





Power, Images, and Text: A Faircloughian CDA of a Gulf Foundation English Textbook

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Abstract

This study applies Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework to examine images in a foundation-level English textbook used at Gulf universities for English for academic purposes (EAP). Guided by two research questions— (1) how key social groups (gender, nationality, role) are represented in images and their verbal-text interplay, and (2) ideologies/power relations in discursive and social practices—the analysis targets a multimodal page featuring Western professionals Sylvie Dam and Michael Morgan arranging a San Francisco conference trip. Textual findings reveal balanced gender (50% female/male in equal high-status roles) but ethnocentric Western dominance: blonde figures, suits, and urban skylines exclude Gulf/Arab or minority representations. Visual grammar shows equal salience, demand gaze, and symbiotic captions naturalizing professionals as ideal English users tied to grammar like "shall." Discursively, tasks emphasize comprehension over critique, sequencing within global corporate intertextuality absent local contexts. Socially, neoliberal globalism and Anglo-hegemony emerge,

prioritizing employability over cultural relevance in Gulf EAP curricula. The study results echo Dabbagh (2016) on Westernized ELT visuals and Lestari (2025) on limited multimodal criticality, highlighting regional inclusivity gaps. Conclusions underscore images' ideological reproduction of power asymmetries. Recommendations include diversified imagery (e.g., Arab professionals), reflective tasks (e.g., "Oman adaptation"), teacher supplements, equity audits, and comparative corpus research to foster plural Englishes.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Textbook Images, Multimodal Analysis, Gulf ELT, Western Dominance

Introduction

Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework provides a systematic and robust analysis of the ideological work that takes place in multimodal educational resources such as those found in textbooks images (Fairclough, 2010). Such model based on Fairclough's three concepts namely, text, discursive practice and societal practice help conceptualize relations of production of images, interaction of images with corresponding verbal and visual components and participation of images in wider socio-cultural representational power, identity and social inequality (Fairclough, 2010). However, regarding textbooks content analysis, one can state that images do not act as indifferent illustrations. They are rather semiotic positions within which social meaning constructs of values, norms and hierarchies more effectively reproduce themselves than it is for written word (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Dabbagh, 2016). Nevertheless, no matter how important they are, textbook images are often paid scant attention to in comparison with verbal material, hence, the traditional approaches need to be stylized into a more comprehensive, Faircloughian-influenced CDA in practice forms (Gee, 2014).

Importance of the study

Education has witnessed a "visual turn," which causes images in the textbooks to become a core of meaning creation especially for younger learners and for those who learn multiple languages for whom pictures are more conducive to the understanding of concepts, relationships, and roles (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Studying images can help or hinder students' understandings of gender, ethnicity, class, occupation, national identity, and many ideas in a direct or indirect manner (Dabbagh, 2016). The images of women in domestic spheres or males in positions of power appear so often that they make such gendered patterns appear "normal" or natural; being retold repeatedly as "us" versus "them" with certain race or nations also allows ethnocentrism and discrimination (Dabbagh, 2016; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Fairclough's critical discourse analysis allows the researcher to follow the relevant groups through the images, to provide rationales for such images through textual explanations, and to link the images with larger

patterns of education and politics (Fairclough, 2010; Gee, 2014) as seen here.

This kind of analysis is particularly useful to engage with this analysis in both national as well as international curricula because textbook images shape the socialization of students into different kinds of citizenship and morality and national identities (Qazi, 2020). Textbooks as official information vehicles approved by state authorities usually include images that help define what is “normal”, “appropriate” or “desirable” in a particular society (Dabbagh, 2016). Marketization and constructed objects within their commercial context, influence the images that are selected in that they value more the known, the stereotypes, the conventions as opposed to images that confront or question or include (Fairclough, 1993). To this end, the analysis of images in textbooks is considered untypical from a linguistic or a pedagogical point of view as it is also ethical and political as it presents issues of equity and representation and social justice (Dabbagh, 2016).

Fairclough’s Framework and Textbook Images

Fairclough's critical discourse analysis encourages the understanding of discourse based on the interrelations of language, social practice and consciousness (Fairclough, 2010). In other words, the researcher explains in detail the structure of visual materials, i.e. the composition, the colors, the light, the direction of “gaze”, the “salience” and the connection between picture and text (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), using a frame of “text”. Kress & van Leeuwen (2006) involved this level with notions of semiotics as well as multimodality when describing how the pictorial categories termed in terms of inclusion exclusion position and agency are factored. To give but one example: concentrating or marginalizing, villainizing or glorifying a figure as an active or passive agent, may have ideological undertones which influence understanding (Bergstrand & Jasper, 2018).

The study explores the appropriacy of Fairclough's critical discourse analysis in choosing, placing, or arranging each of the didactic images as well as their linkages to other texts and images contained in the textbook (Fairclough, 2010). The study further looks into how some captions, questions, instructions, and tasks revolve around the images, directing the reader’s interpretation towards some views and discouraging other, achieved readings of the images (Gee, 2014). Further, it explores editorial decisions regarding – which images to apply and which not and why, also scrutinizing the system of cropping and modifying an image impelled by the policy behind it rather than neutral editing practices. As a discursive practice, the analysis of the images can also extend to the medium between the lowest level which examines each image while the higher level is the analysis of the design and pedagogical discourse of a given curriculum (Fairclough, 2010).

On a social-practice level, the analysis places all these activities within larger systems of power relating, for instance, to curriculum at large, national curriculum as a policy, cultural censorship, ideological standpoints, and the economics of book publishing

(Fairclough, 2010; Dabbagh, 2016). This level attempts to address the place of 'the textbook images' with respect to reproduction, participation, or possible condensation of these existing social provisions such as gender, race, class status or national identity issues (Dabbagh, 2016). In addition to this, it considers the impact of such things as the global development of educational systems, new affirmative testing techniques, and restrictions against certain languages on which images in textbooks of today will be considered 'useful' or 'unusual'. Fairclough's critical discourse analysis thus provides a range of analytical steps which include both the microscope analysis of visuals as well as the critique of the function of the pictures in the textbooks in relation to specific culture (Fairclough, 2010).

Research Questions

The study is anchored in the following two focused research questions:

1. How are key social groups represented in the selected textbook images, and what patterns emerge in the relationship between image and verbal text? (Dabbagh, 2016; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006)
2. What ideologies and power relations are evident in the discursive and social practice of textbook image selection and framing? (Fairclough, 2010)

Research Gap

Although critical discourse analysis has been extensively employed to study the language of textbooks and media images, only a handful of studies have systematically considered the analysis of textbook images within Fairclough's critical discourse analysis and its three-dimensional analysis. While existing research on images in textbooks tends to be semiotic or visual-grammar approaches focusing more on power and ideology, CDA in practice is aimed at the written text whereas the images are treated as an addition (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Gee, 2014). Gender and identity in textbooks are most often studied as a verbal representation; therefore, this visual turn and its embedding in discourse and practices is incompletely addressed in such research (Dabbagh, 2016). In this incomplete integration there is an apparent lack in the research: there is scarcity in detailed research without clear contribution to treat textbook visuals as normal discourse texts in Fairclough's three-dimensional framework. (Fairclough, 2010). This study addresses the gap by using Fairclough's critical discourse analysis as an explanatory disciplinary framework to examine the purpose and function of depicted textbook illustrations as ideological sites with meaning of all the three layers integrated - text, discursive and social-practice level - thus an integrated role which is conceptually and theoretically illuminating is presented in regard to students and their construction of their worldviews and types of identities cultivated among them. (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Dabbagh, 2016).

Literature Review

The most recent studies have expanded the range of Fairclough's 1 critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine the ways in which images in the text reflect and maintain social ideologies among others using the examples of English language teaching be it at the primary school's courses or not. However, within all the mentioned research spaces, there has been a visual turn of MDA — a concept that considers pictures, text colours and the text itself and other elements as one whole system of semiotic signs being the dominant approach within critical applied linguistics (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Gee, 2014). This section will review some of the studies that have been carried out in the period 2018 to 2025, toward the analysis of textbooks' visual resources, either using or conforming to Fairclough's theory. Prominence will be on the issues of how text transformations – on the discursive level – practices translations and its social-practice level, and which areas are underrepresented.

Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Framework and Multimodal Images

Through Fairclough's critical discourse analysis theory, discourse is seen as consisting of a text, discursive practice as well as social practice in which for every case of a discourse it ought to be dissected from these three levels of connection, all at once, (Fairclough, 2023). On the level of the text, analysts can describe the structure in detail, for example vocabulary, grammar and in images, composition, color, gaze and salience may be described (Liu, 2013). On the level of the discursive practice, they investigate the processes that enable the production, dissemination, and reception of texts and images as well as how text and image relate to one another, including intertextuality and editorial choices (Johnstone & Andrus, 2024). On the social-practice level, they relate these practices to broader power structures such as the policy of education, ideology, and social inequality (Farhadytooli, 2025). In the case of textbook images, this framework makes it possible to identify micro level visual description, level classroom and pedagogic practices, and finally to macro-level projects of nation-building, citizenship, and moral socialization (Dabbagh, 2016).

Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual grammar has been effectively combined with this approach as these modes: representation, interaction, and composition are employed to understand how visuals help in making meaning. (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). There has been a concerted effort to integrate these models of analysis: the common approach adopted is the Fairclough's Three Levels in Fairclough's 1 critical discourse analysis (CDA) is frequently used and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) categories are borrowed to characterize image properties.

Recent Studies on Ideology and Representation

Several studies in the recent past have used the Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA) as well as multimodal discourse analysis (MDA), which aims at analyzing the social analysis of textbook illustrations for English language teaching (ELT) in terms of gender, race, or social class and nationalism. In a study conducted in Indonesia in 2020 titled, "Didactic Symbol of Visual Images in EFL Textbook: Multi-modal Critical Discourse Analysis", all the 158 visual images used in the textbook were analyzed by the author who applied Kress and Van Leeuwen's multimodality approach (Hasan, 2020). Examining the last section, males were found only 30% whereas females in 70%, and the study also challenged other works that portray men in much higher proportions in careers than women by affirming that illustrations of men and women in the textbook represented their representation, which is roughly equal (Hasan, 2020). It is, therefore, possible to conclude that the differences in images can be used to complement the writing and foster respect for other cultural observations by contrasting the local and the foreign in a more conscious way, in other words, by introducing a shifted design which incorporates more tolerable representational practices (Hasan, 2020).

In a similar sense, ethnic and place literacy studies, implemented multimodal approaches to uncover discursive patterns in ELT textbooks have also influenced in the development of this analysis in the recent years. An article in 2020 titled "Discourse Representation in the Images of English Textbooks 'Prospects' and 'Visions'" applied Halliday's functionalist analysis of grammar and Kress and van Leeuwen's approach to visual grammar to understand how ethnicity and buildings are represented in the textbooks (Balaye et al., 2021). The visual content was described in general terms, and this is why authors argued that their effects and expectations' preferences are skewed towards modernity and the west at the expense of localities thereby affecting cultural bias and self-assessment of the learners (Balaye et al., 2021). By treating images as discursive sites, the study connected micro-level choices (such as which ethnic groups appear and how they are framed) to broader questions of cultural imperialism and linguistic hegemony in foreign-language education (Balaye et al., 2021).

Critical Discourse Analysis of Gender and Values

Gender roles and how they are portrayed in textbook pictures has always drawn a lot of attention into the critical analysis of textbook images (Tajeddin & Janebi Enayat, 2010; Benlaghrissi, 2023). In the year 2020 an investigation into gender roles in Iranian EFL teachers' books used Fairclough's critical discourse analysis approach in conjunction with the use of visual-grammar that Kress and van Leeuwen developed. As a result, it illustrated that visual turn includes more of women involved within the domestic home-

bound spheres and more men in the work-bound work-place spheres. (Dabbagh, 2016). Nevertheless, being depicted as professionals tends to mean that women are positioned in subordinate or supportive roles, while men appear as definitive movers and or leaders in the images. According to Mahnaz, this is how gender roles continue to dominate at a social-practice level even when the official discourse is that there is equal gender treatment in the educational setting (Dabbagh, 2016).

Likewise, in a recently published study in 2023 entitled “Textbooks as Value-Laden: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Moral Values Representation in Primary School EFL Textbooks” an investigation of the ways in which certain images and texts represent and advance specific morals, like moral norms, such as respect, sharing, and obedience (Sitio, 2023). It was found that images usually present images typically depict idealized, conflict-free scenarios in which children and adults behave in normatively ‘good’, while images depicting discord or discontents exist or often, they are structured as marginal conditions. In discursive practice, such images are instantiated through reference to questions and assignments, assigned to students either explicitly or implicitly, to accept such behavior, rather than question it (Sitio, 2023). At the social-practice level, it is suggested that these dynamics are part of a state project of moral and national education in which children are expected to be socialized through textbooks to specific coherence regarding citizenship and religiosity (Sitio, 2023).

Multimodal Image Analysis and Critical Thinking

Some studies investigate how illustrative materials inside textbooks can be helpful in building critical thinking instead of only defining where they should focus their attention. A subsequent study conducted in 2025 on the same critical thinking concepts using multimodal English language teaching materials; “Critical Thinking in Multimodal ELT Materials: A Discourse Analysis of Tasks and Visuals” examined the Indonesian upper secondary English text-book to see how narrative visuals, politics based images and Venn diagram type structures are included in a ‘task’(Lestari, 2025). In this paper the researchers identified that narrative images promote analytical and evaluation skills, politically charged images facilitate evaluation and construction of arguments, charts and diagrams allow them to map and make sense of the intricate concepts. That only happens when the task itself requires sophisticated thinking otherwise the visuals serve merely decorative or retention purposes (Lestari, 2025).

This type of research confirms that textbook images are not ideologically neutral. They can be used as discursive resources that can either open space for critical reflection or close it down. It depends on how they are framed by verbal text and pedagogic practices (Gee, 2014). In general, images are selected to appear “realistic” or “relatable,” yet they reproduce common stereotypes about gender, class, or national identity, which may subtly

undermine attempts to promote critical awareness (Dabbagh, 2016; Sitio, 2023).

Methodology

The research presents a qualitative analysis following critical discourse analysis framework as pioneered by Norman Fairclough (2010), to undertake visual analysis of the textbook that is utilized in foundation level colleges in the Gulf. In particular, the following two questions underpinned the analysis:

1. How are key social groups (e.g., by gender, nationality, and role) represented in the selected textbook images, and what patterns emerge in the relationship between image and verbal text?
2. What ideologies and power relations are evident in the discursive and social practice of selecting and framing these images in the textbook?

Research Design

This research employs qualitative, interpretive methodology and is carried out using multimodal discourse analysis and Fairclough's three-dimensional critical discourse analysis (CDA). It proceeds from a micro level description of the visual features towards micro-level institutional analysis, as well as for the subsequent macro-level study of the social ideological context (Fairclough, 2010; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) Micro analysis begins with the visual image of the textbook and explanation of the relevant accompanied-text, captions, inquiries and instructions etc as one unit of multimodal discourse. This research is descriptive and analytical in its nature but not experimental emphasizing the uncovering the patterns: repetitions, omissions on the images of social groups and exploring the ideological dynamics of the textbook.

Sample

The sample textbook is Business START-UP 2 Student's Book (2006) published by Cambridge University Press. It has twelve units and 182 pages. The textbook revolves around business ideas in general. Units discuss various topics such as *Teamwork*, *Experience*, *Choices*, *Objectives*, *Strategy*, *Solutions*, *Success* and many more. It focuses on teaching grammar, listening, vocabulary, and reading skills to prospective students. This textbook is appropriate for the present study because it is loaded with high quality images of males and females in various contexts.

Sampling

This study's population consists of foundation-level English textbooks in the Gulf region within selected cluster universities. Of the available English language textbooks, one that is most used is selected, that is a foundation textbook, using purposive sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The textbook is chosen on the basis of the following: (1) it is officially used in many Gulf region universities, (2) it is a foundation level general (academic) English course textbook, (3) it has a lot of images.

After that, the images are chosen by the principle of content-based sampling: the images depicting people (individual and groups) are extracted from the core chapters of the textbook. Unnecessary icons without people and diagrams that are fully abstracted from people are exempted. Thus, the image corpus is limited enough to allow for in-depth analysis of multimodal activities. The last set of the images with combined analysis contains all the textual human images with the captions and the assignments that they are related to, as one unit of analysis.

Data Collection Procedure

The process of data collection comprises three main steps, which are closely related. In the first step, all pictures that fit the inclusion criteria are thoroughly scanned, photographed, or exported digitally and then registered in an image-coding form that includes the chapter number, page number, image type (e.g. family scene, classroom, workplace etc.), and a short description of the content or event illustrated. In the second step, the researcher writes out the written text enclosed in relation to each image: captions, photo descriptions, task instructions, and any adjacent paragraphs which reference or provide the visuals do not require any silent reading. In the final step, the textbook is put in its situational context, this involves researching all other syllabus statements of the publisher and where possible curriculum documents from the teaching universities, and the discourse practices they embrace in that instance, mostly policy educational social scientific levels.

This procedure ensures that the images are not analyzed in isolation but as semiotic bundles of visual and verbal elements shaped by specific pedagogic intentions and publishing practices.

Data Analysis Procedure

In terms of language use, the units made up of an image and text are analyzed using categories proposed in Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) grammar of visual design. This feature describes who is appearing in the image and what they are doing, the gaze in

relation to the distance as well as the gaze-situation relationship, finally the features of the layout, salience and colour. Each description is then organized in a table which, for instance, specifies an aspect involving the existence of images or even the absence of them regarding the existing textual framework.

At the level of discursive practice, the focus moves to the process of selection of the images, their sequencing and framing (Snow, 2004). The researchers consider the presence of intertextual links between the images and their tasks and asks how the questions, activities and even explanations construct or limit the interpretation of the material. For instance, does the task ask to think about gender roles, or simply provides the image as a support for grammar? The researchers pay attention to editorial choices as well: recurrence of certain images or exclusions of people from specific regions or maintaining predominance of other ways of life or locations (urban, metropolitan, etc.). Across visualizations in these chapters, such patterns of representation are examined looking for most significant discursive practices.

After the analysis at the discursive-practice level, textbook images are placed in a broader sociocultural context of the Gulf Foundation institutions. Using the gathered sociocultural data, the relative importance of the emerging social practices regarding feminism, masculinity, nationalism, language and ideology of cosmopolitanism in the Gulf culture is evaluated. At this point interpretative analysis is carried out to converge the micro and macro-level results to be more relevant in relation to macro discourse such as global education agenda, publishing for profit or exploitation, and English as a medium of Higher Education in the Gulf.

Limitations

The scope of the study is limited to one textbook and images consisting mainly of human figures, which may not apply to other foundation textbooks or other types of images. Additionally, because it is a collected data analysis based on qualitative research, the results are interpretative and contextually relative, rather than statistically applicable, when treating the details of the obtained case as opposed to a statistically representative survey.

Results

Textual Analysis (RQ1: Representation of Social Groups)

The presented multimodal image carries different modes, i.e., visual and verbal, of communicating meanings aimed at producing certain images of social groups at Fairclough's textual level. The main visual in question is a photo of two professionals (See Figure 1), namely Sylvie Dam, a blond woman wearing a suit, and Michael Morgan, a man

in glasses with a suit and a tie, both on the phone at a business conference in San Francisco. Both heads are in the center, same size, direct gaze engaging the audience which is frameless taking every piece of the visual without hierarchy (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006). They are represented as active as ‘arranging a trip’ and their neutral active which include a slight smile of Sylvie and a serious face of Michael signify effectiveness in someone. Active in the eyes of viewers interactionally, the close social distance, the demand gaze, which makes the viewer an addresser in a business world, actors of business commodification themselves. In such compositions, the split layout (Sylvie left, Michael right) contains the double focus of the caption where their swipes of conference tags and city sceneries contribute to the global firm context.



Figure 1: Representation of social groups

Note. From *Business Start-Up 2: Student's Book* [Two businesspeople], by M. Ibbotson & B. Stephens, 2006, p. 30. Copyright by Cambridge University Press

Featured social classifications remain relevant: gender (male-female, both females in the same positions), age (no children but adults only), nationality (Western/European American is assumed based on blondes in suits in San Francisco), and class (participants in the meeting). All these constituents are absent – no kids, no workers, no minorities and no Gulf/Arab people either. There is verbal text to support this: ‘Michael Morgan and Sylvie Dam are arranging a trip to a conference in San Francisco’ caption in the present continuous suggests such activity gives agency to them, of the tasks, as in ‘What do Sylvie and Michael decide to do’ promote action rather than one’s identity. As one looks through the page, it becomes obvious that in terms of gender, there is a balance, whereas Westerners are also given priority, where, for instance, language exercises, incorporating pictures, use

in language exercises, “shall I? for offers.

Discursive Practice Analysis (RQ1 & RQ2: Patterns and Framing)

In addition to the presence of visual content in the layout, discursive practices can also be identified in the use of the images, their sequence and intertextuality. They are perceived to have the salience business English (“conference”, “trip”) lexis, which is grammar (“shall” for suggesting) to build comprehension. The list of instructions (a-d) focuses on the content (“listen to their conversation”) and the functions (“Why don’t we...?” “Shall we...?”), disregarding the image as a tool of analysis. Applying intertextuality, they promote the position of global corporate discourse and San Francisco in comparison with other places, such as the Gulf region (no hijab, Arabic script, or notable places from the region). In other words, there were assumed production practices in that the publisher said he had bought Western imagery to include in stock libraries and cropped them in application, thus categorized them with neutral labels.

Repetitive patterns in the designated textbook show that professionals dominate; the presence of gender equality, but stereotypical attire persist (suits, no cultural adaptation). Discursive power lies in naturalization. For example, viewers interpret texts and images via Anglo-American norms (See Figures 2, 3, and 4).

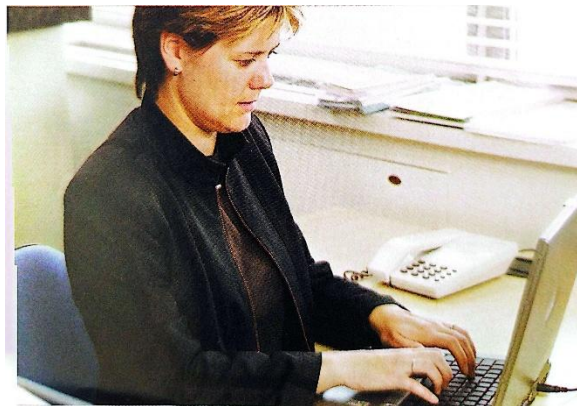


Figure 2: Repetitive patterns

Note. From Business Start-Up 2: Student’s Book [Businesswoman], by M. Ibbotson & B. Stephens, 2006, p. 32. Copyright by Cambridge University Press

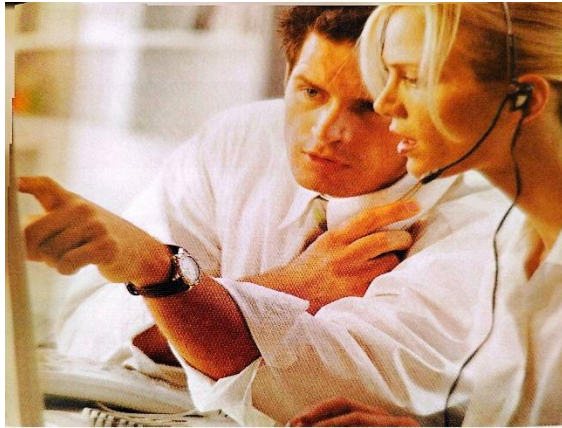


Figure 3: Repetitive patterns

Note. From Business Start-Up 2: Student's Book [Anglo-American norms], by M. Ibbotson & B. Stephens, 2006, p. 43. Copyright by Cambridge University Press

Social Practice Analysis (RQ2: Ideologies and Power Relations)

At the social-practice level, these choices are embedded within the Gulf foundation-university English teaching, where textbooks socialize students into global Englishes. Ideologies are also evident in the textbook. For example, neoliberal globalism (See Figure 6). In addition, the presence of gender egalitarianism (balanced representation aligns with Gulf reforms) and ethnocentrism, which refers to the absence of Arab/Gulf figures reproduces "English=Western" hegemony (See Figure 7). Moreover, the textbook clearly exhibits the concept of "Power relations" (See Figure 8). In other words, the western publisher authority shapes imagery and curriculum. Finally, it seems that broader orders of discourse prioritize employability over cultural relevance, marginalizing local identities for cosmopolitan ideals (Fairclough, 2010).



Figure 4: *Neoliberal globalism*

Note. From *Business Start-Up 2: Student's Book* [Neoliberalism], by M. Ibbotson & B. Stephens, 2006, p. 54. Copyright by Cambridge University Press

2.3 Welcoming visitors VOCABULARY Polite phrases Small talk

1 a Work with a partner. Write a list of things people do and say when they welcome visitors to their company.
b Can you give examples of how people from different countries welcome visitors?

2 a BA Listen to four short conversations with a visitor, in a company. Match them to the photos (a-d). Write 1-4 in the boxes.
1 2 3 4

Figure 5: *Western hegemony*

Note. From *Business Start-Up 2: Student's Book* [Western Hegemony], by M. Ibbotson & B. Stephens, 2006, p. 76. Copyright by Cambridge University Press



Figure 6: *Power relation*

Note. From *Business Start-Up 2: Student's Book* [Power Relations], by M. Ibbotson & B. Stephens, 2006, p.63. Copyright by Cambridge University Press

Discussion

These results are in line with contemporary research in CDA inquiry of ELT textbook pictures' analysis using images. In Dabbagh's (2016), the salience of the balanced gender in the text was found to be in the similar context within the Persian ELT textbook where the professionals included a parallel image of Iran – Western view of women in professions, pointing at Fairclough's textual level endorsing the subtle patriarchy even through context. Sylvie's smile vs. Michael's seriousness subtly feminizes approachability, aligning with Hasan (2020) on didactic symbols encoding tolerance yet prioritizing global agency.

From a discursive perspective, task-image synergy reflects Lestari (2025), where multimodal materials foster comprehension but hinder critical thinking. It is evident that Western exclusivity in textbooks favors metropolises and perpetuates cultural imperialism in EFL. In Gulf context, of local images may lead to alienation, as Hasan and Rahman (2023) noted teachers valuing visuals for relatability. It is also evident that Western imagery dominates linking micro-choices to macro-hegemonic practices.

Socially, ideologies reflect Gulf internationalization but reproduce Anglophone dominance. Kress & van Leeuwen (2006) calls for multimodal equity. Compared to Indonesian studies (Hasan, 2020) which contains local elements, Gulf materials lag, widening cultural disconnections. This underscores Fairclough's (2010) warning: uncritical adoption entrenches power asymmetries which could lead to serious social and cultural imbalances in university textbooks.

Conclusion

By using Faircloughian CDA, it has become evident how social groups are represented in the images within textbooks whereby these images contain both genders but considering the professional context of the West only (RQ1). The symbiotic patterns of neoliberal globalization in images and texts present a further dimension of naturalization that is not critiqued in tasks. In addition, and the Anglo-domination that is controlled through social practices within learning curricula in the Gulf (RQ2). The images, which support the gender equity towards the regions, do not incorporate the regions themselves in a meaningful manner, rather, they mainly have an affirmative purpose of encouraging students to seek alternative 'International' prospects.

Recommendations

The present study offers various recommendations to curriculum developers/publishers, teachers, and future research. First, curriculum developers/publishers should diversify imagery by including Gulf/Arab professionals in equal roles, blending local (e.g., Dubai conferences) with global settings. Moreover, curriculum developers should pay special attention to adapting captions/tasks for cultural resonance (e.g., "How is business communication different in Oman?"). In addition, teachers/instructors are ought to supplement with local visuals and design critical tasks (e.g., "Rewrite the dialogue from a Muscat perspective") to activate Fairclough's reflective potential, fostering multimodal literacy. It is also recommended to analyze full textbook corpus comparatively (Gulf vs. Asian ELT), triangulate with student/teacher interviews on image interpretations, and explore digital adaptations for inclusivity.

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