

Ideologies in College EFL Textbooks—A Content Analysis Based on Critical Pedagogy*

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Abstract—The goal of college English teaching is not only to convey language knowledge and improve students' language skills, but also closely related to the current political, economic, social and cultural realities. Its textbooks are largely a manifestation of the country's dominant ideology and also the way the ruling class realizes social control. This study, based on Professor Apple's theory of critical pedagogy, attempts to provide an insight into the most commonly used college EFL textbooks in Mainland China and show what and how ideologies and values are presented on the pages. Literature and content analysis methods are employed. The results reveal that the two sets of textbooks are imbued with the ideological ideas which center on the theme of "harmony", highlighting the peaceful coexistence between the country, society and individuals. Dominant ideologies have been implemented as the core spirit of textbook compilation, and the themes such as multiplicity, equality, tolerance and so on frequently appear in explicit and implicit ways. The implicitness of political ideologies, the prominence of economic development, the dominance of social issues, the awakening of individual consciousness, etc. are expressed and transmitted through EFL textbooks.

Index Terms—dominant ideology, value orientation, college EFL textbooks, Michael W. Apple

I. INTRODUCTION

"The Guide to College English Teaching" issued by the Ministry of Education in 2017 pointed out that "College English courses are part of humanities education in colleges and universities, and its important task is to carry out cross-cultural education. In addition to scientific and technological or professional information, students should also learn about foreign societies and cultures, enhance their understanding of different cultures, raise their awareness of the similarities and differences between Chinese and foreign cultures, and develop intercultural communication skills...The core values of socialism should be integrated into college English teaching...to achieve an organic unity of instrumentality and humanity." The Guide highlights the two-way nature of cross-cultural communication, that is, not only to understand the world's outstanding cultures, cutting-edge scientific and technological achievements and management experience, but also to tell Chinese stories and pass on Chinese voice well (Li & Zhang 2018). Therefore, the goal of college English teaching is not only to convey language knowledge and improve students' language skills, but also closely related to the current political, economic, social and cultural realities.

Textbooks, as one of the essential parts of teaching, are designed, edited and structured based on the national education policy, combining the characteristics of the subject and the teaching objectives. Critical sociology of education theory holds that the "legitimate knowledge" in the textbook is not arbitrary or random, nor is it neutral or value-free. It is the result of the selection and organization of a wide range of possible social knowledge based on a series of principles and values. It is the embodiment of the ideology of the ruling class and the realization of social control. Therefore, only the content that conforms to the dominant ideology can legally enter into the textbook and then become the knowledge that students learn and master.

This study, based on Professor Apple's theory of critical pedagogy, attempts to provide an insight into the most commonly used college EFL textbooks in Mainland China and show what and how ideologies and values are presented on the pages. Literature and content analysis methods are employed.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A. *Critical Pedagogy and Apple's Theory of Cultural Politics and Education*

Critical pedagogy emerged in the 1970s and continued Marxist pursuit of social rationality and justice. Its scholars believe that education is not neutral and objective, but is full of conflicts of interest, and teaching is an inherently political act. The purpose of critical pedagogy is to reveal the interest conflicts behind specific educational practice. One of the important purposes of school education is to guide the development of people's thinking patterns and shape their ideological values. Therefore, what types of knowledge and whose knowledge are given priority in school defines the way and method to control the education process.

* This research was supported by the fund of "Teaching Research and Reform" of Beijing International Studies University" ([2020], No. 111010013121)

American educational sociologist Michael W. Apple is one of the most famous representatives of the neo-Marxist critical sociology of education. His research focuses on the relationship between knowledge and power and the political attributes and essence of curriculum, teaching and education. Curriculum is not only a technical, educational, and epistemological issue, but also a product of the interactions between class, economic power, and cultural hegemony; it is the result of the explicit or implicit conflict of values, so it is essentially a political and ideological issue and a matter of value (Huang 2003). The ruling class screens knowledge and selects the part that fits its own ideology as the course content in order to gain social control. In other words, as the legitimate knowledge, textbooks achieve the purpose of social control by selecting and organizing existing culture and knowledge. In the book "Ideology and Curriculum", Apple (2004) argues that historical and contemporary perspectives should be used to examine how specific, normative, and legitimate cultures, values, and concepts become part of the curriculum, thereby revealing the "hidden curriculum", namely the essence of "social control". He believes that social control is still the goal of education, but it is no longer presented in the explicit way, and is hidden under the social structure, becoming the hidden curriculum. Curriculum and teaching serve to play an indoctrination role, in which ideology plays an important part and conveys the underlying meaning of education.

Apple (2000) raised the question of "Whose knowledge is of most worth?" on the basis of Spencer's "What Knowledge is of most worth?". This has shifted the focus of educational research from knowledge choice to value choice, that is, the relationship between ideology and education. Power determines official knowledge, and official knowledge reacts to power, which shows a two-way interactive relationship (Zhang et al. 2016). In order to make the people accept the given ideology, the ruling class often packages ideology in the form of "objective knowledge" and "universal morality", and then delivers it through social communication and educational institutions (Xu 2014). Educational institutions play a role in transmitting and distributing ideologies, values and knowledge, and also help to produce certain types of knowledge to coordinate and maintain socio-economic, political and cultural relations. The formal or implicit knowledge in schools all involve the interrelationship between power, economic resources, and social control. School knowledge reflects "cultural capital" and "political cultural power". Curriculum content and its design are controlled by some hidden values or ideologies, and people can only accept prescribed knowledge in prescribed ways. Therefore, only under the guidance of relevant theories, through systematic investigation and in-depth analysis of the historical, political, cultural and economic reasons behind the phenomenon, especially the changes in the ideological functions of school education and curriculum, can these hidden factors be discovered.

B. Dominant Ideology in Mainland China

Ideology refers to the views, beliefs, or values held by a person, group, or class. Ideology is not only epistemic, but also political, social, ethical, and value-laden (Honderich 1995). Marxists believe that the economic base of production determines the political superstructure of a society, and superstructure denotes the dominant ideology. Ideology includes interpretations of history, beliefs about human nature and society, and visions for the future. Its themes cover nation, class, race, gender, religion, relation to the land and environment, etc. This study takes modern China as the background and college EFL textbooks as the research object. Therefore, the ideology here refers to the political, social and value-laden thoughts, ideas and positions held by a group or class, which can represent the political system, the economic development and cultural changes in China today.

Dr. Wu (2013) argued in his paper "Research on the Change of Ideology in Contemporary China" that the changing process of ideologies in China has basically gone through three stages, from "the revolutionary ideology" to "the constructive ideology" and then to "the harmonious ideology"; the traditional ideology in China, under the new historical environment, has continuously broken away rigid ideas and absorbed advanced concepts and ideas from the West, gradually forming a cohesive socialist ideology with the theme of "harmonious development".

Yang et al. (2015) also mentioned in "Research on Contemporary Chinese Ideology" that the construction of modern Chinese ideology was first influenced by the former Soviet Union during the early days after the founding of the People's Republic of China, and was later impacted by Western capitalist countries during the period of reform and opening up; after entering a new stage of development, the Communist Party of China, in accordance with the profound changes in economy and politics, has sought to find the root of Chinese philosophy from traditional culture and thus formed its ideology based on both Marxism and Confucianism.

The "Opinions on Cultivating and Practicing Socialist Core Values" clearly states that to realize China's dream—the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, we must cultivate and practice the core values of socialism. The so-called "value orientation" refers to the organized, internalized, and stable ideas that affect the judgment and behavior choices made by individuals or groups. The China's dream and the core values of socialism are the mainstream ideologies of modern China under the leadership of the Communist Party. "Prosperity, Democracy, Civilization, Harmony; Freedom, Equality, Justice, Rule of Law; Patriotism, Dedication, Honesty, and Friendliness" comprehensively clarifies the value goals, orientation and norms of China as a nation.

It can be concluded that the dominant ideology of contemporary China is formed on the basis of Marxism and China's historical traditions and realities with distinct Chinese characteristics, emphasizing the concept of nation and collective consciousness, aimed at building a harmonious and prosperous socialist country. The dominant values are the manifestation of the will of the ruling class, which inevitably affect all aspects of the country and society. How to influence and cultivate the ideology and values of citizens, especially of young students, is of strategic significance to

the stability of the country. At the "National College Ideological and Political Work Conference" in 2016, President Xi Jinping proposed: "We must carry out ideological and political work throughout the entire process of education and teaching... we must unremittingly cultivate and promote the core values of socialism, and guide the majority of teachers and students to firmly believe in, spread and practice the core values of socialism..." Therefore, it is very necessary to further explore the forms and functions of ideology in the field of higher education.

C. Studies of College EFL Textbooks in China

As the carrier of teaching content, college EFL textbooks are the basic tools for teachers to organize teaching and the main source for students to obtain relevant knowledge. Therefore, it is essential to make comprehensive and in-depth analysis and research on textbooks. Domestically, from 2000 to 2019, the results of paper retrieval on CNKI with the keyword "College EFL textbooks" show as follows: First, the overall number of studies on college EFL textbooks is relatively small. There are a total of 134 related papers published in foreign language journals and the number of papers each year varies from several to dozens. Secondly, the studies, from the perspective of linguistics and pedagogy, are mainly teaching-oriented and focus on textbooks as tools (Li 2007), such as the ideas and principles of compilation, writing methods and specific problems, analysis and evaluation of textbooks, evaluation standards for textbooks, teachers and teaching methods, learners and textbooks, corpus applications, etc. Thirdly, some studies have begun to involve cultural background, cultural content, and cultural value in the textbooks, recognizing the importance of cultural factors and the absence of Chinese culture, but most of them still remain at the surface level, lacking the in-depth discussion of hidden influencing factors such as politics, economy, power, control, etc. However, Fu (2004) pointed out that textbooks are the main source for students to inherit value and meaning; it is difficult to reveal the real operating mechanism behind college EFL textbooks merely through technical analysis and research.

Dr. Shi (2013), based on the theory of critical pedagogy, has comprehensively explored the value orientation presented by the selection of College English textbook content since the founding of new China. The value orientation and the structural changes of each set of textbooks in China are controlled by the dominant ideology in each period. This research approaches language and teaching from the perspectives of history, politics, and power distribution. This has given us a deeper understanding of the social and political attributes of language teaching, which provides a good reference for future research.

III. THEME CATEGORY AND FREQUENCY STATISTICS

After decades of development, College English education has achieved great progress and occupies an important position in the higher education system in China. At the same time, college EFL textbooks have undergone massive changes and flourished with economic development, political reform and social opening-up. From 1949 to the post-Cultural Revolution period, from the 1980s and 1990s to the 21st century with "internationalization" as its main trend, each generation of college EFL textbooks are fully loaded with the value of the times, and the content not only reflects the continuity of history, but also highlights the characteristics of each period.

Content analysis and frequency statistics are effective ways to analyze the value orientation of textbooks, and thus to reveal the ideologies in course content and the characteristics of social control. Wu (1999) developed a "value orientation category scale" in his study of junior middle school textbooks of Chinese language, in which there are two major categories, "morality" and "politics", and 36 sub-categories. The current study has modified the scale, and the revised version includes eight major categories, that is, nation and politics, economy and business, moral and ethics, science and technology, social life, education and culture, personal development, and nature and environment. At the national, social, and individual levels, the author tries to analyze the dominant ideology and value orientation in college EFL textbooks through frequency counts of the selected topics. It is hoped that this study, with focus on the internal relationship and logic of politics and economy, society and culture, power distribution, and official knowledge in textbooks, will provide some inspiration for the construction of the college English education system with Chinese characteristics.

At present, there are dozens of college EFL textbooks being used in colleges and universities in mainland China. This study will select two sets of the most widely used textbooks published by the most authoritative publishing houses in the field of foreign language education. "Reading and Writing Course" in "New Horizon College English Series" (Third Edition) was published by "Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press" in 2015 (hereinafter referred to as "NH"), and "Comprehensive Course" in "New Target College English Series" by "Foreign Language Education Press" in 2016 (hereinafter referred to as "NT"). The two sets of textbooks each have 4 volumes, and each volume contains eight units (eight topics), so there are 64 topics in total. The frequency counts and proportion data collected by the above eight categories are shown in the table below.

FREQUENCY AND PROPORTION OF TOPICS IN NH AND NT

Topics	NH		NT	
	frequency	proportion	frequency	proportion
Nation & politics	1	3%	2	6%
Economy & business	3	9%	1	3%
Moral & ethics	7	22%	1	3%
science & technology	1	3%	5	16%
Social life	13	41%	4	12%
Education & culture	3	9%	9	28%
Personal development	2	6%	5	16%
Nature & environment	2	6%	5	16%
Total	32	100%	32	100%

There is a big difference in the choice of topics between the two sets of textbooks. In NH, the topics related to social life take a big proportion, and the content is rich and diverse, involving college life, family life, work and study, love, attitude to life, and travel. At the same time, NH also puts more emphasis on the theme of moral and ethics, of which seven units are related, such as gender equality, human rights and animal rights, friendship, honesty, the essence of success, etc. In addition, there are three units about economy & business and education & culture respectively. Under the theme of economy & business, the focus is on financial management and self-employment in the perspective of students, while education & culture mainly emphasizes the importance of learning at college, language learning and cross-cultural communication. Moreover, there are two units related to personal skills development, such as how to achieve success and overcome fear; the other two are concerned with nature & environment, mainly about how to rationally protect the environment and cope with energy crisis. Finally, there is only one unit on each of the two topics, nation & politics and science & technology. Nation & politics is about war and peace, while science and technology is related to digital campus. Compared with NH, NT is relatively balanced in the choice of themes. The topics most involved are education and culture, which include university life, studying abroad, higher education, literature, reading, music, sports, art, etc., and equal attention is paid to Chinese culture and traditions. Secondly, the three topics—science & technology, skill development and nature & environment—each have 5 units. The science & technology category includes new technologies, smart devices, space technology, medical technology, etc.; the skill development category focuses on creativity, leadership, self-improvement, image building, how to overcome depression, etc.; the theme of nature & environment covers nature, animals, renewable energy, green revolution, etc. There are another 4 units about social life, such as growth, love, friendship, and body language.

IV. CONTENT ANALYSIS

Based on the content analysis of the texts, it can be concluded that the two sets of textbooks have the following characteristics in value orientation:

A. The number of topics concerning nation & politics is relatively small, and the political values tend appear in a more implicit way, no longer overtly promoted or criticized. In Unit 6 Book 3 NH, Text A tells about the cruelty of the war, and Text B depicts the love and friendship between people in the war with touching strokes and allows readers to put themselves in a real context, reflect on war and cherish peace. Unit 8 Book 2 NT discusses the theme “globalization” from a dialectical point of view, and puts the concept of nation in a larger scope of the world. Text A, starting with people’s worries about immigration, recognizes and emphasizes the benefits of immigration to the US economy, culture, production, population structure and other aspects, prompting the public to reexamine the issue; Text B also begins with people’s suspicion of globalization and the argument that globalization is dead, and with very detailed data attempts to propose that globalization today develops in a new way and emerging nations are playing an increasingly important role in world trade, politics, finance, and culture. This provides the learners a new perspective to know better about globalization and the relationship between developed and under-developed countries. These selected texts break through the stereotypes, abandon the preaching tone, and trigger learners to think and judge from multiple angles and have a more comprehensive understanding of the concept of nation, politics and the development trend in the new era.

B. The topics on economy and business have started to appear in textbooks, and although the number is not large, it still reflects the importance of economic development and the popularity of commercialism. The aim is to cultivate students' economic awareness and innovative spirit. Relevant texts do not care about economic principles or market rules, but pay more attention to how to deal with personal finance and respond to crises in a real social and economic environment, and focus more on training students' financial quotient. There are three units in NH covering this topic, such as Text A, Unit 5 Book 2, "Spend or save: the students' dilemma", which is new and very practical for Chinese university students who have had little exposure to personal finance since childhood. It is to guide the learners to be able to identify real and effective information in a complex situation, do rational thinking, and become a smart and well-trained consumer. Text A, Unit 7 Book 3, from the perspective of an unemployed person, tells about the serious impact of the economic crisis on and painful experiences of individuals, while Text B systematically introduces the causes and conditions of economic bubbles, which allows readers to feel and think about the economic activities and problems at both levels of sense and sensibility. Moreover, Text A, Unit 2 Book 2 of NT compares the differences between A

students and B students, and points out some of the characteristics of B students who can become entrepreneurs; Text B introduces a 13-year-old young entrepreneur, including his inspiration, goals, parental support, his own efforts, etc. These two texts show readers the basic framework of entrepreneurship and the necessary qualities of entrepreneurs, provide inspiration and information, and try to help students to carry out innovative activities in accordance with their actual conditions.

C. In terms of morals and ethics, there are 8 units related, which account for a large proportion, including success, friendship, gender, human rights, etiquette, etc. This shows that moral education remains as one of the main functions of college English teaching and students are supposed to form positive and upward ethical values. Books 1 and 2 of NH cover most of the moral issues, from people's attitudes towards success to friendship, from honesty to women's rights and gender equality, all of which reflect the constant pursuit of justice, fairness, harmony, dialogue and other values. Gender is one of the most important issues in today's world, and gender equality is the moral requirement of modern civilization and an important indicator for a harmonious society. Two units of NH are about this topic and attempt to explain the values of equality, coexistence, and harmony. Text A, Unit 7 Book 2, discusses the changes in women's positions in the workplace and the problems and confusions they face, while Text B describes the development trend of women from family to workplace and the change of their status. Besides the focus on women, Text A, Unit 6 Book 4, from a male's perspective, tells about the hard work and helplessness of men, especially men at the bottom of society, expressing a strong desire to pursue equality beyond gender and class. These texts encourage both male and female students to feel empathy for each other and think more and deeper about gender roles in society and family. Then, Unit 8, Book 2 NH, discusses human rights and animal rights, which is a new and controversial topic especially when animal rights movement is now gaining momentum. The author of Text A is a doctor who emphasizes the importance and necessity of animal experiments and denounces the destructive impact of extreme animal rights movements on medical research. However, Text B, in a dog's monologue, tells its attachment, expectation and loyalty to the owner, and also expresses great confusion and sorrow about the owner's abandonment. These two texts discuss human rights and animal rights from opposing perspectives, allowing learners to reexamine the relationship between humans and animals, and the role and responsibility of humans in nature.

D. Social life is absolutely the most valued topic in college EFL textbooks, highlighting the importance of social development, interpersonal relationship, and family life in modern Chinese ideology, and showing a more practical, diverse, and inclusive trend. The texts create a real life situation for learners, most of which discuss the problems and possible solutions that may occur in learning and living, attaching importance to the experiences and feelings of students. This affects and guides their thoughts and actions while making them feel familiar and friendly. For example, Text A in Unit 1 of the first book of NT tells from a student's perspective his experience of studying and growing up at Harvard University, including learning pressure, teamwork, community activities, and multiculturalism, and especially the busy and vibrant campus life in Harvard Yard where the dormitory is located. The whole text is full of rejoicing, positive, upward and satisfying emotions, and it depicts a real and beautiful picture of college life for learners. Besides, there are two units in NH related to family life. Text A, Unit 2 Book 1, tells a story between mother and daughter who have both conflicts and love. While, Text A Unit 8 Book 3 compares the differences in parenting between Chinese and Western parents, and gives family relations social and cultural value, which intends to help students develop a good parent-child relationship and a right view of parenting. In addition, there are two units in NH and one unit in NT about love and romance, which is very important to college students. Many of them are exposed to love for the first time at this stage of life and they often encounter problems and troubles. The texts selected help them have a better understanding about what love is and how to handle relationships. Also, the textbook introduces some new concepts with unique characteristics of the times. For example, Unit 6 "Less is more", Book 2 NH, begins with the well-known story of Xiang Yu burning the boat and discusses difficult choices that everyone may come across in life. This text develops step by step in a very rational way, guides students to realize the necessity of "fewer options", and conveys the idea of "minimalism".

E. The cultural value of the text content has been strengthened, with particular emphasis on the cultivation of learners' cross-cultural awareness and self-confidence in Chinese culture. In Text A, Unit 1 Book 2 NT, the American author discusses what Americans can learn from Confucianism. He compares Confucianism with other religions, highlights the value of Confucianism as a philosophy of life, and promotes the basic values of harmony, friendliness, diligence, and respect for teachers in Confucian culture. This provides Chinese students with a new perspective; that is, English learning not only familiarizes themselves with the outside world, but also allows them to review their own culture and social conventions and thus raise their cultural awareness. This gives students more input of Chinese culture, helps students adopt a more dialectical and objective attitude towards it, and also enables them to tell Chinese stories in English.

F. The selection of texts keeps pace with the times, and popular topics such as technology, energy, and environmental protection have received attention. Since Deng Xiaoping proposed that "Science and technology are primary productive forces", technology has always occupied an important position in the Chinese ideology. It has made great contributions to China's economic development and the rise of its international status. Therefore, the cultivation of college students' scientific thinking and attitude is the proper meaning of university education. In addition, college EFL textbooks also pay attention to the personal life and mental health of college students, including teaching students how to cope with

fear and depression, how to cultivate creativity and success, how to develop leadership skills and build a good image, etc. These texts help to guide students to better deal with various problems they encounter or may encounter in their lives and careers, and to achieve a state of both internal and external harmony.

In all, the two sets of college EFL textbooks are closely centered on the theme "harmony", highlighting the values of harmonious coexistence and development of the country, society and individuals. Ideology is implemented as the core spirit of textbook compilation. Multiplicity, equality, inclusiveness and other themes appear frequently in an explicit or implicit manner. The implicitness of political ideologies, the prominence of economic development, the dominance of social issues, the awakening of individual consciousness, etc. are all expressed and transmitted through EFL textbooks. The key topics of concern in today's world, such as the relationship between the country and the world, interpersonal relationships, human and nature, moral awareness, personal growth, economy and technology, are reflected in the textbooks. It is revealed that the choice of textbook content, as a product of power struggle, is controlled by dominant ideologies.

V. CONCLUSION

College English teaching in China involves many learners and has a wide range of influence. In addition to instrumental functions, college English also bears important ideological or value functions, that is, to deliver specific values to learners and shape students' moral outlook to achieve social control. Students learn English through textbooks, receive the culture and thinking mold behind them, and form their own thoughts and expressions through perception, analysis, and judgment. This is also the process of the formation, institutionalization, and consolidation of dominant ideologies and social control.

The college EFL textbooks are produced in conformity to the historical background and dominant ideology. As China enters the modern society, economic development, scientific and technological progress, cultural diversity, and social harmony have become the main themes, and the changing trends in the political, economic, cultural, moral, and ideological fields that constitute this grand picture are all reflected in education. The selection of teaching content and compilation of textbooks show the combination of Marxism and realities in China, the fusion of Western ideology and traditional Chinese culture, the integration of internationalization and localization, the parallelism of collectivism and personal development, etc. Chinese President Xi repeatedly emphasized the important role of educational institutions in ideological propaganda and political education. However, the current college EFL textbooks seem to deviate slightly from that, failing to strictly follow the requirement of the government, which is mainly due to the time lag between political development and textbook planning and writing. Also, the original materials and resources in English fit for political propaganda is rare. Therefore, it is essential to collect, organize and write the relevant materials in a timely manner. This is the mission and responsibility of college EFL textbook researchers and teachers, and also the focus of follow-up studies.

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