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Hidden Ideologies in English for Iraq Textbooks: A Critical Discourse and Multimodal Analysis of Health, Education, Culture, Safety, and Environmental Awareness

Rose Mohammed M. Alghanimi
Department of English Language, College of Education for Human Sciences, University of Karbala
rose.m@uokerbala.edu.iq

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Abstract:

English language textbooks have evolved from language learning tools to educational texts that convey cultural values, social norms, and ideological views. This study explores how five major educational topics are represented in the English for Iraq textbook series for intermediate and preparatory levels. The topics are: health awareness, educational values, cultural diversity, environmental responsibility and safety awareness. Research Design The study is qualitative interpretive design. The study adopts the Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MCDA) for the analysis of textual and visual discourse. The results show that the textbooks consistently emphasize individual responsibility and, to a limited extent, institutional accountability and broader social contexts. The analysis further indicates that representations of health, safety and environmental issues are more likely to emphasize individual behavior than systemic factors, while cultural diversity is depicted. The analysis shows that health, safety and environmental issues are often represented in ways that emphasize individual behavior over systemic factors, and that cultural diversity is presented through lenses that only partly reflect local cultural and religious identities. This study illustrates how linguistic and visual resources combine to construct implicit ideological meanings that shape learners' perceptions of society and citizenship. The findings contribute to Critical Discourse Analysis research in the field of English language

education and have practical implications for curriculum developers, textbook authors and EFL teachers by advocating Critical Language Awareness (CLA) and facilitating the development of more balanced, inclusive and critically informed instructional materials.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MCDA), English for Iraq textbooks, Educational themes, Critical Language Awareness (CLA).

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الأيديولوجيات الخفية في كتب اللغة الإنكليزية للعراق: تحليل نقدي وخطابي متعدد الوسائط لموضوعات الصحة، التعليم، الثقافة، السلامة، والوعي البيئي.

روز محمد مهدي

قسم اللغة الإنكليزية، كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية، جامعة كربلاء

rose.m@uokerbala.edu.iq

ملخص:

تطورت كتب لغة الإنجليزية المدرسية من مجرد أدوات لتعلم اللغة إلى نصوص تعليمية تنقل القيم الثقافية، والمعايير الاجتماعية، والرؤى الأيديولوجية. وتستكشف هذه الدراسة كيفية تمثيل خمسة موضوعات تعليمية رئيسية في سلسلة كتب (English for Iraq) للمرحلتين المتوسطة والإعدادية، وهي: الوعي الصحي، والقيم التعليمية، والتنوع الثقافي، والمسؤولية البيئية، والوعي بالسلامة. التصميم البحثي: تعتمد الدراسة على المنهج الكيفي التفسيري (Qualitative Interpretive Design)، حيث تطبق نموذج فيركلوف ثلاثي الأبعاد للتحليل النقدي للخطاب (CDA) وتحليل الخطاب متعدد الوسائط (MCDA) لتحليل الخطاب النصي والبصري. وتظهر النتائج أن هذه الكتب تؤكد باستمرار على المسؤولية الفردية، مقابل تركيز محدود على المسؤولية المؤسسية والسياقات الاجتماعية الأوسع. ويشير التحليل كذلك إلى أن تمثيل قضايا الصحة والسلامة والبيئة يميل غالباً إلى التركيز على السلوك الفردي بدلاً من العوامل الهيكلية والنظامية، في حين يُعرض التنوع الثقافي من خلال عدسات لا تعكس الهويات الثقافية والدينية المحلية إلا بشكل جزئي. وتوضح هذه الدراسة كيف تتكامل المصادر اللغوية والبصرية معاً لبناء معانٍ أيديولوجية ضمنية تشكل تصورات المتعلمين تجاه المجتمع والمواطنة. وتساهم هذه النتائج في أبحاث التحليل النقدي للخطاب في مجال تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية، كما تحمل دلالات تطبيقية لمطوري المناهج، ومؤلفي الكتب المدرسية، ومعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، وذلك من خلال الدعوة إلى تعزيز الوعي اللغوي النقدي (CLA) وتسهيل تطوير مواد تعليمية أكثر توازناً، وشمولية، وقائمة على رؤية نقدية واعية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تحليل الخطاب النقدي (CDA)، تحليل الخطاب متعدد الوسائط (MCDA)، كتب اللغة الإنكليزية للعراق، الموضوعات التعليمية، الوعي النقدي باللغة (CLA).

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The research

Introduction

In recent decades, textbooks of the English language have changed from simple instructional materials to powerful educational resources which shape the learners' linguistic competence, cultural understanding and social perspectives. Modern English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbook do not only serve to teach vocabulary and grammar, but also function as a vehicle to convey values, beliefs and ideologies to learners that influence their perceptions of health, education, culture, environmental responsibility and social behavior. Textbooks are thus no longer viewed as neutral pedagogical instruments, but as social and cultural artifacts that produce specific worldviews through language and visual representation. In this era of moving towards a holistic approach to learning, English language textbooks play a growing role in developing health literacy, environmental sustainability, intercultural understanding, responsible citizenship, and lifelong learning.
Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers a useful theoretical and analytical framework for investigating how educational discourse constructs ideological meanings and legitimizes particular forms of knowledge, identity and social relations. CDA does not concentrate on the linguistic structures only; it studies the relation between language and power, ideology and society. CDA reveals how apparently ordinary educational texts promote or undermine existing social values. Multimodal discourse analysis with CDA allows researchers to analyze written language, images, symbols, visual layout and other semiotic resources that contribute to the creation of implicit meanings. This dual perspective is especially useful for textbook research because the textual and visual elements complement each other to shape students' perceptions of reality, social identities, and cultural norms.

Recent curriculum reforms have tried to promote learning-centred and competency-based education through emphasis on health awareness,

environmental responsibility, quality education, cultural diversity, safety awareness and global citizenship. These educational priorities closely resemble international initiatives such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which call for educational systems that prepare learners to be socially responsible, culturally aware, environmentally conscious, and critically engaged citizens. In turn, English language textbooks have become important means of transmitting educational values that go beyond learning about the language itself. Yet, educational resources are often loaded with implicit assumptions, ideological preferences and selective representations that are mostly invisible to learners. They may unwittingly reinforce cultural stereotypes, privilege certain worldviews, emphasize individual responsibility to the exclusion of broader social or institutional factors, or marginalize alternative views on health, culture, education, environmental protection and safety. These covert ideological messages have the potential to influence students' beliefs, attitudes and views of society, emphasizing the importance of critical analysis of textbook discourse.

Many studies have investigated cultural representation, moral values, environmental education, gender ideology, and critical discourse in EFL textbooks in different educational settings. However, few studies have investigated the Iraqi English curriculum from a thorough critical discourse point of view.

Previous research has mainly focused on specific topics, specific linguistic features or specific ideological features. There has been some attention to how a number of educational values are constructed at the same time through the interaction of textual and visual discourse in the English for Iraq textbook series. This limitation is a significant gap in the literature considering the importance of these textbooks in shaping the educational experiences and social awareness of learners. The present study attempts to fill this gap by investigating how the English for Iraq textbooks adopted at the intermediate and preparatory levels construct implicit ideologies of health awareness,

environmental responsibility, educational values, cultural diversity, and safety awareness through textual and visual discourse.

The study applies Critical Discourse Analysis with multimodal discourse analysis to investigate how linguistic choices, visual representations and discourse strategies construct students' understanding of these educational themes and whether these representations reinforce dominant social values or promote more inclusive, critical and global perspectives. The research questions steering the study are:

- To what extent are health awareness, environmental responsibility, educational values, cultural diversity and safety awareness reflected in the English for Iraq textbooks?
- What linguistic and visual resources are deployed to construct these educational themes?
- What ideological assumptions and power relations are inscribed into these representations?
- How do these representations align with the principles of critical pedagogy, global citizenship education and sustainable development?

Based on these questions, the objective of the present research is to analyze the textual and visual representation of the main educational themes, to identify the ideological messages that underlie the discourse of the textbooks, to analyze the interaction of language, visual resources and relations of power and to evaluate the extent to which these materials promote inclusive, balanced and critically informed educational values.

This study contributes in several important ways. Theoretically, it contributes to the developing research of the application of Critical Discourse Analysis and multimodal discourse analysis to the English language textbooks by providing a comprehensive study of multiple ideological dimensions in a single educational setting. Methodologically it combines textual and visual analysis to provide a fuller understanding of the construction of ideological meanings in educational materials. It offers an educational analysis of how

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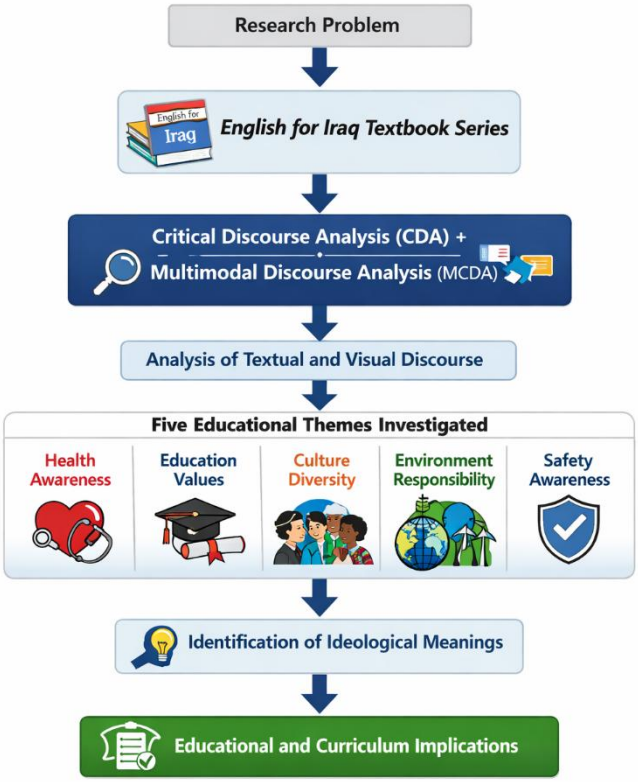
the English for Iraq textbooks promote health consciousness, environmental consciousness, values of education, cultural diversity, and awareness of safety among Iraqi learners. The research framework is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Overall Research Framework of the Study



The findings have practical implications for curriculum developers, textbook authors, educational policymakers and EFL teachers who want to develop more balanced, inclusive and critically-informed instructional materials. Moreover, the study contributes to the improvement of teachers' Critical Language Awareness (CLA) and their capacity to identify, interpret and critically discuss implicit ideological messages, rather than to transmit them uncritically in classroom practice.

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I. Literature Review

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has become one of the most influential approaches for investigating how language constructs, reproduces, and challenges ideological meanings in educational contexts. CDA, unlike the traditional linguistic approaches which emphasize only on grammar or textual structure, explores the dynamic linkages between discourse, power, ideology and social practice. It presupposes that language is never neutral, but always embedded as a means of constructing social realities, and of justifying certain systems of knowledge and authority. Likewise, van Dijk, (2006) stressed the cognitive aspect of discourse, arguing that ideologies are reproduced by shared social knowledge and mental models that influence both the production and interpretation of texts. Janks, (2009) further extended Critical Discourse Analysis in educational research by stressing the interplay among power, access, diversity and design, showing how educational materials replicate and resist social inequalities at the same time.

The use of CDA in English language teaching (ELT) has grown enormously over the last ten years. Recent research has begun to view textbooks not as neutral aids in language learning but as ideological texts that contain cultural values, social identities and educational priorities. Therefore, CDA has become an important analytical tool for evaluating the representation of gender, culture, citizenship, morality, environmental responsibility, and other educational themes in textbooks. Recent empirical studies underline the relevance of this perspective. Setyono and Widodo (2019) mentioned that Indonesian EFL textbooks contain multicultural values that reflect the government's educational priorities and national identity. Baleghizadeh and Shayesteh (2020) found the discourse in textbooks to be a selective representation of cultures through deliberate language and visual choices which affect the intercultural perceptions of learners. More recently, Deng and Wang (2023) suggested that English language materials are increasingly used to promote responsibility, cooperation and ethical

behaviour, and thus serve as instruments of value education in addition to language instruction.

Although these studies confirm the value of CDA in textbook research, most focus on isolated ideological dimensions or single educational contexts. Comparatively little attention has been devoted to examining how multiple educational values are simultaneously constructed through both textual and visual discourse within Iraqi English language textbooks. This limitation provides a strong justification for adopting an integrated Critical Discourse Analysis in the present study. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) examines how language reflects and constitutes power, ideology and social values, rather than treating language as neutral. It is commonly used in educational research to analyse textbooks and expose the hidden messages they convey. For instance, Setyono and Widodo (2019) found that Indonesian EFL textbooks promote multicultural values that are in line with the national educational goals. CDA is good at revealing implicit meanings, but CDA results are open to interpretation by the researcher.

Today's ELT textbooks teach more than language skills. Moreover, they help to enhance health awareness, cultural awareness, moral values, environmental awareness, and safety through the reading of texts, activities, and images (Barrot, 2025; Baleghizadeh & Shayesteh, 2020; Deng & Wang, 2023; Lasekan et al., 2023; Almosawi & Rashk, 2022). Recent research has shown that the joint analysis of text and images provides a better understanding of such messages. Komarawan et al. (2025) focused on the importance of Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) while Mahrudin et al. (2023), Putri (2023), and Kadhim (2024) studied moral values, national identity, and gender representation in EFL textbooks. But most of the earlier studies were limited to a single ideological theme. Also, there is a lack of research on Iraqi English textbooks in terms of gender and power relations. The current study addresses this gap by applying MCDA to the analysis of the presentation of health, education, culture, environment and safety together

in English for Iraq textbooks. It provides a wider understanding of the hidden ideologies embedded in the curriculum.

II. Theoretical Framework

1. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) examines how language represents and reproduces ideology, power and social values rather than considering language as neutral (Fairclough 2013; van Dijk 1993). Critical Discourse Analysis is often used in educational research to analyze textbooks because they communicate both explicit learning objectives and implicit social values (Janks, 1997). In addition, CDA is adopted as a main framework to analyze the representation of health, education, culture, environment and safety in the English for Iraq textbooks through language and visual images in this study.

2. Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model

Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model (2013) forms the analytical basis of this study. The model examines discourse through three interconnected dimensions: text, which focuses on linguistic and visual features; discursive practice, which examines how texts are produced and interpreted; and social practice, which explains how discourse reflects broader ideologies and power relations. This framework enables the analysis of both explicit and implicit meanings in the English for Iraq textbooks. Table 1, illustrate the analytical Dimensions of Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model and Their Application in the Present Study. Figure 2 summarizes the analytical dimensions of Fairclough's model adopted in this study.

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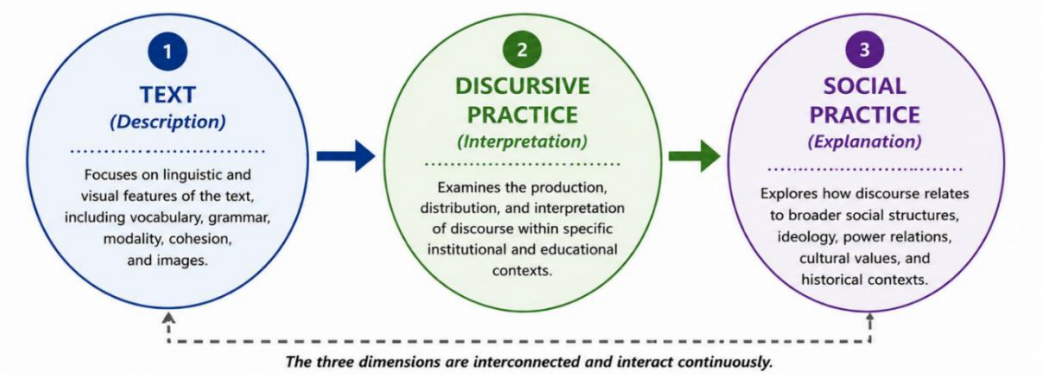
Table 1. Analytical Dimensions of Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model and Their Application in the Present Study

Dimension	Analytical Focus	Application in the Present Study
Text (Description)	Lexical choices, grammar, modality, cohesion, and visual features	Examination of textual and visual representations within the English for Iraq textbook series.
Discursive Practice (Interpretation)	Production, distribution, interpretation, and interaction of discourse	Analysis of how educational messages are constructed and interpreted within the Iraqi EFL curriculum.
Social Practice (Explanation)	Ideology, power relations, social and cultural values	Identification of implicit ideological meanings related to health, education, culture, environmental responsibility, and safety awareness.

Figure 2. Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2013; Janks, 1997).



Source: Fairclough, 2013; Janks, 1997

3. Multimodal Discourse Analysis

The study compliments CDA with Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MCDA) as English language textbooks have both visual and written elements. MCDA is concerned with the ways in which text, images, layout and other visual resources come together to communicate meaning (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021). The combination of CDA and MCDA offers a more holistic analysis of the presentation of educational values and covert ideologies in the English for Iraq textbooks.

4. Theoretical or Conceptual Framework of the Study

The conceptual framework integrates CDA and MCDA and is used to analyse the English for Iraq textbook series. Fairclough's model is used to analyze textual and visual elements simultaneously, to find ideological meanings about health, education, culture, environment and safety. The general analytical process applied in the present study is shown in Figure 3.

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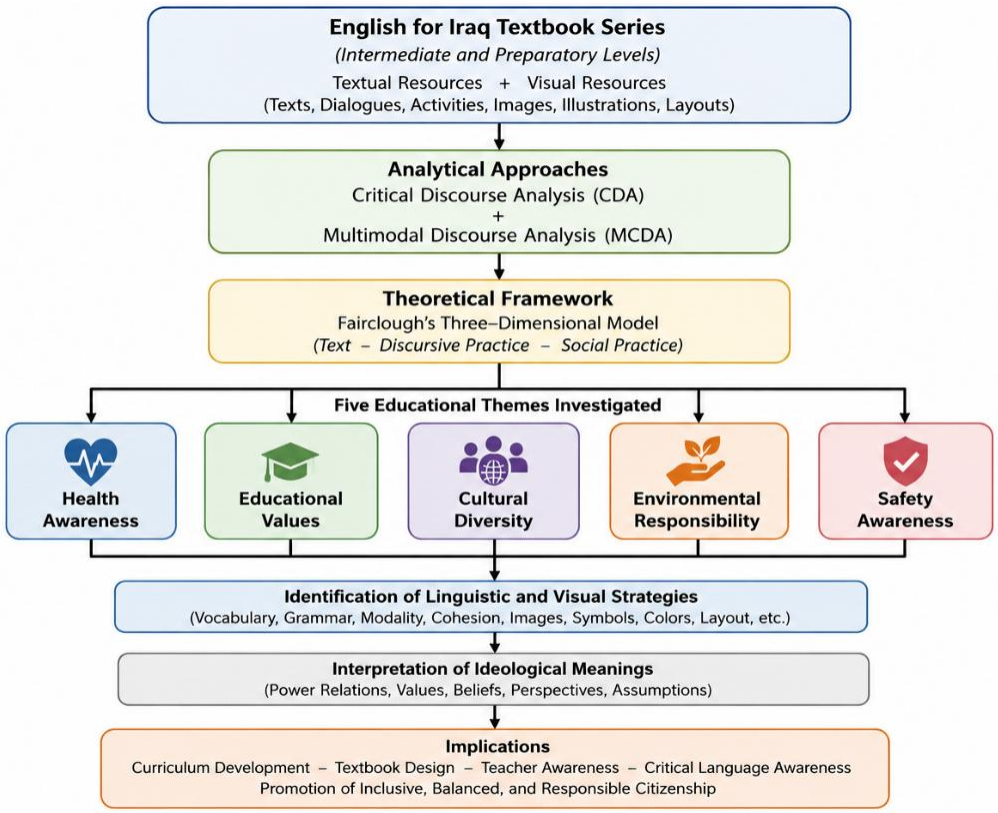
Figure 3. Conceptuel Framework of the Study



III. Methodology

1. Research Design

The study is based on a qualitative research design. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is used to analyze the ideological meanings in the English for Iraq textbook series. Therefore, CDA was chosen as it focuses on how language reflects power, values and social views (Fairclough, 2013; van Dijk, 1993). To analyze visual elements together with written texts, the study also applies Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MCDA), which enables both linguistic and visual resources to be examined together (Kress & van

Leeuwen, 2021).

2. Data Source

The data are the official English of Iraq textbooks prescribed by the Iraqi Ministry of Education for intermediate and preparatory school. The analysis involves reading texts, dialogues, activities, photographs, illustrations and other visual elements which transmit educational and social messages.

3. Sampling Strategy

Textbook units that were related to health awareness, environmental responsibility, educational values, cultural diversity and safety awareness were selected using a purposive sampling strategy. This approach guaranteed that the chosen materials were directly relevant to the study objectives (Patton, 2015). Figure 4 shows the research workflow of the study.

4. Analytical Framework

The study used to combine Fairclough of three-dimensional model with multimodal discourse analysis. it examines discourse at the textual, discursive, and social levels, while the MCDA do the analyzes how both visual and linguistic elements work together to communicate ideological meanings.

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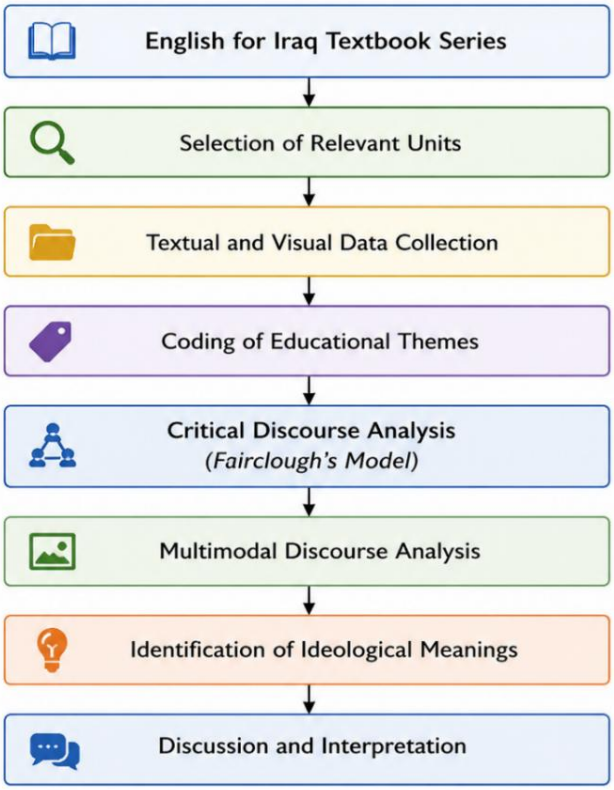
Figure 4. Research Workflow of the Study



5. Data Analysis Procedures

The Data Analysis Procedures is conducted through a series of systematic stages as follow:

i. Read the selected textbook units.
ii. Identify textual and visual data related to the five themes.
iii. The Code recurring linguistic and visual features.
iv. Analyze the data via CDA and MCDA.
v. Interpret the ideological meanings and compare them with studies.

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6. Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the findings was ensured using (Lincoln and Guba's, 1985) criteria. Credibility was achieved through repeated analysis of the data, dependability through clear documentation of the analytical procedures, confirmability by grounding interpretations in textual and visual evidence, and transferability by providing sufficient contextual information.

7. Ethical Considerations

The study analyzed publicly available textbooks approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Education. As no human participants were involved, ethical approval was not required. All sources were cited according to APA (7th edition). The components of the research design are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of the Research Methodology

Component	Description
Research Design	Qualitative CDA
Framework	Fairclough's CDA + MCDA
Data	English for Iraq textbooks
Sampling	Purposive sampling
Data Units	Texts and visual materials
Themes	Health, education, culture, environment, safety
Analysis	Coding, thematic analysis, CDA, MCDA
Trustworthiness	Lincoln & Guba (1985)

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IV. Data Analysis

In this section a Critical Discourse Analysis of the selected units from the English for Iraq textbooks is presented. The analysis employs Fairclough's three-dimensional model and multimodal discourse analysis to explore how linguistic and visual resources construct ideological meanings relating to health awareness, environmental responsibility, educational values, cultural diversity and safety awareness. Each theme is analyzed in four steps: visual analysis, ideological reading, textual analysis, and comparison with previous studies.

1. Health Awareness

Textual and visual resources for health consciousness are emphasized in the English for Iraq textbooks. The text encourages healthy behaviors through action verbs, modal expressions and positive words like healthy, exercise, balanced diet and stay fit. Images of students exercising, eating healthy food and practicing good hygiene-all at once-support these messages, making healthy behavior desirable and achievable. From a CDA perspective, health is mostly understood as an individual responsibility. It emphasizes self-discipline and personal commitment to encourage students to make healthy choices and pays little attention to broader issues such as access to healthcare or socioeconomic issues.

Table 3. Summary of Critical Discourse Analysis Findings Across the Five Educational Themes

Theme	Main Textual Features	Visual Features	Ideological Message
Health	Action verbs, modal verbs, positive vocabulary	Students exercising, healthy food, hygiene	Health is presented as an individual responsibility

This finding is reliable with Barrot (2025) and Deng and Wang (2023), who claim that contemporary EFL textbooks promote health education alongside language learning. The inclusion of visual analysis further shows that text and images work together to support these ideological messages within the Iraqi educational context. A summary of the key findings is listed in Table 3.

V. Discussion

This study explored the representation of health awareness, environmental responsibility, educational values, cultural diversity and safety in the *English for Iraq* textbook series by analysing textual and visual discourse. The results show that these themes are interconnected as the educational values and not as the separate themes. This is in line with the general function of English textbooks to develop responsible citizenship and positive social behaviour. A key finding is the continued emphasis on personal responsibility. There are five themes, which encourage students to live healthily, protect the environment, respect cultural diversity, behave safely and develop positive personal values. These types of messages are better at defining what desirable behaviours are, but less at addressing broader social and institutional factors.

This is in line with Fairclough's (2013) contention that educational discourse typically frames particular ideological positions as common sense and widely accepted. The study also emphasises the necessity of integrating textual and visual analysis. Images, photographs, illustrations, colors and social interactions complement the verbal messages, thus strengthening the educational values in the textbooks. This aligns with Kress and van Leeuwen (2021) who state that meaning is constructed not only through text but also through the combination of language and visual elements. The study extends previous research by examining five educational themes in one analytical frame, giving a more complete picture. It is not on a single ideological dimension, but rather shows how health, education, culture, environment and

safety merge to communicate common educational priorities. This combined methodology of CDA and MCDA provides a more comprehensive understanding of the ideological messages in the *English for Iraq* textbooks.

This study is limited to the analysis of one textbook series; it does not investigate the classroom implementation and learners' interpretations. Future research should include teachers' and students' perspectives, classroom observations, and the comparison of textbooks in different educational contexts. To summarize, the findings back up the view that the English for Iraq textbooks are not just language learning materials but also educational materials that affect the learners' values and social outlook.

Conclusion

The study investigated the representation of health awareness, environmental responsibility, educational values, cultural diversity and safety in the English for Iraq textbook series in terms of texts and images. The findings, using Critical Discourse Analysis and Multimodal Discourse Analysis, suggest that these textbooks are doing more than teaching English. They also serve as vehicles for the promotion of values, social attitudes and ideas of responsible citizenship. The analysis found a focus on health, environmental responsibility, educational success and safety as more or less individual responsibilities with less focus on wider social or institutional factors. It is important to consider the importance of seeing linguistic and visual features together, as text and images constantly work together to reinforce these messages. The present study is an extension of the previous ones in the sense that it deals with several educational themes in the Iraqi EFL curriculum and not a single topic. The findings provide some useful insights for curriculum developers, textbook authors and teachers wanting to develop more balanced learning materials as well as enhance students' Critical Language Awareness. Because this study focused only on the English for Iraq textbooks, future research should include classroom practices, teachers' and students' perspectives, and comparisons with other educational contexts.

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