Application of Sociocultural Identity Theory to Education in EFL Textbooks Development

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Abstract—The present study aims to use Sociocultural Identity theory to education with reference to teaching and learning English as a second language in the EFL textbooks development. The findings of this study revealed that there is a need to use the cultural sensitive and context-appropriate materials in the EFL textbooks. It is urgent to teaching materials correspond with the learners' attitudes, religious opinions and preferences. Because, textbook is not only a commercially accessible reference book which is utilized in a language teaching program, it additionally serves as a significant way to convey political and ideological orientation. Moreover, textbooks decide not only content teaching and learning environments, but also what dominant or valid culture is passed on. Then one goal of textbooks is to serve as a means of facilitating the integration of content about ethnically, racially and culturally diverse individuals. To this end, textbook writers should avoid cultural inequalities and prejudices that learners can absorb in their learning, and have a balanced representation of social / cultural components such as ethnicity, gender, and race.

Index Terms—sociocultural identity theory, EFL textbook, education, teaching and learning ESL

I. INTRODUCTION

According to Roohani and Molana (2013), English as an international language has been widely used worldwide not only by native speakers but also non-native English speakers for transactional and interactional. Furthermore, because of progress in many aspects of science and technology, living in today's world needs all the necessities of living in a global village; therefore, as the very word ' universal ' implies, English no longer belongs to a particular people. (Brutt-Griffler, 2002; House, 2003; Nault, 2006, as cited in Roohani and Molana, 2013). In this period of globalization, English has become the language of technology and diplomacy, as well as a platform for information access. (Lee, 2009, as cited in Roohani and Molana , 2013). The world's complexities also call for more attention to be paid to English as well as factors other than language itself, which can improve English language teaching (ELT) courses and help English as a foreign language (EFL) learners achieve their goals. One of the factors worth considering is culture, which represents the way a language speaker thinks and lives (Roohani & Molana, 2013).

One of the well-known features of modern approaches to foreign language learning is the belief that successful acquisition of foreign languages (FLA) is followed by acquisition of foreign culture (FCA) (e.g. Hamers & Blanc, 1989,as cited in Poorebrahim,2012). It seems obvious that the learning of communication skills by a learner will entail more than controlling the target language's grammatical structures, and mastering its phonology. The learner often needs to acquire new cultural knowledge and a collection of culture–specific linguistic behavioral constraints. While cultural context in foreign language instruction is important (Poorebrahim, 2012).

Language and culture are inextricably connected and culture shapes an integral part of English language teaching (ELT) (Risager, 2007, as cited in Mofidi,2019). In addition, based on Mofidi (2019), in the English as a foreign language EFL contexts, textbooks provide a rich source of input for language learners and shape the heart of ELT programs (see Sheldon, 1988, as cited in Mofidi, 2019). Moreover, language textbooks should not be considered as a neutral repertoire of lexico grammatical patterns per se. Alternatively, as these scholars note, textbooks on language teaching include a variety of genres that encourage particular ideological and cultural choices within the classroom context (Shardakova & Pavlenko,2004, as cited in Mofidi,2019). Consequently, the more a textbook includes the sociocultural dimension, the better it would foster cultural communicative competence in language learners (Shardakova &Pavlenko, 2004, as cited in Mofidi, 2019). This trend encouraged some scholars to reconsider the role of issues related to culture that are represented in EFL textbooks. Language textbooks actually offer an authentic manifestation of both native and non-native cultures (Feng &Byram, 2002, as cited in Mofidi, 2019).

II. SOCIOCULTURAL THEORIES

Sociocultural theories characterize learning and development as being embedded in social events and as learners interacting in the collaborative environment with other people, objects and events (Vygotsky, 1978, as cited in Wang et

al., 2011). Furthermore, sociocultural theories describe human cognition as developed by engaging in social activities, as an individual interacts with other people, objects, and events. It is therefore impossible to separate human cognitive development from the social, cultural and historical contexts from which such development arises (Johnson, 2009, as cited in Wang et al., 2011). Lastly, this social and cultural commitment is mediated by cultural instruments such as language, objects, signs and symbols which make unique human forms of higher-level thinking (Wang et al., 2011).

III. IDENTITY

By engaging in social practice, people learn the social context's norms, roles and culture and help them to establish their identity by intervening in daily activities in social situations with intrinsic self-meanings. (Lave & Wenger 1991; Wenger, 1998, as cited in Park, 2015). Identity is also rebuilt and established as the social context in which a person involved changes. So identity isn't static (Foucault, 1979; Hall, 1990 as cited in Park, 2015). But Park (2015) Maintain that under the influence of social contexts which involve individuals on a daily basis continually evolving and changing. Because identity is constantly changing and evolving according to the impact of everyday social contexts, recognizing and expressing identity characteristics needs consideration of how identity is built in socio-cultural circumstances. (Park, 2015).

According to Park (2015), the sociocultural viewpoint helps us to understand the creation of identities in social practices. In particular, it provides an opportunity to explore an effective theoretical framework for explaining how people learn identity from the concept of human behavior in activities. In a situation where many approaches to adult learning studies focus primarily on the characteristics of individuals, cognitive change and growth or formalized educational settings, the socio-cultural viewpoint gives new insight and theoretical context for learning identity as a socio-cultural phenomenon arising from complex and continuous interactions between individuals and societies in everyday contexts (Park,2015). Finally, Rashidi and Zolfaghari (2018) claimed that the existential view refers to identity as a human self that interacts continuously with language's evolving meanings. Because of these accounts, identity is composed of three stages. The first level, associated with socio-cultural discourse analysts like Fairclough and Halliday, is called "ideological identity." The second level is ' generic identity ' endorsing the grammatical language development accounts of Chomsky and Descartes, and the third level is Heidegger and Derrida's ' existential identity ' (Evans, 2015, p. 16 , as cited in Rashidi & Zolfaghari ,2018).

IV. TEXTBOOKS

Gunantar (2017) indicated that textbooks are essential components of learning for students and teachers alike. Textbooks are considered the fundamental foundations of courses in the teaching and learning cycle. Textbooks may not contain all the necessary aspects in the process of teaching and learning but their existence as teaching sources is still paramount. They acted as effective instruments for teaching and learning, and as a reflection of a person or nation's values and ideas (Hinkel, 2005, as cited in Gunantar, 2017). Systematic and detailed textbooks may help support the dimension of culture. Textbooks should be crafted with a detailed explanation because of the goal of promoting cultural value in EFL education. The value of textbooks is varied, but the cycle of teaching and learning in second language countries is generally facilitated (Gunantar, 2017). Cortazzi and Jin (1999, in McKay, 2002) said that the textbooks "can be an instructor, a map, a guide, a mentor, an authority, a de-skiller and an ideology" as part of teaching and learning. Consequently, they can serve as major sources of cultural knowledge, as well as linguistic and thematic materials depicting the ideology of the ESL countries. Textbooks in every part of the world possess various cultural orientations; whether it is based on cultural source, target culture, or international target (Gunantar, 2017).

V. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

A. Sociocultural Theories

In the 1920s and 1930s Vygotsky and his colleagues in Russia initially systematized and applied socio-cultural theories (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996, as cited in Wang et al., 2011). According to Wang et al., (2011) Lev Vygotsky was a Russian psychologist and educator who died in 1934 in his late thirties of tuberculosis "without the world's comprehension or acceptance of the sociocultural theory which he had developed almost by himself" (Whiteside, 2007: 48 as cited in Wang et al.,2011). Other theoreticians such as Lave (1988; 1991), Lemke (1990), Rogoff (1990; 2003) and Wertsch (1991) have further developed sociocultural theories based on (Wang et al., 2011).

B. Culture

In the 1990s, the link between language and culture in Applied Linguistics arose as an issue as developments in identity politics and second language (L2) acquisition work burgeoned (Kramsch & Hua, 2016, as cited in Mofidi, 2019). Due to improvements in multilingualism and human communication, such a link became more complicated (Kramsch & Hua, 2016, as cited in Mofidi, 2019). According to Merriam-Webster's (2004) dictionary, the word culture originated in the 15th century. It originates from the Latin word' cultura' or' cultus' which means the land cultivation. As quoted in the Oxford Word History Dictionary (2002), the meaning of culture in the 16th century was extended to "cultivation of the mind, faculties or manners" (p. 287). In addition, Kramsch (1995), defines culture as "the attitude

and beliefs, ways of thinking, behaving, and remembering shared by members of that community." (p. 84). In sum, As Mofidi (2019) stated several researchers have so far tried to define the idea of culture, but there is still little agreement in the literature on its precise meaning and interpretation. Culture has been such an abstract definition that researchers show their "apprehension" of using this language either by putting it in quotation marks or by using "lexical avoidance behavior" that places words like "discourse," "praxis", or "habitus" (Heath ,1997, p. 113, as cited in Atkinson & Sohn, 2013, p. 1).

C. Identity

Erikson (1968, as cited in Park, 2015) focused on the idea that personality is profoundly influenced by historical circumstances. The central issues in finding a self-concept are a sense of continuity and sameness over time, including "Who am I?" And "Why am I in the present-day society?" (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007, as cited in Park, 2015). In social life, he focused on the mechanisms for achieving identity and connection between individuals and their social environment. In his notion a person is constructed in a social context as a social and historical object and, in this regard, the identity of individuals is not a given "item" or a "product." He emphasized the process of becoming and offers a more complete account of how individual functions develop from sociocultural processes, considering the transforming aspect of sociocultural processes and how these shape individual choices. (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995, as cited in Park, 2015). Moreover, Mead's notion of identity (1934, as cited in Park, 2015) is grounded in social coordination of activity through symbolic communication and negotiated through daily social interaction (1934). The social origins of mental functioning; all human mental functioning is socio-cultural, historical and institutional. Identity is formed in socio-cultural practices as a psychological function of higher order (Vygotsky, 1978, as cited in Park, 2015). In addition, based on Rashidi and Zolfaghari (2018), identity is one of the basic concepts which affect learning (Ivanic, 2006; Lave & Wenger,1991). It reflects an individual's relationship with the world (Hyland, 2010). Each individual possesses multiple identities based on their roles in society (Afful & Mwinlaaru, 2010; Desrochers, Andreassi, & Thompson, 2002). One's multifaceted self-comprises a series of counter-identities as well (Burke, 1980; Cheng, 2015; Hall, 1997; Ivanic, 1998; Ivanic & Camps, 2001; Kramsch, 1998). Therefore, Ivanic (1998) preferred to use the word "identity" rather than "identity" for one's self-reliance and the overlapping positions in social contexts (Ivanic, 1998).Moreover, Rashidi and Zolfaghari (2018) claimed that the universal perspective relates to identity as a human self which interacts constantly with the transforming meanings of language. Because of these accounts, identity is composed of three levels. The first point, identified with socio-cultural discourse analysts such as Fairclough and Halliday, is called "ideological identity." The second level is "generic identity' endorsing the grammatical language development accounts of Chomsky and Descartes, and the third level is credited to Heidegger and Derrida ' existential identity (Evans, 2015, p. 16).

Crozet and Liddicoat (2000, as cited in Mofidi, 2019) furthermore, this approach to culture is loosely linked to language, since culture is seen as a separate entity, divorced from the context of language as a result of engaging with another culture, and learners attempt to build an intercultural identity by decentralizing their current linguistic and cultural identity (Liddicoat, 2011, as cited in Mofidi, 2019). In this sense, language and culture are interconnected and constant exposure to language and culture contributes to optimal learning outcomes (Liddicoat, 2011, as cited in Mofidi, 2019).

D. Textbooks

Wright (1999,as cited in Abd Rashid and Ibrahim, 2018) who examined the factors influencing the attitudes of secondary education in Britain towards French, found that language learners find textbooks to have a significant influence on their attitudes towards the target culture and that there is a significant positive association between this effect and the attitudes of many pupils. In addition, Yamada (1997, as cited in Abd Rashid and Ibrahim, 2018) argued that a textbook is not just a commercially available reference book used in a language teaching program, it also acts as an important means of providing political and ideological guidance. She also remarked that "textbooks can be understood and examined as curricular materials, which project images of society and culture. They reflect historical, social, cultural and socio-cultural, economic and political contexts" (p. 20). Dellinger (1995, as cited in Abd Rashid and Ibrahim, 2018) also believed that language was a kind of social practice that was used for representation and meaning. Texts, like textbooks, are written by people who are socially situated.

VI. DISCUSSION

The present study focuses on the application of Sociocultural Identity theory to education with reference to teaching and learning English as a second language in the EFL textbooks development. The findings of this study revealed that there is a need use cultural sensitive and context-appropriate materials in the EFL textbooks. The present study is consistent with (Homayounzadeh & Sahragard , 2015 ; Rashidi & Zolfaghari , 2018; Far ás & Cabezas ,2015). Homayounzadeh and Sahragard (2015) maintain that the key guiding factor in deciding on the particular culture to be portrayed in language textbooks is undoubtedly the fundamental purpose of language instruction courses, which are probably the very aim of learners to follow in acquiring the language. This objective is generally determined by global changes which require an international language knowledge. If English was used solely as a medium for contact with target language native speakers, their cultural values constituted the substance of textbook language. The more inclusive

a book was in describing its scope of socio-cultural identities and the more objectively it represented its beliefs, the more suitable it was to develop the communication skills of the learners (Shardakova & Pavlenko, 2004, as cited in Homayounzadeh & Sahragard, 2015). It was believed that such cultural representation could give the learners a frame of reference for understanding the information in the target language and empathizing with the target people in their communications with them. (Widdowson, 1990; Alptekin, 1993; as cited in Homayounzadeh & Sahragard ,2015). Shardakova and Pavlenko (2004, as cited in Homayounzadeh & Sahragard, 2015) examined two Russian textbooks, designed for American students to determine the extent to which identity representations in the books were embracive of the diversities among the actual audience of the book. Biases and mischaracterizations in the texts have been taken as missed opportunities for cross-cultural reflection and an ability for opposition of the target culture by the students and an obstacle to their more investment in the target language. Hence the authors suggested that foreign language textbook writers integrate challenging unequal language learner experiences that are likely to negotiate in the sense of the target language. A host of other research examining identity depictions in language textbooks suggested that writers portray identities important to the social and political life of the learners and prevent stereotyping and biased representations (Canagarajah, 1993; Kinginger, 2004; Talburt & Stewart, 1999, as cited in Homayounzadeh & Sahragard, 2015). Moreover, according to Javadi and Tahmasbi (2020), the course-book and its materials should not conflict with moral, cultural and political values in our society. Textbook content should be written in such a way as to prepare learners for more communicative objectives. Language is a social practice that works outside of the linguistic surface to create identity in socio-cultural contexts (Bignold, 2015; Edwards, 2009; Harwood, 2005; Hyland, 2010; Ivanic, 1998; Norton, 2000). Writing is not quite impersonal, as a by-product of language use (Hyland, 2002b; Ivanic, 1998). Writers don't just pass on information. They share their thoughts, their values and their ideas and then find answers to their questions (Hyland, 2002b, Petersen, 2003). In this sense, texts project the identities of writers who are formed throughout their life's socio-cultural contexts and exposed through their social activities, experiences and choice of language components, topics and content (Evans, 2015; Fairclough, 1993; Hyland, 2002a; Hyland, 2002b, Hyland, 2005; Ivanic, 1998; Ivanic & Camps, 2001; Norton, 2000; van Dijk, Ting-Toomey, Smitherman, & Troutman, 1997). Many scholars have debated identity in academic texts so far. For example, in thesis acknowledgments, doctoral prize applications, and bio statements, Hyland (2011, as quoted in Rashidi and Zolfaghari, 2018) focused on identity building. He found that the writers developed their identities by finding targets, influencing the opinions of the audience, and studying and practicing the ideals and features of rhetoric and academia. And in Bulgaria, Germany, the Netherlands, and Spain, Taylor, Busse, Gagova, Marsden, and Roosken (2013, as cited in Rashidi and Zolfaghari,2018) investigated the relationship between perception of identity and teaching and learning achievement across English as a foreign language and subjects of mathematics. They found significant connections between the perceptions of identity of the learners and the instructors and their rates of performance. We underlined the need to recognize the voices of teachers and learners in academic contexts. Oliynyk (2013, as quoted in Rashidi and Zolfaghari, 2018) studied contemporary reading textbooks and fictions to discover ideologies in another analysis and then concentrated on teaching practices to close current ideological gaps. Some of the political topics discussed in that study were class, crime, divorce and social rejection. Even though many research have concentrated on identity in academic texts, there has been little research into TEFL textbooks, apart from the now traditional reference to how culture is portrayed in EFL materials (Alptekin 1993, as cited in Farías & Cabezas, 2015). In Spain, textbooks were examined for their inclusion and treatment of intercultural and foreign topics (Mendez García, 2005 as cited in Farías & Cabezas, 2015). Its ideological and cultural implications for Chinese EFL learners (Shi, 2000); its suitability for the Iranian EFL context (Shi, 2000); for their appropriateness for the Iranian EFL context (Roshan 2014 as cited in Farías & Cabezas ,2015). Roshan (2014, as cited in Farías & Cabezas, 2015) Concludes that the two textbooks evaluated illustrate cultural and political assumptions by concentrating on the United States and the United Kingdom where their local cities, lifestyles and subjects represent a biased way of life. In sum, the findings of this study revealed textbooks decide not only content teaching and learning environments, but also what dominant or valid culture is passed on. Then one goal of textbooks is to serve as a means of facilitating the integration of content about ethnically, racially and culturally diverse individuals. To this end, textbook writers should avoid cultural inequalities and prejudices that learners can absorb in their learning, and have a balanced representation of social / cultural components such as ethnicity, gender, and race.

VI. CONCLUSION

As Tajeddin and Teimournezhad (2014) point out, some of the latest ELT textbooks have shortcomings in encouraging intercultural comprehension. As Kobia (2009, as cited in Roohani and Molana, 2013) maintains that if such textbooks are biased and not effective in developing cultural understanding among EFL learners, they can in turn lead to a biased worldview in which learners can discriminate and prefer such nationalities, races, gender or groups over others, rather than appreciate diversity and comprehend cross-cultural differences (Roohani & Molana ,2013) .Hence, based on Gómez Rodríguez (2015), the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) occupies a significant role in communicative textbooks since many teachers rely on them as the foundations for helping learners develop communication skills: The capacity to use words, express messages and discuss meanings in real-life social contexts with other speakers (Bachman, 1999; Savignon, 1997, 2001). To meet this mission, textbooks include lists of communicative features, grammar types, and language skills to be learned. Tudor (2001,as cited in Gómez

Rodríguez ,2015),demonstrates that the socio-cultural aspects of communication and cultural meaning greatly interfere with the use of language, and therefore culture can not be overlooked in program designs and teachings. In that sense, the design of communicative textbooks can not disregard culture. The need to learn a foreign language now goes far beyond studying grammatical forms hidden in communicative functions. In consequence, The EFL field can not ignore the need for learners to build intercultural knowledge in order to fit into a globalized world where people from different cultural backgrounds create international relations and become intercultural speakers (Banks, 2004; Byram, 1997). Students should foster what Kumaravadivelu (2008, as cited in Gómez Rodríguez, 2015), has named global cultural knowledge, in which students are learning to effectively communicate towards new cultures which are very differently from themselves. Then, if the English language is taught in many educational settings through communicative textbooks, they are expected to provide the means to address the foreign culture. To this end, textbooks should encourage the enhancement of ICC, which is characterized as the ability to understand and communicate with individuals with multiple social identities. (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002, as cited in Gómez Rodríguez, 2015). In summary, this article provides an overview of application of sociocultural theory Identity to Education in EFL textbooks development. The recent study showed that there is a need to use materials that are cultural sensitive and context-appropriate in the EFL textbooks. To achieve this purpose, to this end, textbook writers should avoid cultural differences and biases that learners can absorb in their learning, and have a balanced representation of social / cultural components such as ethnicity, gender, and race. Hence, University professors who find the textbooks ' secret voices can be great assets for their students to free them and increase their agency and strength. Materials developers can also be directed on what should be passed to the students and what conforms to the demands of global and local learning contexts. Finally, the findings of this study will redound to the advantage of material developers and users of textbooks considering the sociocultural Identity theory to Education through EFL textbooks development in L2 learning.

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