

Role of Curriculum and Instructive Resources in Reinforcement: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Textbooks

Rubina Shaheen¹, Abdul Rasheed Soomro², Sonal Khan Maitlo³ and Azhar Ahmad⁴

<https://doi.org/10.62345/jads.2025.14.2.78>

Abstract

The present study examines educational materials and curricula, particularly textbooks and teaching practices, as actors that either reinforce or resist dominant ideological constructs. This research employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to gain insight into how the language, content, and form of educational resources either inhibit or legitimise ideologies of nationalism, gender roles, race, and capitalism, among others. An analysis of a wide range of textbooks and teaching practices across primary, secondary, and tertiary educational levels reveals the subtle but powerful ways education influences students' worldviews and beliefs about the society around them. It further suggests that curricula have the potential to disrupt hegemonic ideologies by introducing alternative subject positions, fostering critical thinking, and enabling empowerment. This research contributes to the burgeoning CDA literature by emphasising the ideological thrust of educational discourse and its implications for socialisation, identity formation, and cultural reproduction. The study concludes that curricula and teaching materials must undergo critical review and redesign to foster a more democratic and reflective educational environment.

Keywords: Textbooks, Ideology, Critical Pedagogy, Hegemony, Empowerment, Curriculum.

Introduction

Educational materials, including textbooks, curricula, syllabi, and other instructional content, serve as foundational tools in shaping students' knowledge, beliefs, and worldviews. However, they cannot simply share objective facts; instead, they become ideological instruments of a kind entangled with a specific aspect of the social structure of society (Abbas et al., 2025; Ahmad et al., 2025). The media's representation of education can mirror dominant cultural, political, and economic paradigms, and the construction of educational content routinely reinforces existing power relations, thereby legitimising certain ideologies. Therefore, education becomes an ideological reproduction site in which national, capitalist, patriarchal, and racial narratives are circulated through what appear to be neutral pedagogical practices (Rogers & Schaenen, 2014; Ahmad et al., 2021; Maitlo et al., 2024, 2025).

In recent decades, however, an increasing number of scholars have turned to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine how language and discourse in educational contexts construct and perpetuate ideological dominance. Using the critical theories of Fairclough (1995) and van Dijk

¹Assistant Professor, Institute of English Language and Literature, Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur, Sindh, Pakistan. Email: drowsylaked_eye@yahoo.com

²Lecturer, Institute of English Language and Literature, Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur, Sindh, Pakistan. Email: soomrorasheed4u@gmail.com

³MPhil. English (Linguistics), Lahore Leads University, Lahore, Pakistan. Email: sonalkhan3634@gmail.com

⁴MPhil English (Linguistics), Lahore Leads University, Lahore, Pakistan. Email: azharscholar313@gmail.com



(2001), CDA is provided as a way of examining educational texts for their ideological content and implications. This implies the use of discourse in the enactment, sustenance and, at times, the contestation of power structures and social inequalities.

In modern societies, where schools are not only centres of learning but also modes of socialisation and cultural reproduction (Bourdieu, 1991; Rasheed et al., 2024; Naz et al., 2024), education plays a significant role in shaping ideology. Students are introduced to normative conceptions of national identity, race, gender roles, and economic relations through the content of textbooks and classroom activities. These norms tend to be reframed as universal truths in these materials, and their ideological nature tends to be masked, limiting critical reflection.

However, the educational space is not one-dimensional. These ideological narratives can be reinforced or challenged by teachers, curriculum designers and academic policies. Critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1983; Anjum & Zafar, 2022; Rasheed et al., 2024) is a teacher tool educators can utilize that will effectively subvert dominant ideologies and introduce alternative perspectives to make a difference in the society in which we live by concentrating on inclusivity and social justice to name a few. Educational materials and practices are, therefore, contested terrains in this sense: sites that allow hegemony to be reinforced and resistance to be engendered simultaneously (Ahmad et al., 2021; Hassan et al., 2024).

This paper provides a deeper study of how educational materials and practices that shape teaching and learning operations can either reinforce or challenge ideological constructs (in particular, the ideologies of nationalism, capitalism, gender, race, and social class). In this study, an attempt is made to investigate the discursive structures in textbooks and curricular guidelines and to explore classroom interactions that either reiterate or challenge these ideological messages using a Critical Discourse Analysis framework.

Research Objectives

- An analysis of how textbooks and educational materials convey and re-enforce specific ideological constructions, particularly of national identity, gender, race and class, critically.
- The purpose of this study was to investigate how teaching practices either uphold or contradict the ideologies presented in textbooks and curricula.
- Through the assessment of the effect of language use in educational materials on the formation of power dynamics and social inequalities in society.

Research Questions

1. How do instructive materials support ideologies linked to nationalism, capitalism, gender, race, and class?
2. In what ways do instructive resources use language to perpetuate or subvert existing social norms and power structures?
3. How do instruction rehearses contribute to the reinforcement or challenge of ideological constructs within the educational context?

Problem Statement

This research addresses a problem in which educational materials and curricula play a crucial yet largely overlooked role in perpetuating particular ideological constructions that reflect and reinforce prevailing power relations in society. Educational materials, while seen as neutral bearers of knowledge, are drenched with ideological assumptions that, in turn, inculcate in students their beliefs, values, and understandings of the world. In this regard, the textbooks and the teaching

approaches might unwittingly have reinforced dominant ideologies like nationalism, capitalism, patriarchy and racial hierarchies, making it impossible for the students to analyze these constructs critically.

The issue here is the question of how educational materials, in their substance as well as their presentation, contribute to reproducing social inequalities. The further query considers whether these materials can be transformed into ideological resistance tools, serving as tools for alternative narratives, diversity, and critical thinking among students. This paper examines some of these issues through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis, demonstrating the role of education in not only reproducing but also subverting societal ideological constructs.

Literature Review

A literature review is a comprehensive survey of scholarly sources (like books, articles, etc.) on a specific topic. It provides an overview of existing knowledge, identifying key theories, methods, and areas of current research that require further attention. Essentially, it is a synthesis and critical analysis of what is already known about a subject, helping to establish a foundation for new research (Cheema et al., 2023; Soomro et al., 2023)

Ideology and Education: The Nexus Between Ideology and Education has been a central concern in critical educational studies. According to Van Dijk (2001), ideologies are mainly produced and reproduced in discourse. Education materials, therefore, constitute a crucial site where ideologies are transmitted. In this regard, textbooks serve as tools for shaping what is considered legitimate knowledge, and, thus, by extension, they reproduce the dominant ideologies of a given society.

On the other hand, Gramsci's (1971) theory of cultural hegemony explains that dominant groups use not only force but also the consent of the governed to maintain power. In the context of education, this amounts to our children being persuaded to swallow dominant (and, in some cases, misleading) perspectives as common sense or 'objective truth' without asking many questions. At the same time, This is built on by Althusser (1971), who identifies the school system as an (Ideological State Apparatus) ISA, where it reproduces capitalist relations of production through ideological indoctrination.

Textbooks as Ideological Tools: Textbooks are central to the curriculum and exert a powerful influence over students' knowledge construction. Apple (2000) emphasizes that textbooks are never neutral; they are constructed in specific socio-political contexts and often serve the interests of dominant groups. This is evident in the selective portrayal of historical events, the valorisation of capitalist economic models, and the marginalisation of minority voices.

Research has shown that gender bias is prevalent in many educational texts. Sunderland (2000) highlights the underrepresentation of women and stereotypical gender portrayals that reinforce traditional roles. Similarly, Sleeter and Grant (2009) argue that U.S. history textbooks tend to downplay or omit the experiences of marginalized racial and ethnic groups, presenting a sanitized version of history that prioritizes the perspectives of dominant groups.

LGBTQ+ identities or sexuality, more broadly, are deliberately left out of or treated negatively in school curricula (Clark & Blackburn, 2009) based on heteronormative norms. This suggests that textbooks greatly influence the socialization of students into normative gender and sexual identities.

Teaching Practices and Ideology: Pedagogical approaches play a critical role in either reinforcing or challenging textbook-based ideologies. Critical pedagogy, as highlighted by Freire (1970), stresses the importance of dialogue and reflection in empowering students to question and change

their realities. This approach to education does not allow teachers to deposit knowledge in passive students; instead, it engages them in critical thinking and resists the banking model of education. According to Giroux (1983), educators need to transform themselves into transformative intellectuals whose work challenges the hegemonic discourses that dominate the classroom. Of course, this complicates things since institutional constraints, such as standardised testing and prescriptive curricula, often discourage critical engagement and encourage memorisation instead. According to Ball (1994) and Luke (1995), educational policies and assessments shape teacher behaviour to reinforce dominant ideologies. Nevertheless, teachers may be aware of the ideological content of textbooks but feel disempowered from challenging them due to curriculum guidelines, assessment pressures, or fear of reprisal.

Bourdieu's (1991) theory of cultural capital illustrates how schools privilege the dominant classes' language, behaviour, and knowledge, thereby reinforcing existing patterns of class arrangements. The cultural capital of students from marginalised backgrounds often does not align with what schools value. Therefore, they tend to be at a disadvantage.

Skelton (1997) adds that the hidden curriculum (i.e., the underlying values and expectations transmitted through classroom practices) serves as another mechanism that intensifies the inequalities that prevail in society. It encompasses the norms of gender behaviour, authority, competition, and individualism.

Even so, educators such as Kincheloe (2004) and McLaren (2007) lead to the transformational potential of education. Critical theory is a method of challenging and responding to ideology, thereby problematizing dominant and largely unexamined discourses in education.

Methodology

Research methodology encompasses the systematic approach and specific techniques used in a research study to gather, analyze, and interpret information. It provides a framework for how a researcher will conduct their study, ensuring validity, reliability, and meaningful results (Maitlo, Abbasi & Ali, 2024; Sadaf et al., 2024). The current research employs a qualitative research design based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to investigate how teaching practices and educational materials either reproduce or problematize ideological constructs. Because CDA permits the analysis of linguistic and semiotic elements with respect, more broadly, to social and power structures (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2001), CDA is particularly suited to this purpose.

Data Sources: The research utilised a selected sample of textbooks for different educational levels, as well as contemporaneous curriculum, lesson plans, and transcriptions of classes, as its materials. A variety of countries were included, including those with concentrated educational control and others with more liberal and innovative approaches.

Data Collection Procedures Involved Gathering Books and teaching materials: The data collection is done from ministries of education, school storage, and online educator sites. Before recording any classroom interactions, the participants were informed and gave their consent for their identities to be kept secret. Interviews with teachers were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the methods they use and the challenges they face.

The analytical framework employed was Fairclough's (1995) model, which comprises three parts: analysing the words and grammar, exploring how texts reach readers, and assessing their context within society. Analysts used this model to study how language and discourse help establish, sustain, or question ideologies in schools.

Trustworthiness and Limitations: These are addressed through triangulation, or checking our findings against several sources, by analysing course material, observing classes, and interviewing

teachers. Participating educators were involved in checking the ideas discovered in the study. Even so, the study has limitations, as its results cannot be applied universally and are limited to specific regions. Further studies may gain insights by relying on statistical methods or by tracking people's opinions over time.

Analysis and Findings

Nationalism and Textbook Narratives: History and civics textbooks are found to emphasise that national identity is built by highlighting heroic events, military achievements, and essential figures in the nation's beginnings. Such texts usually overlook and disregard views regarding colonialism, Indigenous life or issues that have sparked debate in one's own country. Indigenous peoples' attempts to resist settlement are hardly mentioned in one paragraph. Meanwhile, the settlers' deeds fill several chapters in this book. Due to this selective attention, the belief in nationalism appears familiar, while opposition seems unusual.

Capitalism and Economic Discourse: Most of the economics textbooks studied in this book present capitalist systems as inherently superior. Briefly, alternative economic models, such as socialism, were mentioned, usually in negative or outdated terms. The language used promoted meritocracy, competition, and consumer choice, thereby implicitly promoting neoliberal values. For example, in Country B, a tertiary text described capitalism as a "natural evolution of economic freedom" that instead promoted a market-oriented viewpoint and lacked consideration of systemic inequality.

Gender and Representation: Analysis of language arts and science textbooks proves that women were consistently underrepresented and that traditional gender roles were relied on. Characters were male, including Scientists, leaders, and explorers; female characters were caregivers, assistants, or missing altogether. The classroom observations reveal that teachers rarely challenged these representations due to their own normative gender identities.

Race and Cultural Visibility: Many books in the past often either presented stereotypes or ignored the existence of racial and ethnic minorities. Little to no information about Africa's culture or new successes was found in Country C's geography textbook, which mainly focused on its conflicts and poverty. Interviewed teachers agreed these things were present but also said that the curriculum limited their options.

Resistance through Pedagogy: Despite being influenced by specific trends, some teachers chose to adopt critical teaching approaches. At School X, the literature teacher introduced them to postcolonial and feminist works to motivate students to examine what they read in the textbooks. Another example is how a social studies teacher at School Y organised debates on important historical topics to support critical thinking among the students. These techniques show that teaching methods can challenge dominant beliefs and ideas.

Researchers observed that hidden values and unwritten expectations often supported the dominant group. For instance, how the teacher positioned students in class, how rewards were chosen, and how discipline was implemented all reflected certain views about power, following rules, and accomplishing tasks. Such messages helped ensure that hierarchical structures became common in the school environment.

Discussion

This study finds yet another proof that educational materials and curricula serve as conduits for ideological transmission, perpetuating dominant narratives about nationalism, capitalism, gender and race. The textbooks analysed for all levels of schooling contained distorted and incomplete

representations of social realities, serving as contributions to the transfer of hegemonic values. These texts shape students' understanding of the world in ways that tend to advantage current forms of power through selection of content, framing and omission.

Related to this is that teaching practices significantly mediate the ideological content of educational materials. While some educators follow the curricular guidelines that continue the continuity of dominant ideologies, others practice critical pedagogy to challenge normative assumptions and empower students to think independently. Therefore, the teacher has a key role, not as a dispenser of content, but as an activist in the students' ideological formation.

Additionally, the study highlights the impact of the hidden curriculum in reinforcing social norms that support privileged groups. The hidden curriculum conveys values associated with disciplines, competitions, gender behaviour, and authority as it reinforces social order. However, it is helpful to understand these dynamics and create opportunities to interrupt them with more reflective and inclusive educational strategies.

Key to these findings is the need for systems to critically review and redesign curricula and educational materials to promote equity and ideological diversity. Teacher training programs that focus on critical pedagogy and attending to the hidden curricula can improve educators' ability to become agents of change.

Conclusion

This research highlights the dual role of educational materials and curricula as both tools of ideological reproduction and potential sources of resistance. With the help of Critical Discourse Analysis, the study reveals how textbooks and teaching practices may invoke and perpetuate dominant ideologies, including patriotism, capitalism, sexism, racism, and classism. At the same time, it demonstrates that educators can resist these norms through critical pedagogical approaches that enable students to challenge and reframe dominant narratives.

The curricula must be critically examined for ideological content, and the teaching practices must encourage critical inquiry and inclusion. Furthermore, such transformations should be supported by educational systems through the promotion of teacher autonomy, diversification of curricular content, and institutional equalisation of educational reforms.

Recommendation

However, future research could further this study by incorporating longitudinal data to investigate how ideological constructs in education change over time and students' responses to different pedagogies. To build an education system that both informs and liberates, recognising the ideological aspects of education is the first step.

References

- Abbas, T., Soomro, A. R., & Abbasi, I. A. (2025). The Impact of Shortened Words Usage on Communication Effectiveness among Pakistan's University Students. *Journal of Arts and Linguistics Studies*, 3(1), 49-66.
- Ahmad, A., Abbasi, I. A., Jatoi, Z. A., & Maitlo, S. K. (2025). Eminence of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) In Pakistani Educational Setting. *Policy Research Journal*, 3(1), 797–807. Retrieved from <https://policyresearchjournal.com/index.php/1/article/view/341>
- Ahmad, A., Khokhar, M. I., Shaheen, R., Ali, H., & Maitlo, S. K. (2021). Stylistic Analysis of the Amrita Pritam's Poem "I Call upon Waris Shah Today." "Ajj Aakhaan Waris Shah Nu. *Remittances Review*, 6(2), 192-205. <https://doi.org/10.33182/rr.v6i2.1585>

- Ahmad, A., Maitlo, S. K., Rasheed & Soomro, A. R., Ahmed, A. (2021). Impact of Phonological Instructions in the Enhancement of ESL Learners' Pronunciation. *Remittances Review*, 6(1), 94-109. <https://doi.org/10.33182/rr.v6i1.125>
- Anjum, Z. I., & Zafar, J. M. (2022). A Study on Decision Making of Head Teachers at School Level. *Journal of Development and Social Sciences*, 3(3), 821–832. [https://doi.org/10.47205/jdss.2022\(3-III\)77](https://doi.org/10.47205/jdss.2022(3-III)77)
- Apple, M. W. (2004). *Ideology and curriculum* (3rd ed.). RoutledgeFalmer.
- Ball, S. J. (2006). *Education policy and social class: The selected works of Stephen J. Ball*. Routledge.
- Cheema, M. I., Maitlo, S. K., Ahmad, A., & Jalbani, A. N. (2023). Analyzing the Portrayal of The Characters in Cathrine Mansfield's Literary Novel Bliss by Using Critical Discourse Analysis. *International Journal of Contemporary Issues in Social Sciences (IJCIS)*, 2(4), 225-231. <https://www.ijciss.org/Home/article/135>
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (2001). *Language and power* (2nd ed.). Longman.
- Giroux, H. A. (1983). Theory and resistance in education: A pedagogy for the opposition. *Bergin & Garvey*.
- Hall, S. (1996). The problem of ideology: Marxism without guarantees. In D. Morley & K.-H. Chen (Eds.), *Stuart Hall: Critical dialogues in cultural studies* (pp. 25–46). Routledge.
- Harb, M. (2017). Curriculum as a Discourse: Using Critical Discourse Analysis to Revive Curriculum Reconceptualists' Thought. *Journal of Curriculum and Teaching*, 6(1), 58-64.
- Hassan, S., Zafar, J. M., & Ullah, N. (2024). Effect of Using Problem Solving Technique of 5Es Instructional Model on Student' Learning at Secondary Level: An Analysis. *Pakistan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 12(2), 2279-2289. <https://doi.org/10.52131/pjhss.2024.v12i2.2409>
- Ilef, T. I. A. R. Investigating the Impact of Integrating Critical Discourse Analysis Instruction on Improving English as a Foreign Language Learners' Critical Reading of Historical Documents: The Case Study of Third-Year Students at Biskra University.
- Janks, H. (2010). *Literacy and power*. Routledge.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (1999). Critical classroom discourse analysis. *TESOL quarterly*, 33(3), 453-484. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.2307/3587674>
- Luke, A. (1995). Text and discourse in education: An introduction to critical discourse analysis. *Review of Research in Education*, 21, 3–48. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1167278>
- Maitlo, S. K., Abbasi, F. N., & Ali, H. (2024). Exploring the Features of Mobile Language Learning Apps (MELLAs) for Improving English Language Skills in College Level Students. *Journal of Asian Development Studies*, 13(2), 694-705.
- Maitlo, S. K., Abbasi, I. A., Jatoi, Z. A., & Ahmad, A. (2025). Quantifying Awareness and Attitudes Towards Forensic Linguistics: A Survey Of Young Legal Professionals. *Policy Journal of Social Science Review*, 3(2), 12-22.
- Maitlo, S. K., Kalhor, I. A., Soomro, A. R., & Ahmad, A. (2024). Exploring the Negative Impact of Short Message Service (SMS) Texting on Academic Writing Skills at University Level. *Policy Research Journal*, 2(4), 2327-2333.
- Naz, S., Zafar, J. M., & Ullah, N. (2024). The Role of Accessibility and Inclusivity in Instructional Materials in Enhancing Learning for Higher Education Students. *Annals of Human and Social Sciences*, 5(4), 366–378. [https://doi.org/10.35484/ahss.2024\(5-IV\)34](https://doi.org/10.35484/ahss.2024(5-IV)34)
- Pennycook, A. (2001). *Critical applied linguistics: A critical introduction*. Routledge.

- Rasheed, H. R., Zafar, J. M., & Munawar, N. (2024). Emerging Trends of Assessment and Evaluation toward Students' Learning in Early Childhood Education: An Analysis. *Remittances Review*, 9(3), 442-456
- Richardson, J. E. (2007). *Analysing newspapers: An approach from critical discourse analysis*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rogers, R., & Schaenen, I. (2014). Critical discourse analysis in literacy education: A review of the literature. *Reading research quarterly*, 49(1), 121-143. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.61>
- Rymes, B. (2015). *Classroom discourse analysis: A tool for critical reflection*. Routledge.
- Sadaf, H., Rasheed, B., & Ahmad, A. (2024). Exploring the Role of YouTube Lectures, Vlogs, and Videos in Enhancing ESL Learning. *Journal of Asian Development Studies*, 13(2), 657-670. <https://doi.org/10.62345/jads.2024.13.2.52>
- Sleeter, C. E., & Grant, C. A. (2007). *Making choices for multicultural education: Five approaches to race, class, and gender* (6th ed.). Wiley.
- Soomro, A. R., Tumrani, G. A., Bango, Z. A., & Maitlo, S. K. (2023). The Involvement of Artificial Intelligence (Ai) in Enhancing Communication Skills of English Language Learners. *International Journal of Contemporary Issues in Social Sciences*, 2(4), 937-944.