the cultural concept of any society. In PTB book 100% local geography is presented, while in MCE book both local and foreign cultures are presented simultaneously with more foreign cultural representation. The ratio of local and foreign culture in PTB and MCE is 19:72 where MCE book contains 30.5% local and 69.4% foreign culture respectively.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Cultural heritage may include the norms, values and assets of society that are transferred from one generation to other. Local culture in PTB book is highlighted showing ample of local cultural heritage than foreign culture with the ratio of 20:5.

STEREOTYPE AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

Stereotype is a set of beliefs about an individual based on prior concept. National identity refers to concept of national integrity. It has been divided into five categories: Stereotypical characters, Conventions of behaviour, Famous monuments, flag and Famous people. It is the most frequently occurring feature in PTB book based on gender roles and conventions of behaviour related to these roles. As per convention males are exercising dominancy over female. Male representation is very much evident through verbal and non-verbal expressions. Stereotype and national identity reflect gender roles and identity, which is highlighted in 168:125 ratios of local and foreign cultural items. Stereotypical characters are dominating having the ratio of 83:63. Conventions of behaviour are almost equal in both textbooks, which alludes to the similarity of cultural attitudes in the society.

POINT OF VIEW

Point of view reflects views of writer about the text and the cultural picture he draws out of that representation. It is divided into Author absent/given, authentic text and Expression of attitude. Authorship is frequent in PTB book with authentic text while it is absent in MCE book.

SOCIAL INTERACTION

Social interaction shows representation both at verbal and nonverbal level. On verbal level, it can be further categorized into formal and informal level. As texts were non literary so, they are mostly informal and least formal and universal concepts are discussed. Non verbal is half in the ratio of verbal representation of the text. Both in verbal and non-verbal representation males are given dominancy. PTB book highlights greater social interaction with different verbal and non verbal aids. Social interactional features are mostly highlighted in 71: 33 where local verbal and non-verbal dominates the other. Verbal and non-verbal behaviour is highlighted in local scenario as per ratio where verbal is 49:15 and nonverbal is 22:18.

NATURE

It is not the characteristic in any of the model but due to its frequency in books it had got weight age. Natural elements are more frequent in PTB book showing local culture while absent in MCE book.

INTERCULTURAL ISSUES

MCE book highlights more intercultural issues than PTB book showing different blends of cultures. Local culture is suppressed in this regard with the ratio of 2:79 where the foreign culture is dominating the cultural representation in society.

DISSCUSION

In Pakistan English is taught as a target language as it is economic need of our society. But this language teaching is transferring target culture in our society. Book of Punjab Textbook Board is somehow successful in leaving target culture behind and focusing on our local culture while Language Arts (MCE) is focusing only on target culture. Here the question to be focused after analyzing these books is whether our students should be devoid of target culture, if so they might excel in their source culture but they would never be able to compare their cultural values with other hence there would be least cultural understanding of their own culture. On the other hand, students studying books like Language Arts (MCE) are exposed to more foreign cultural content which is devoid of local culture so they are more adaptive towards that foreign culture which is dragging learners out of local cultural context of society.

This study focuses on cultural representation in textbooks of grade 5 both in public and private sectors. An in-depth analysis of textbooks projects two contrastive cultural representations for different groups, Punjab Textbook Board (PTB) highlighting one group and Marshall Cavendish Education (MCE), Language Arts representing another group. PTB book represents local culture while the MCE book represents foreign culture which automatically divides the society into two classes with two different cultural aspects. PTB textbook reflects the local religion, their own national ideology, patriotism, local names, food and their life cycle. In contrast, the MCE textbook reflects foreign culture, religious carnivals, development in the field of information technology, foreign sports and food items. After interpreting the results drawn through textbooks there is a clear cultural distinction and class system in society. In the procedure of analysis, both PTB and MCE books are analyzed in terms of different cultural components through a model devised by Byram et al. and Resiger. The division of foreign and local cultural representation in the terms of class system is as follows:

The Division of Local/Foreign Cultural Representation in Terms of Class System
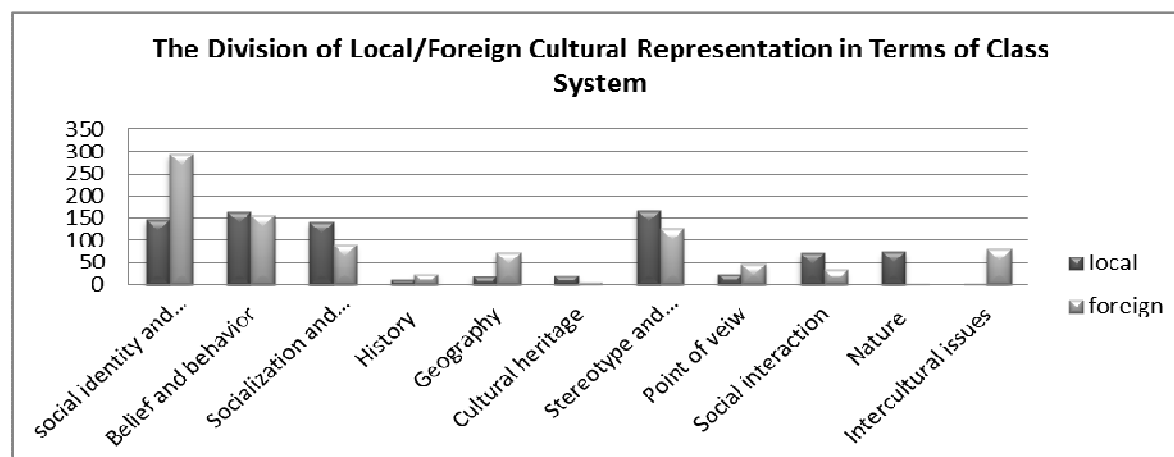
As the above graph shows social identity and social group is highest in ranking which specifies it as an important component of any culture. This study highlights social identity and social group with reference to high foreign cultural representation in comparison with the local culture, as social identity and social group represent the cultural identity thus linking it with different classes of society.

In this graph Belief and behaviour, Socialization and life cycle and stereotype and national identity are almost equal in number but among all these stereotype and national identity is highest in ranking. All three parameters are interconnected in a way that beliefs provide a frame for a better life cycle that strengthens stereotype and national identity. Local culture is highlighted through Belief and behaviour that represents the lower class in society.

Whereas, Geography, history, cultural heritage, and intercultural issues reflect more foreign culture, while point of view and nature highlight more local culture resulting in upbringing of a monotonous kind of groups. The learners who are studying MCE book are following foreign culture and are away from their local values, traditions and history. This leads to a distorted generation and creating communication barriers between learners of different strata. As Pakistani people are more ambitious people so they are more concerned about their culture and its reflection in the new generation but it is misguided by foreign culture which is creating gap in society by giving us the concept of class system.

CONCLUSION

This study involves a detailed discrimination between local and foreign culture in two different textbooks. These textbooks are specified for two different classes of students studying in public and private sectors, reflecting a division in society. At academic level both classes are not appreciated as both relate to two extremes (local and foreign) of culture and no way in between which may lead to a neutral attitude in Pakistani society. Learners learning foreign culture are somehow graded high in society as per their uniqueness in our society while the commoners are always let down. So, educationists in Pakistan should design a syllabus with a cultural blend of both the extremes at every level so that students might be well aware of both and it should demolish the cultural discrimination in Pakistani society.

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