Decoding Religious Contents of Grade 5th Textbooks of Single National Curriculum (SNC) in Pakistan

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Textbooks' discourses are significant means to disseminate desired ideology to the target readers and make them behave in a certain manner. Discursive strategies employed in this regard play a vital role in making certain ideologies common sense. The present study critically analyses the religious contents of primary English and Urdu textbooks to lay bare implicit and explicit ideologies at work through the Critical Discourse Analysis technique. For this purpose, the data has been collected from the textbooks published during 2021-2022. The selected books are based on Single National Curriculum (SNC). Moreover, the study employs Fairclough (2003, 2013) model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Critical Social Analysis (CSA) as a tool of analysis. The relevant data from the mentioned textbooks have been selected and analyzed. The study highlights that fifty percent (50%) of the contents from the selected books carry religious ideology in one way or the other. The language used in the Urdu textbook for the dissemination of religious ideology is more persuasive. Additionally, the propagation of middle-class morality is more obvious in the Urdu textbooks. The study concludes that though the selected books are based on Single National Curriculum, their target readership is more from the middle class as compared to the elite class because the middle class is more in number. Hence, it implies that textbooks at the primary level play a significant role in shaping the mindset of young learners in the desired manner.

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1.   Introduction

Fairclough (2003) believes that no text is ideology free and textbooks are the best sites for the ideological investment. This is done through the persuasive use of language. Textbooks' discourses not only construct ideology but also disseminate it very tactfully to the target audience It is generally observed that religious ideologies are propagated through the discourses of textbooks to shape the young learners' perception. Ideologies inculcated at tender age are long lasting and shape learners' worldview accordingly. Sapir (1921) argued that words and every act of social behavior involve communication. Along with imparting education, textbooks at Primary level are most often used as an insidious weapon to make certain ideologies including the religious ideologies common sense among the learners of different classes. The contents which appear in the textbooks are highly ideological and included deliberately. Most often, it is observed that these books are revised from time to time to meet the challenges of changing time and to disseminate the ideology that is the crying need of time. The present research decodes the discourses of Single National Curriculum

(SNC) implemented by government of Pakistan from education year 2021. Textbooks of English and Urdu of Grade 5have been selected for the present research.

The present study lays bare up to what extent these textbooks vary from each other in the construction and propagation of religious ideologies to the target readership. The followings are the research questions designed for the present research.

- How are the religious ideologies disseminated through discourses of Primary level Urdu and English textbooks of SNC in Pakistan?
- How do these primary English and Urdu textbooks vary from each other in the dissemination of religious ideology to the learners?

2.   Literature Review

The following section introduces the review of the literature related to present study. Hussain (2018) analyzed the religious contents of Primary Textbooks taught at Khyper Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and Punjab published for 2016-2017 session. The religious content was evaluated at linguistic and semiotic levels on the relationship between gender and semiotics to propagate the desired ideologies to the targeted audience. An integrated research approach was adopted for the analysis of the data. The levels of data analysis included word, sentence and discourse. Besides, the relation between word picture-conjunction was also considered in this regard. The findings of the mentioned study were validated through focus groups discussions. The study maintained that Primary English textbooks are one of the best sites for the dissemination of religious ideologies among the young learners. Khan (2019) conducted a research on the Primary level English textbooks of Punjab and Balochistan. She analyzed gendering semiotics and religion. The analyzed data was collected from PTB and BTB. The study reveals that the linguistics and visual contents of primary textbooks are designed tactfully to make certain ideologies about religious matters common sense. In this way, right from the beginning an attempt is made to shape the mind set and to win the consent. Consequently, the research highlights that different socio-political factors matter to shape gender and religion stereotypes.

M. A. Sajid and Khan (2020) analyzed the semiotic discourses of Pakistani Newspaper i.e. Dawn related to the representation of religio-political ideology through the caricatures of Pakistani English print media. The data for the research was collected from Pakistani English newspapers (Dawn, The News) and was analyzed by applying Kress and Hodge (2010) model to analyze a text emboding multiple modes of communication. The findings related to semiotic analysis were validated by knowing and incorporating general perception in the form of focal group discussions among the selected participants. In brief, it reveals that various modes of dissemination (discursive and coercive) are employed by religious leaders to do politics in the name of religion.

Waqar and Ghani (2019) analyzed Cartoons of Pakistani newspapers to know that how agendas of national interests have been propagated through the newspaper's caricatures. A comparison of political jokes was drawn between Dawn and The Nation (dailies). The semiotics of the selected newspapers carrying themes of national agenda were collected. Further, the data was analyzed by an integrated model drawing upon by Roland (1974) and Maier (1995) models of discourse analysis. The findings of the study affirmed that "The Nation's" semiotics represent a positive image of the Government while the semiotics of DAWN play a significant role in disseminating the agenda of national interests. Hence, it stated that political cartoons are loaded with different ideologies and print media are polarized in observing their interest.

M. A. Sajid, Khan, Sumaira, and Jamil (2021) conducted a research on the caricatures of the Pakistani print media in which religio-political discourses were decoded. The data were collected from the daily English newspaper DAWN. The semiotics embodying religio-Political ideological were analyzed through integrated research approach devised by combining linguistic and semiotic theories. The researchers analyzed the data at linguistic as well as semiotic level by employing the research models of (Hodge & Kress, 1997). This model focuses on the analysis of multimodal discourses that how various communicative modes are employed to disseminate a devised version of socially constructed reality and how these modes of representation help naturalizing the ideology of the controlling groups. Moreover, For FGD,

Krueger and Casey (2000) model was also operationalized at five different levels. The study concludes that political rhetoric is a prominent feature print media and the leaders of religio-political parties utilize verbal and visual practices to disseminate their desired ideology in the name of religion through caricatures.

3.   Methodology

The present study is qualitative in nature as it deals with the ways of words in making certain things commonsense and how to win general consent by using persuasive language in the primary English and Urdu textbooks published during 2021 to 2022. The selected books are included in the Single National Curriculum (SNC), which has recently been devised by the Government of Pakistan. The relevant data from the selected textbooks has been collected and categorized from Urdu and English textbooks, that how religious ideologies are propagated through these textbooks. In order to analyze the data the researchers have drawn upon Fairclough (2013) model of Critical Social Analysis (henceforth CSA). The research model includes lexicalization, Implicature, metaphor, polarization, inclusion/exclusion, Normative and Marxist critique as analytical categories. The data related to religious contents has been analyzed by employing the mentioned analytical categories to lay bare layers of meanings embedded in the religious contents.

4.   Data Analysis

Among the religious contents mentioned in the selected English textbook there is a chapter titled "Allah﷾ Loves Me" which carries the message of being thankful to Allah﷾ for his countless blessings. The writer explains that she can feel presence of Allah﷾ all-around her in every creation of Allah﷾ . The use of first person pronoun "I" implies degree of certainty on her part. The following lines support her stance in this regard:

> **"I see you in the stars,**
> **I feel your presence,**
> **I smile or when I weep,**
> **I have judged it far off miles"**

Fairclough (2013) argues that no use of language is ideology free. Some sort of explicit or implicit ideology is always at work through the use of language. Similarly, the use of first person pronoun 'I' five (05) times in this small poem under analysis implies that the writer wants to lay stress on the point that presence and bounties of Allah﷾ can be seen and felt everywhere provided one is as much inclined to see and feel them as is the writer. Beauty of nature all around us is the manifestation of Allah﷾ 's presence. The importance of only believing in Allah﷾ has been implicitly conveyed from the following line, which is as under:

> *"None other can support my smile"*

> The underlying message propagated through the mentioned line is that Allah﷾ is superior to all and none else than Allah﷾ can solve any problem of any body.

Fairclough (2013) opines that lexicalization is a significant feature to know how a story is narrated. The use of adjectives is never ideology free. Similarly, the chapter selected from the Urdu textbooks represents praise of Allah﷾ Almighty but lexicalization is here different from the text of English textbook selected for the research. The natural objects, which are taken as representatives of manifestation of God include sky, moon, the sun, mountains, rivers, flowers, sands etc. The language use is rhythmic in both the selected textbooks. This technique has been employed to propagate the message more comprehensively. Hence, as far as the praise of Allah﷾ Almighty is concerned, it is observed that in the selected books almost same linguistic devices have been used to covey the underlying ideology.

Similarly, the chapter on page (08) in Urdu textbook, titled as "Naat (praise of the holy prophet peace be upon him)" follows the same rthymic pattern in language use. The attributes of the Prophetﷺ have narrated using persuasive language. The prominent attributes that have been discussed here include gentleness, peacefulness, mercy to all, tolerance, forbearance, unity, patience, goodwill, and helping the helpless people. The message that is propagated to the Muslim Ummah is of unity for survival. It has been narrated through following lines which are as under:

"Farmiya tum muslim saray apus main bahi, bahi ho
Mil jul kay raho aps main manzoor jo apani bhali ho"
"All Muslims are brothers and sisters among themselves
They must be united, if they want to live with peace and prosperity"

Another significant feature of the poem under analysis is that lays stress on the practical nature of religion Islam and the prophetﷺ is an embodiment of all these attributes. In this regard, prophetﷺ's life is a guiding star for the Muslims. This is how using language persuasively the poet has disseminated religious lesson and values to the young learners. The message conveyed at this age goes a long way in their lives and it helps in shaping their minds in a desired manner and to make them behave accordingly.

Fairclough (2013) asserts that discourses are layered and affect the readers variously. They last long-term impression on the minds of the readers. Through media discourses, people start believing and idealizing what is made available to them. In the same way textbooks, discourses at primary level play a pivotal role in shaping the minds of the target readership. The very first unit in selected English textbook titled ("Patience p-02") represents the Prophet ﷺof Islam as role model for everyone and especially for the target readers. Ours is an age of media war (war of words). The think tanks from every society try to represent self positively and others negatively. Similarly, the unit under analysis represents prophetﷺ as a role model embodying multiple attributes in his personality such as SAADIQ, AMEEN, honest, true, kind hearted, brave, a guide, a man with a vision, and an example of patience for entire mankind. The implied message being propagated to the target readership is to make them like wise. It is a deliberate attempt by the policy makers (designers of the textbooks) to disseminate desired religious ideology to the general masses and to shape their cognition accordingly.

Fairclough (2013) believes that discourses reflect social reality and the way things are and have been happening around us. The unit from the select textbook about the attributes of the prophetﷺ of Islam illustrates that there are some religious sects in Pakistan which time and again claim that the Prophet of Islamﷺ is not the last prophet of Allah﷽. Therefore, in order to tackle the issue with the help of discourses an attempt has been made to shape the mindset of the readers on permanent basis that he is the last prophet of Allah﷽ . The very inclusion of KHATAM U NABIYEEN (خاتم النبيين) is meant for the said purpose. When right from the beginning, it is repeatedly inculcated in the young readers' mind that there is and cannot be any doubt about his being the last prophet of Allah﷽. In this way, this crucial issue would be solved gradually. None would be in a position at any stage to doubt it. Moreover, the frequency of occurrence of **KHATAM U NABIYEEN** (خاتم النبيين) ﷺ07 times in a small unit implies the degree of importance this matter. Another significant thing to note is that every with the name of the prophetﷺ of Islam and with God Almighty﷽ is written. The underlying ideology might be that Peace be upon him does not convey the meanings whichﷺ conveys. It is conveyed through the discourse of the selected textbooks that respect and obedience of the prophet of Islam is above all for the Muslims. Similarly, in the Urdu textbook on (p.14) the unit titled Rehmat-e-Alam ﷺ(Mercy for all the worlds) carries number of examples of good attributes of Prophetﷺ of Islam. These attributes include His forgiveness on the occasion of Conquest of Makkah, Hisﷺ kindness to slaves and even to animals and birds. Hisﷺ kindnesses towards the poor and the needy etc. have been highlighted. The concept of forgiveness is a prominent feature which has been discussed in this chapter. It is an attempt to promote a soft and enlightened image of Islam before the world because it is observed through Western media discourses that they most often represent Islam and Muslim as violent. The underlying ideology behind the positive representation of the Prophet ﷺ of Islam as a mercy for all the world is to counter the Western perception about Islam and Muslims and other significant feature of the text under analysis is the frequent use of the term **KHATAM U NABIYEEN** (خاتم النبيين) the frequency of occurrence of this term with the name of Prophet of Islamﷺ is twenty-seven times in a single chapter implies that right from the beginning the target audience of these text books must internalize that there can be no doubt about Hisﷺ being the last Prophet of Allah﷽. When the target learners come across such type of religious ideology ultimately the time will come when their minds about the concept of Hazrat Muhammadﷺ as the last prophetﷺ of Allah﷽ will be crystal clear and they would be able to defend it at any stage in their lives. This will help them to counter any doubt about the concept of Hisﷺ being last prophet of Allah﷽ as is sometimes inculcated by a sect at certain levels and other important aspect to note is that in Urdu textbook Salath صلاة

has been written twenty-seven times whereas its frequency is only seven times in English text book at primary level. It implies that the concept of Prophet Muhammadﷺ as a last prophet of Allahﷻ with more intensity in Urdu textbook. Another significant attribute of Prophetﷺ is His mercy to all the worlds suggests that Islam is a universal religion of peace and goodness to all.

Another Religious personality which has been discussed as an embodiment of good attributes is Hazrat Usman Ghani "رضی‌اللہ‌عنه". He "رضی‌اللہ‌عنه" as a literate and wealthy trader besides His other attributes His generosity stands prominent. He"رضی‌اللہ‌عنه"spent his wealth for the well-being of Islam and Muslims especially when the Muslims were in trouble these event include famine in Madina, shortage of drinking water, expansion of Masjid-e-Nabwi (Mosque of Prophetﷺ) well-being of the needy Muslim and improvement in justice system. The underlying ideology behind highlighting His mentioned attributes is to propagate religious ideology among the target learners at primary level and to make them behave in a desired manner. Text books at primary level, play a significant role in shaping the mindset of the target readers in this way the discourse under analysis illustrates that every Muslim should follow His footsteps and should sacrifice his or her wealth for the well-being of the needy Muslim to have a higher status hereafter, such a person surely will be included among the most favorite persons of Prophetﷺ and Allahﷻ Almighty as Hazrat Usman Ghani "رضی‌اللہ‌عنه ".

As far as the representation of religious personalities in the selected English textbook is concerned, the great sacrifice of Hazrat Ibrahim علیہ السلام and his son Hazrat Ismail علیہ السلام has been mentioned very persuasively. The message of Allahﷻ 's obedience in every condition has been highlighted through this example. The textual reference is as under:

"In his dream Allahﷻ told him to sacrifice his most beloved son,
Hazrat Ismail علیہ السلام **and they happily agreed to Allahﷻ's will"**

The intended message conveyed here is that a true Muslim is one who prefers Allahﷻ 's will to everything in his/her life and prophets are superior to other human beings.

Fairclough (2013) contends that textbooks' discourses are of vital significance to win general consent insidiously. They have long lasting effects on the learners. The underlying ideology these discourses embody serve the purpose of some ideological groups because textbooks' discourses have power within and behind them. With the help of persuasive language, the desired ideologies are disseminated to the target audience very tactfully. In the same way, Unit 17, on p, 117, the very title (Naik bano, Naki Phalo, be virtious, spread virtue) centers around the very idea of doing well to all. This is how every individual can play his/her role for the collective wellbeing of society. The message that is being propagated though the unit under analysis is to speak truth , be neat and clean, to work hard, to guide others in the right direction, to be self-sufficient and to avoid jealousy, laziness and depending on others. The following lines illustrate the mentioned ideology as under,

"Such Bolo, Suchay Kehlao, Such ki sub ko Rees Dilao"
Qoum ko achy kam daikhao, Naik bano, naiki Phelao.

Translation:
Speak the truth and be known as truthful person,
Persuade all to speak the truth, be virtuous and spread virtue
Display the good deeds to the nation,be virtuous and spread virtue

Moreover, doing well to one's neighbor has been stressed. In this way, the very unit under analysis imparts the message of truthfulness hardworking, taking care of neighbors and avoid being dependent on others. This is how middle class morality has been propagated through this chapter because though the books under analysis are included in Single National Curriculum (SNC) yet the consumers of the propagated ideology are the audience from middle class who are more in number as compared to elite class.

Similarly, the unit 19, p, 130 (Urdu textbook) embodies the lesson of helping others in trouble. The very title of this unit "Husn e Salook, good behavior" implies that it is our moral and religious duty to help the needy and especially able persons around us. Here, Zafar and Abid have been used metaphorically. They are the representatives of their respective classes.

The underlying ideology at work is to seek Allahﷻ's happiness at any cost and we should do our best to do something good to the needy and helpless persons around us. This unit, like others imparts message of seeking Allahﷻ's will by helping the helpless persons around us. Similarly, the selected English textbook carries some examples of doing well to others. The Unit 07 p, 67 imparts the message of thinking good because most often we do what we think. The desired ideology has been very tactfully propagated to the young learners through the example of a 'mouse and frog'. It illustrates that not only we should be good in our deeds but also in our thinking as well. It is because nothing is hidden from Allahﷻ.

5.   Content Analysis

Kassarjian (1977) opines that content analysis is a technique used for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying special characteristics of a certain text. It reveals pattern used in communication of a content. It is used for documenting the frequency of occurrence of a certain theme present in any text. Similarly, the frequency of occurrence of religious contents in the selected textbooks has been counted. There are total twenty (20) units in Urdu textbook and out of these twenty units, the units that contain religious contents either fully or partially are nine (09). The percentage of religious contents is 45%. Whereas, this percentage is 50% in English textbook used in the present study. The content analysis illustrates that the English textbook is more inclined in highlighting religious ideology as compared to its counterpart. The underlying ideology might be that now teaching of English language has been made as compulsory as Urdu is. Therefore, an attempt has been made to inject desired religious ideology through English and Urdu textbooks and make the young learners behave in a certain manner right from the beginning.

6.   Conclusion

The analysis of the data reveals that the frequency of occurrence of religious contents in Urdu and English textbooks (SNC) contains almost equal percentage. Usually, it is believed that Urdu textbooks contain more religious contents as compared to English textbooks and middle class morality is propagated to the learners of government school system. But, now, as the curriculum is same for both classes, an attempt has been made to propagate almost same religious ideology through more or less similar religious contents. However, the language use for propagating desired religious ideology is more persuasive in Urdu textbook. The research also highlights that خاتم النبیین has been used with the name of prophet of Islam. The issue of Prophet's being the last prophet of Allahﷻ has been dealt more seriously by adding خاتم النبیین every time with his name. The concept of following the middle class morality is more stressed in Urdu textbook. The study proves that textbooks are best sites for the investment of desired ideology to the target learners.

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