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Nation, alterity and competing discourses: Rethinking textbooks as ideological apparatuses

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ABSTRACT

Schools worldwide rely heavily on textbooks to disseminate knowledge and guide pedagogical choices. In critical discourse studies, textbooks have been shown to function as national policy instruments, carry a hidden curriculum, and enact a global agenda. The existing literature, however, pays a little attention to the fact that textbooks also represent competing discourses rather than merely being ideological apparatuses. The purpose of this study is to fill this gap by examining national subjecthood, alterity, and the way textbooks engender competing discourses and make them accessible to learners. Based on critical and post-structuralist discourse traditions, 12 English language textbooks were analyzed in one province of Pakistan. National subjecthood appears to have been constituted through various discursive indexes, including religion, gendered subjectivity, languages, literature, and patriotic sentiments among others. The Other is constituted in textbooks both as internals (religious minorities) and externals (e.g., India). Additionally, textbooks offer learners competing discourses with a possibility to negotiate their subject positions.

1. Introduction

Textbooks are an indispensable resource for teaching and learning in modern-day schools globally. Teachers use textbooks to help students not just excel as academics, but also gain a deeper understanding and knowledge of their world and environment. This knowledge can be both value-free and interest-laden and is well demonstrated in textbook research that shows textbooks are not only media that transmit information but also shape our thought, perception, experience, memory, and communication (Kramer et al., 2003). Also, textbooks are alleged to carry a 'hidden curriculum' (Apple, 1979) and (re)produce dominant meanings in service of national policy interests (Giordano, 2003) and instill a global agenda, such as neoliberalisation of the world social order (see, for example, Block, Gray, & Holborow, 2012; Nizamani & Shah, 2022; Shah, Pardesi, & Memon, 2023). In this sense, textbooks can be

seen as normalizing certain ways of knowing, being, and doing as common sense and desirable (Macgilchrist, 2018 p. 169). Consequently, the textbooks are viewed as the repository of different ideologies and –isms, including nationalism, racism, neoliberalism, religion, or other meanings presented as 'official truths' impacting on learners' consciousness.

Despite such a plethora of studies affirming the value-laden nature of knowledge, recent textbook studies illuminate how these official truths embedded in school knowledge carry conflicting discourses, oppositions, and agency (Canagarajah, 1993; Ciechanowski, 2012; Saarinen & Huhta, 2023; Sunderland, 2018; Shah, in print), which must be considered in broader socio-political, economic, cultural, and historical settings. Notably, research on EFL textbooks in Applied linguistics and how language classes perpetuate dominant discourses or act as neutral sites began with the critical turn of the 1980s, when Critical Linguistics,

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Critical Discourse Studies, Critical Applied Linguistics, and post-structural perspectives emerged. As Fairclough (1989, p. 2) notes, the ideological dimension of language was long neglected. He goes on to argue:

Ideology is pervasively present in language, the fact ought to mean that the ideological nature of language should be one of the major themes of modern social science (Fairclough, 1989, p. 3)

Language classes as learning spaces and teaching materials thus started to be examined in relation to larger sociopolitical realities. In this context, critical discourse studies (CDS) have contributed to our scholarly understanding of textbooks and knowledge as having both ideological effects (Fairclough, 2003) and being sites of contestation (Christophe et al., 2018). The present study aligns with this line of thinking to shed some light on the extent to which English language textbooks in state-mandated schools in one province of Pakistan are dual in nature – reproducing dominant national narrative as well as serving as spaces of conflicting and competing discourses. Pakistan is a highly diverse country in terms of ethnicity (e.g., Sindhi, Punjabi, Baloch, Pashtuns), religion (e.g., Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Ahmadis), and language (e.g., Sindhi, Punjabi, Urdu, Pashto, Dhatiki) as shown in the census (see Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017). Despite such diversity, studies show that the state-mandated education offered since 1947 has focused primarily on building a single national identity through Islam and Urdu as major driving forces in nation building (see Aziz, 2010; Qazi, 2020), excluding diverse ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups. In this vein, most studies on (English language) textbooks in the Pakistani context have examined ideological content and how it impacts learners' identities, making them docile and irrational subjects (see e.g., Aziz, 2010; Channa, Gilhooly, Channa, & Manan, 2017; Qazi, 2020) not unlike other contexts where learners' diverse identities are at stake in the process of nation building (see e.g., Gürsel, 2018; Hagren, 2021). For example, Podesh (2018) in Egyptian school textbooks discusses, creating 'a collective national memory often entails the use of stereotypes and negative images of the Other – a process that fosters delegitimization' (p.142). Likewise, Hein and Selden (2000) note how history is censored in three countries, including Japan, Germany, and the United States. They argue, nationhood narratives, like textbooks themselves, are always unfinished projects that must be revised and reinterpreted to remain relevant. A controversy over textbook content can arise when prevailing assumptions about national unity are challenged and when international relations are changing rapidly. They further note that throughout history, textbook controversies have revealed a number of ways in which societies have negotiated, institutionalized, and renegotiated nationalist narratives (p.3).

However, it is important to note that textbooks can also encapsulate conflicting discourses that allow learners to negotiate subject positions in conflictual ways, which is often overlooked in burgeoning scholarship on EFL textbooks. This study invites readers to rethink the nature of English language textbooks in Pakistan as well as other similar global contexts as not only carrying ideological meanings often related to building of national subjecthood, but also offering alternative discourses that may empower learners from diverse backgrounds who are under-represented in institutionalized textbook discourses. This study addresses the duality of English textbooks within a methodological intermix of critical and poststructuralist traditions in discourse studies (see Christophe et al., 2018). These authors note that critical discourse analysis (CDA) can reveal how certain meanings are stabilized and others are excluded, while poststructuralist discourse analysis (PDA) can explain how resistance is already evident on the margins of dominant discourses (Christophe et al., 2018). The study addresses the following research questions:

- 1 How is national subjecthood built in Pakistani English Language textbooks?
- 2 Who is represented as the Other? /How is alterity constituted?

- 3 What type of competing discourses are available to learners in textbooks?

In the following sections, I first discuss how nation, alterity, and competing discourses have been conceptualized in the existing research literature, followed by some empirical studies in relation to these categories. I will then present the methodological framework for the study, followed by the results and discussion, and finally the implications.

2. Conceptualizing 'Nation', 'Alterity' and 'Competing discourses'

Ernest Renan's (1882) brief account of nation describes how people in Europe used this concept to divide people according to language, race, ethnicity, and religion, which he viewed as misleading. Conversely, he argues that nations must be built through the virtue of 'will' and social justice. As he notes

let us not abandon the fundamental principle that man is a reasonable and moral being, before he is cooped up in such and such a language, before he is a member of such and such a race, before he belongs to such and such a culture (Renan, 1882, p.299).

The contemporary world, however, is witnessing a growing number of nations and national claims as noted by Ayres (2009, p. 1). She argues that nationalism operates through a political logic of cultural difference, claiming that different people have the right to rule themselves. In terms of theory, scholars who study nation can be divided into three groups - perennialists/premordialists, ethno-symbolists, and modernists. In the view of the premordialists or perennialists, nations are ancient, natural, and biological phenomena (Shils, 1957). According to Smith (1991), who advocates a symbolist approach to nationalism, symbols, myths, traditions, ethnicities, and historical continuity are essential to the formation of a nation. The modernist account of nation/nationalism, however, envisions it as a 'school-mediated idiom' (Gellner, 1983) or as a 'socially fabricated imagined community' (Anderson, 2006). My study mostly adheres to the modernist view of nation since I consider nation as forged through school knowledge such as textbooks, where power, ideology and discourse are all prominent in nation building. It is consistent with Anderson's view that nationalism/nation must be understood in light of large cultural systems that help form nations (Anderson, 2006, p. 19). In this sense, Bhaba (1990) writes that a nation is understood in terms of its 'narratives' that construct meanings and symbols associated with national life. Accordingly, the present study examines the narratives of textbooks that help build national consciousness and life in schools and colleges in Pakistan.

Alterity emerges as a parallel category to nations in scholarly studies. By definition, 'alterity' often implies 'otherness,' that is, being under-privileged/marginalized. Scholars have theorized this concept, especially in postcolonial studies analyzing Oriental discourse (Said, 1978) and racial stereotyping in colonial ideology (see Bhaba, 1990). In terms of gender, Simon de Beauvoir explains how historically women have been treated as absolute others by men instead of human subjects (de Beauvoir, 1949). Gürsel (2018) points out that the notion of nation has been defined by emphasizing the alterity or otherness of other nations. I would argue, however, in line with Carrier's (2018, p. 187) arguments, that the alterity of other nations does not refer to only external nations, but also those existing 'inside' that are subject to the process of inclusion/exclusion within a nation state. Ayres (2009), for instance, notes how multiple linguistic and ethnic groups claim separate 'nations' within Pakistan. The present study explores the alterity that embraces both externals/outside and insiders who are Otherised based on religion, ethnicity, and language. In Foucauldian terms, humans are not different naturally, but become so through the process of 'othering' (Foucault, 1980).

CDA and Poststructuralist scholars maintain that human actions are not completely socially constrained. This implies that we are not subject

to discourses and ideologies every time. As [Chouliaraki and Fairclough \(1999, p. 22\)](#) note, social agents are not free agents, they are socially constrained, but worth noting is that their actions are not totally socially determined. Agents have their own causal powers which they use to transcend the causal powers of social structures and practices. Foucault also discusses how individuals can challenge modern power structures and reclaim new forms of subjectivity ([Foucault, 1983, p. 216](#)). As Foucault suggests elsewhere, the self is not static and fixed, but constantly positioned and repositioned through discourse ([Foucault, 1980](#)). Thus, individuals negotiate and are shaped by their subject positions within different and often conflicting discourses. This view informs my understanding that competing discourses in textbooks may give rise to conflicting subject positions and ambiguities of power, resulting in both the privilege and disempowerment of the same group of people in a given time.

3. Nation, alterity and competing discourses in textbooks and language learning

Peter [Carrier \(2018, p. 181\)](#) provides a comprehensive review of how the notion of nation has been featured in textbooks (1951–2017) that consists of three categories: textbooks 1) used as instruments of nation building or international negotiation; 2) presenting nationally significant events visually and linguistically; 3) comparing or historicizing nations or deconstructing national semantics. In a similar vein, [Giordano \(2003, p.35\)](#) categorizes textbook research in the European context into six phases, stating that the nationalistic era is characterized by jingoistic elements in textbooks preparing students for warlike foreign policy, indicating legislative restrictions on textbooks in order to maintain nationalistic unity and perpetuate nationalistic biases. He notes that despite some efforts to overcome the influence in the interests of international peace, nationalistic sentiments continue to persist ([Giordano, ibid, p.49](#)). The current scholarly body of work shows a growing trend of nationalist sentiments being reinforced in school textbooks in relation to the alterity of other nations - for instance in Spain ([Jubran, 2002](#)), China ([Suzuki, 2007](#)), the United States ([Gürsel, 2018](#)), Israel ([Rabinowitz, 2002](#)), Sweden ([Hagren, 2021](#)), and Iran ([Ram, 2000](#)). For example, [Gürsel \(2018\)](#) notes national identity as constituted in US geography textbooks through alterity of other nations, depicting Indians as ‘dark-colored savages’, Britishers as ‘foes’, the Other with negative connotations for some European & Asian countries in their attempts to establish North American identity. [Podeh and Alayan \(2018, p. ix\)](#) discuss how multiple alterities are constituted in Middle Eastern textbooks, specifically relating to the conflict between Israel and Palestine. In order to construct a positive image of the Self, States and decision-makers often portray a negative image of the Other or Others. States and individuals, they argue, should eliminate biases and distortions from their educational media and rectify omissions.

In South Asian contexts, [Chaturvedi \(2002\)](#) and [Rosser \(2003\)](#) note how nation-building involves otherness/alterity not only through educational processes, but also through other political strategies. Recently, [Qazi \(2021\)](#) studied English language textbooks (grade 9–12) in Pakistan and showed how ‘Islam’ is deployed as a dominant factor in national belonging. Also, [Siddiqui \(2016, p. 215\)](#) states that almost all educational policies, with varying degrees of emphasis, recommend that Islam be the basis for curricula and textbooks in the process of nation-building. Most textbook studies in the Pakistani context, such as those related to history and social studies, focus on the reproductive aspect of the national discourses, such as Islamization ([Nayyar & Saleem, 2005](#); [Rosser, 2003](#)), as well as prescribed myths, historical errors, and ideological distortions ([Aziz, 2010](#)). Some studies have been conducted in the context of English language teaching, highlighting docile aspects of identity e.g., grade 1–5 (see [Channa et al., 2017](#)), religious nationalistic identities e.g., grade 9–12 ([Mahboob, 2009](#); [Qazi, 2021](#)). The present study shifts its focus from textbooks as being conceived as merely ideological apparatuses to how they engender

competing discourses in English language classes.

The existing scholarship shows that textbooks can serve as sites of contesting discourses and offer conflicting subject positions to learners. As [Mustapha and Mills \(2015, p. 2\)](#) argue, educational textbooks are inevitably aimed at educating and challenging, and it should not be assumed that representations should simply reflect the status quo i.e., reproduction of the dominant ideologies. In [Canale’s view \(2021\)](#), textbook research over the past few decades has focused on three elements, including representation, interaction, and learning, with the first leading the rest in terms of representing social, cultural, and political discourse. This suggests that language textbook studies should explore the dynamics of structural power and situated agency, and how the teachers and learners make use of textbooks in classrooms. A few recent studies have examined teacher talk around the text (see e.g., [Koster & Littosseliti, 2021](#); [Pawelczyk & Pakula, 2015](#); [Sunderland et al., 2000](#)). There are also examples of learners offering oppositional readings of textbooks in ESOL (e.g., [Canagarajah, 1993](#)) and of social studies textbooks and in class interactions ([Ciechanowski, 2012](#)). Several scholars have examined gender discourse in textbooks in particular and the ways in which men/boys and women/girls assume different subject positions, both privileged and disempowered as a result of their interactions and representation in discourses (e.g., [Baxter, 2002](#); [Mustapha & Mills, 2015](#); [Sunderland, 2018](#); [Walkerline, 1990](#)). In light of this scholarship, the present investigation, which is part of a larger doctoral dissertation, contributes to the research on nation building in textbooks and representations to examine how national subjecthood is constituted, and what conflicting discourses are available to learners.

4. The present study

4.1. Context

Sindh as the context of the present study is the second largest province in Pakistan with 47.89 million people (see [table 1](#) for population and diversity). As part of the country’s move towards a parliamentary system, Sindh now enjoys provincial autonomy after the 18th constitutional amendment bill passed in 2010. As a result of the 18th amendment, curriculum, syllabus, planning and policy fall under the provinces’ purview. Hence, provinces can develop textbooks autonomously, determining the content and ways of representing knowledge.

Sindh like other provinces has its autonomous textbook board that works under the directives of the School Education and Literacy department of the Government of Sindh, Pakistan. The School Education and Literacy department decides about the educational matters relating to recruitment of teachers, teacher training programs, curriculum and

Table 1
Census, 2017 bureau statistics of Pakistan.

Population category		Percentage
Gender	Male	51.98
	Female	48.02
	Transgender	0.01
Religion	Muslims	90.34
	Hindus	6.99
	Christians	0.85
	Ahmadi	0.05
	Scheduled Castes	1.74
	Others	0.02
Language/ethnicity	Sindhi	61.60
	Urdu	18.20
	Pashto	5.46
	Punjabi	5.31
	Saraiki	2.23
	Balochi	2
	Hindko	1.58
	Brahavi	0.73
	Kashmiri	0.15
	Others	2.75

textbooks design and its implementation throughout the province.

4.2. Textbooks as data

Data for the present article is gathered from 12 English language textbooks (grade 1–12, see [table 2](#)) produced by Sindh textbook board (STB), Jamshoro.

These textbooks are taught in the government schools and colleges (grade 1–12) and in non-elite private schools (mostly, in grade 9–12) whereas in the lower classes in non-elite private schools and elite private schools, private publishers are preferred e.g., Oxford/Cambridge University Press. This reflects the division of Pakistani education system into three categories: a) government schools/colleges that follow government-mandated textbooks b) non-elitist private schools that follow a mixed syllabus. For example, they prefer private publishers for grade 1–8 and grade 9–12 students must opt for the government syllabus to qualify for the annual examination c) elitist private schools that follow the Cambridge System e.g., O/A levels with textbooks produced by foreign publishers. The focus of the present study is on government-mandated/produced English language textbooks. Recently during the years 2021–2022, the Sindh textbook board under the directives of the School Education and Literacy department revised some English textbooks (e.g., grades 9, 10 and 11). Hence, I have included the revised textbooks for these grades in my study.

4.3. Positionality statement

The concept of researcher positionality refers to how researchers situate themselves within the whole research process, including problem, data, participants, and analysis ([Chavez, 2015](#); [Holmes, 2020](#)). According to [Massoud \(2022\)](#), social scientists have paid more attention to how researchers' self-identifications, marginalization experiences and professional privileges affect their research questions, data collection, and analysis. Researchers have discussed two different research positionalities relating to participants: insider and outsider. In the former, the researcher interacts with the participants with shared identities, whereas in the latter, there is no prior relationship. Additionally, insiders are divided into two sub-personalities: a total insider, who shares multiple identities (e.g., race, ethnicity, class, religion) and profound experiences (e.g., family, profession, membership), and a partial insider, who shares a few identities. In the present study which draws on textbook data without involving human subjects, I take on a total insider position as a critical discourse analyst in relation to the context of the study and textual content being examined. As a Pakistani Muslim and a native Sindhi, I can understand the socio-cultural and political context that shapes textbook discourses being studied in the present study.

Arguably, scholars in critical discourse studies (CDS) reject a neutral and objective stance in research. Taking a critical perspective, scientific neutrality can be understood in relation to the politics of knowledge because it places unequal power in the hands of the researcher and fails

to recognize that knowledge is socially constructed and based on values ([Mullet, 2018](#)). CDA researchers need to remain aware of the social, political, and economic motives behind their own work ([Wodak & Meyer, 2009](#)). It is, however, argued that researcher must remain trustworthy by articulating their viewpoint within the field as well as in broader social contexts ([Van Dijk, 1993](#)) and by triangulating various methods, theories and data ([Wodak & Meyer, 2009](#)). As a total insider, I bring my own understanding of the context as a Pakistani Muslim to discern how national subjecthood is constituted in relation to the Other, which is underrepresented in textbooks. The author himself belongs to a minority Islam e.g., Shia whose religious identities are considered at stake in Pakistani educational discourses. Further, my own profession as a teacher helps me reflect on these discourses and understand how language textbooks contribute to ideological 'becoming' as well as creating space for diversity, dialogue, and dissent. This has been achieved through triangulation technique that ensures trustworthiness in this scholarly attempt as can be seen in the following section.

4.4. Methods of analysis

I analyzed the themes pertaining to nation, alterity, conflicting discourses, and diversity represented in textbooks i.e., both in written language and images abductively through parallel and equal engagement with empirical data and extant theoretical understanding (see [Thompson, 2022](#) on abductive approach in thematic analysis). I triangulated two theoretical and methodological approaches for analysis of data. As [Denzin \(1978\)](#) discusses four types of triangulations: a) *method triangulation* that helps researchers to use multiple methods to study a phenomenon and may include both the methodologies and methods, b) *data triangulation* that includes collection of data from multiple sources, c) *investigator triangulation* which engages more than one investigator/evaluator in the process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting data to assess the extent to which the investigators reach similar conclusions and d) *theoretical triangulation* whereby researchers bring together multiple theories to study a phenomenon of interest (see also, [Carter et al., 2014](#) for further details on triangulation in qualitative research). The present study triangulates critical and poststructural orientations in discourse studies as having multiple perspectives enhances the quality of research and produces more knowledge than just one perspective. For this reason, I first studied discourses related to national subjecthood in textbooks using Fairclough's dialectical relational approach (DRA) (see [Fairclough, 1989, 2003, 2010](#)). To further explain how alterity is constituted, and what conflicting discourses learners have access to in English textbooks, Foucault's writings ([Foucault, 1975, 1976, 1980](#)) were triangulated. The dialectical-relational approach sees discourses as ideological representations, while Foucault's writings explain how multiple subject positions appear simultaneously in any discourse.

Fairclough offers three levels of analysis: description, interpretation, and explanation (see, for instance, [Fairclough, 1989, 2003](#)). He explains how internal relations, such as semantic, grammatical, and lexical in the text (e.g., description stage) relate to external relations including social events, structures, and practices (i.e., interpretation and explanation stages) and the way they are connected to each other dialectically ([Fairclough, 2003](#), p. 38). Fairclough offers a detailed procedure for the analysis of the textual data (see [Fairclough, 2001, 2003](#)). According to him, 'the procedure should not be treated as holy writ'; the analysis he offers is a useful guide for social researchers looking for ideological elements in the text and the way it links to social processes. In his later writings, [Fairclough \(2010, p.230\)](#) uses the term 'semiosis' to suggest that discourse analysis examines various semiotic modalities, of which language is only one while others include visual images and body language. Therefore, to operationalize Fairclough's model in my data, I have restricted my analysis to visuals (images related to themes under study) and specific linguistic features that recur in my textual data e.g., formal features of the text, such as vocabulary, metaphor, grammatical

Table 2
Textbooks used in the study.

Textbook	Publication year
My English Book 1	2013
My English Book 2	2013
My English Book 3	2013
My English Book 4	2013
My English Book 5	2013
My English Book 6	2013
My English Book 7	2013
My English Book 8	2013
Secondary Stage English Book I	2021
Secondary Stage English Book II	2021
Comprehensive English Book 1	2022
Intermediate English Book II	2021

constructions, and modality by looking at three values associated with these features i.e., experiential, relational and expressive (see Table 3). In my analysis, these three features reveal how language used in the written text embodies the beliefs and knowledge of the text producer and how social relationships are enacted in the text. In addition, these features offer a way to explain how discourse constructs subjects through formal features of language.

Furthermore, Fairclough's conceptualization of text as an interplay of three meanings: representation, action and identification (see Fig. 1) provided additional insights into my analysis. Fairclough (2003, p.28) defines text in terms of genres, discourses, and styles to explain how genres, i.e., different ways of producing social life (such as interviews, biographies, poetry) can manifest dominant discourses (representations) and create a particular social identity (style). As a result, I identified several subgenres in the textbooks under study, including reading passages (prose), dialogues, exercises (language learning activities), and poetry. As part of the analysis, I selected reading passages (prosaic texts) and dialogues that were combined with images relevant to the topics examined. By analyzing these subgenres, I was able to identify what discourses they embody and how they shape identities or create subjects within discourses. This latter part of analysis was done using other features from Fairclough's model, such as frame, script, presuppositions/assumptions, foregrounding/backgrounding, intertextuality and interdiscursivity to understand how the texts, both written and visual, have causal effects that have an ideological nature, i.e., how they inculcate, maintain, or change ideologies and affect social structures naturalized by power (Fairclough, 2001, p. 135).

Through Foucault's writings, I further understand the construction of alterity and how conflicting subject positions emerge in textbook discourse (see Foucault, 1975, 1976, 1980). The regimes of truth, as described by Foucault in 1976, produce truth through multiple constraints. In his view, every society has its own regime of truth (Foucault, 1976, p. 13). As a result, power is not just institutional, but also manifests as a field of power relations with effects everywhere. Truth regimes are governed by discursive rules limiting human activity and thought. These rules constitute the discourse, and therefore knowledge, that Foucault is interested in (Foucault, 1975). Alterity/Otherness can be viewed as the result of discursive rules imposed on textbook knowledge in schools (Foucault, 1971). The subject in Foucault's view is not fixed into specific socialized roles, but rather constantly positioned and repositioned through discourse (see e.g., Rabinow, 1994). According to Baxter (2002, p. 829), the subject emerges in a range of different, often conflicting discourses that vary by historical, social, and cultural contexts. Using this perspective, I have considered instances in my data where subjects assume both privileged and disempowered positions. In this way, Foucault's writings help me understand how discourse operates at institutional and cultural levels to produce subjectivity.

5. Findings and discussion

As can be seen in Table 4, English language textbooks (grades 1–12) contain a considerable number of units that embody a sense of national 'self'. Units relating to other -isms include discourses on class subjectivities, gendered identities, environment, colonialism, and the neoliberal skillset and market rationality. The Other remains largely

Table 3
Values of the formal features (Source: Fairclough, 2015, p. 131).

Value	Function
<i>Experiential</i>	a trace of and a cue to the way in which the text producer's experience of the natural or social world is represented.
<i>Relational</i>	embodies contents, knowledge and beliefs of the writer/speaker a trace of and a cue to the social relationships which are enacted via the text in the discourse.
<i>Expressive</i>	establishes relations and social relationships creates subjects and social identities

excluded in the process of national building, thus shifting away from the ideals of the country as discussed in the following sections. In turn, this contrast creates conflicting discourses in textbooks in relation to alterity and diversity.

According to Table 5, the constitution of the nation in the textbooks incorporates a wide variety of constituent elements, such as religion, heroic portrayals, representation of the country's geography and history, gendered subjectivity, and several others. It involves both linguistic (e.g., written texts, language activities) and non-linguistic content (e.g., pictures).

This table provides a general overview of the constituent elements of the nation, but an in-depth analysis is necessary to comprehend how nation building occurs and what conflicting discourses the textbooks embody. The following sections elaborate on these discourses. Considering the space in the article, the examples in my analysis are representative of the data. As shown in Tables 5 and 6, there are several units that account for how national subjecthood is constituted in English language textbooks. I used the same procedure when discussing alterity, competing discourses, and diversity in textbooks.

5.1. Fabricating national subjecthood: discourses of nation-building

A significant portion of textbooks position English language learners as unitary subjects, such as Pakistani Muslims or national subjects. Figs. 2 and 3 illustrate such subjectivity. A depiction of Minar-e-Pakistan, an architectural site in Lahore, Punjab, is shown in Fig. 2, along with the flag of Pakistan. It is historically known for the Pakistan resolution passed on 23rd March 1940, the first official call of independence for the new state in the subcontinent. In the last three sentences, the inclusive 'we' is used repeatedly, which according to Fairclough (1989, p. 106) enacts a relational value. In this case, 'we' as an inclusive pronoun contributes to building a sense of nation. As such, excerpt 1 below affirms the same message as given in Fig. 2, that is to foster national cohesiveness. Fig. 3 shows Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan as a new state on the subcontinent in 1947 that also reflects how national heroes constitute an important part in building a sense of nation.

Excerpt 1

Bilal was from Lahore, Sher Ali was from Mardan, Khudadad was from Gwadar and Shankar was from Sukkur. They were all participants in the track races. Bilal won the 100-meter race and Sher Ali stood second. They had become good friends as they were sharing the same room during the Olympiad (**Grade 4, Unit 3.2 p. 37**)

The excerpt shows male students from four major cities, one from each province of Pakistan, participating in the Olympiad and becoming good friends. Fairclough (1989, p. 96) asserts that language serves as a tool for getting things done. Here, the use of 'good' as an adjective presupposes and metaphorically establishes a strong bond between the four provinces. However, Ayres (2009) and Khan (2022) point out that the country has been faced with several ethno-nationalist movements by ethno-linguistic groups since its inception with a desire for independence or autonomy. As shown in several units in the textbooks analyzed, English language textbooks in Sindh province seem to reinforce and naturalize the ideological foundation of the country by uniting various ethno-nationalist groups into one Muslim nationalism/patriotism (see Table 6 for examples).

Table 6 illustrates how religion plays a crucial role in the formation of a national identity. This can be further illustrated by the following excerpts from grade 9:

Excerpt 2

The world has seen many leaders who have obtained independence for their people from undesired rulers, but few have achieved what the Quaid-e-Azam did; he created a new country. He led the Muslims

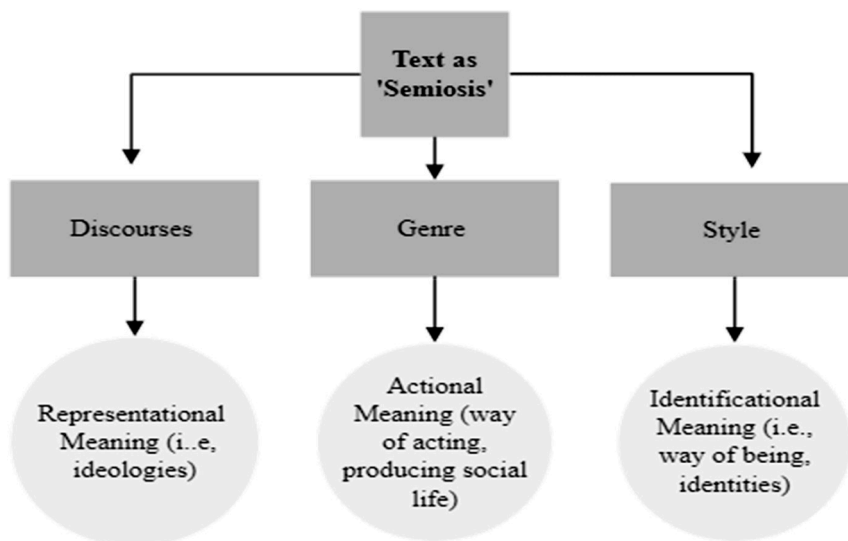


Fig 1. Fairclough's (2003) conceptualization of the text as an interplay of three meanings.

Table 4
Nation & Alterity and other - isms in textbooks.

	Frequency (f)	Percentage
Total number of units (grade 1–12)	434	
Number of units related to nation-building	99	23
Number of units related to inclusion of Other (e.g., Hindus, Christians)	4	0.9
Number of units related to other – isms	331	76

Table 5
Constituent elements of nation-building.

	Frequency (f)
Total number of units associated with national building (grade 1–12)	99
Islam as a singular epistemic reality	21
Religious figures/personalities	2
Patriotism (e.g., national flag/anthem)	9
National heroes/personalities	3
Mystic poets	2
Military sentiments	3
Interprovincial Unity	2
Muslim gendered identity	42
Languages (Arabic/Persian)	1
Literary Figures/Pakistani literature	5
contemporary geographical sites	2
archeological historical sites	4
Pakistani sportsmanship	3

Table 6
Some indicators of nation-building in textbooks (grade 1–12).

Textbook	Sub-themes in nation-building	Unit and page No (some instances)
Grade 1	Islam as a single epistemic reality	Unit 1, p.1
	Patriotic sentiments	Unit 25.1, p. 60
Grade 2	Islam as a single epistemic reality	Unit 1.1. p.1 & Unit 7.2, p. 57
	Patriotic sentiments	Unit 6.1, p. 46, Unit 6.2, p. 47
Grade 3	Islam as a single epistemic reality	Unit 4.5, p. 55
	Patriotic sentiments	Unit 4.3, p. 57
Grade 4	Islam as a single epistemic reality	Unit 5.2, p. 73, Unit 5.3, p. 77
	Ethnic unity/representation	Unit 3.2, p. 36 and 37
Grade 5	Islam as a single epistemic reality	Unit 2.4, p. 34
Grade 6	Islam as a single epistemic reality	Unit 4.1, p. 61 and 62
Grade 7	Islam as a single epistemic reality	Unit 7.1, p. 150
	Patriotic sentiments	Unit 2.3, p. 39
	Historical archeological sites	Unit 5.1, p. 97
	Language (Arabic)	Unit 3.2, p. 59
Grade 8	Pakistani literature	Unit 6.1, p. 121
	Islam as a single epistemic reality	Unit 4.1, p. 64
	Patriotic sentiments	Unit 2.1, p. 21
Grade 9	Pakistani sportsmanship	Unit 6.1, p. 114
	Religious personalities	Unit 1.1., p. 4
	Mystic poets	Unit 2.1, p. 25
	National heroes	Unit 4.1, pp-77–78, Unit 4.1, p. 82
Grade 10	Historical sites	Unit 2.4, p. 44
	Pakistani literature	Unit 4.1, p. 82, Unit 4.4., p. 95
	Arabic and Persian Language	Unit 4.1, p. 82
	Islam as a single epistemic reality	Unit 2.1, p. 26
Grade 11	National heroes	Unit 1.1., p. 2
Grade 12	National heroes & patriotism	Unit 4, p. 44

of the sub-continent to achieve an independent state called Pakistan, where they could live **honorably**, according to the teachings of their **faith** and **culture** (Grade 9, Unit 4.1., pp.77–78)

Excerpt 3

I have learned one lesson from the history of Muslims. At difficult moments in their history, it is **Islam** that has saved **Muslims** and not **Muslims** that have saved **Islam**. If, today, you put your **faith** in **Islam**, you will become a **strong** and **united** once again and **save** yourself from complete destruction (Grade 9, Unit 4.1., p. 82)

In excerpt 2, Quaid-e-Azam is mentioned as a founding father of the country who led the independence struggle for the Muslims of the sub-continent and created a new country. Similarly, excerpt 3 discusses Allama Muhammad Iqbal as a Muslim philosopher and poet who conceived of a separate state for Muslims within India (see Aziz, 1967).

Both the excerpts establish a religious link of these historical figures to the newly established country i.e., Pakistan. This can be explained in words of Fairclough (2003, p. 28) who describes text as an interaction of three meanings: action (genres), representation (discourses) and identification (styles). As a genre, the biography of two key figures - Quaid-e-Azam and Allama Iqbal enacts and inculcates discourses of religion and national cohesion that construct Muslim nationalistic identity. Specifically, the overwording of 'Muslims', 'faith', 'Islam', 'culture' establishes the ideological position of language in creating a dominant religious reality and how they co-occur/collocate with other value-laden words to construct Pakistani nationalistic identity/imagined community (Fairclough, 1989; Anderson, 2006). As shown in excerpt 3, intertextuality establishes a link between being a 'Pakistani' and being a 'Muslim' (see Fairclough, 2003). Fairclough (2003, p. 270) notes that intertextuality is concerned with the productivity of texts,

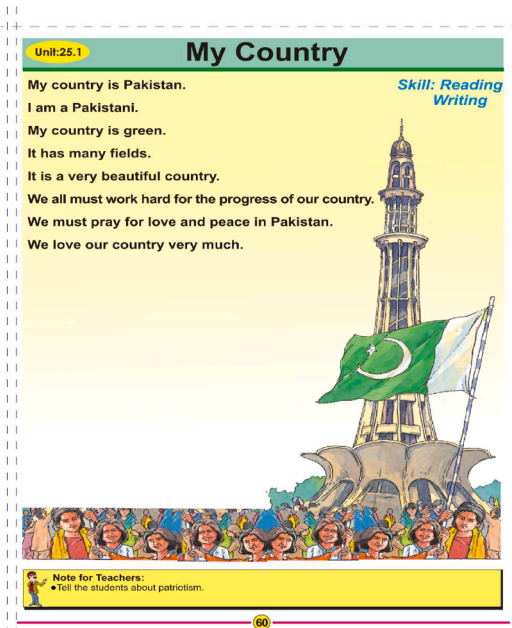


Fig 2. Patriotism (Grade 1, p. 60).

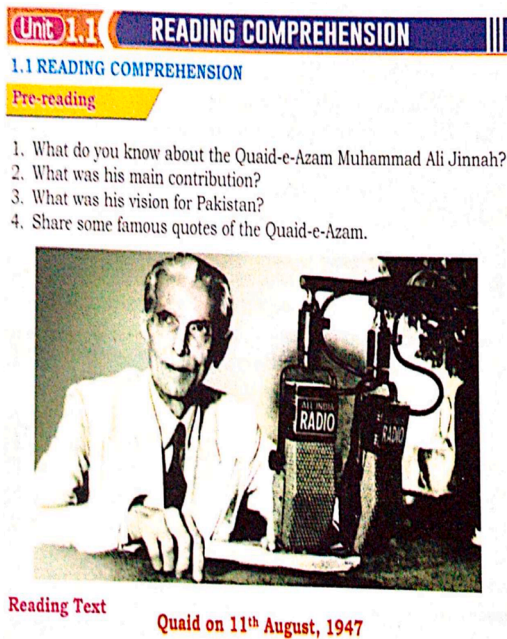


Fig 3. Grade 11, Unit 1.1. p. 2.

which entails how texts can incorporate prior texts and restructure existing conventions (genres, discourses) to create new ones. In excerpt 3, Allama Iqbal's historical speech is cited to construct discourses about Pakistani Muslim identity. Moreover, these ideologically contested underlined words in both excerpts exhibit experiential and relational values since they are not only used to represent the world, but also to enact social relations among diverse groups. Biographies and semiotic representations of national and religious figures appear to be a key source for negotiating the nationalistic agenda.

Another example of building nationhood is provided by Fig. 4 i.e., the image of the Kaaba, a sacred place for Muslims around the world that contributes semiotically to the formation of Pakistani national identity. As part of this semiotic representation, a biography of the Prophet

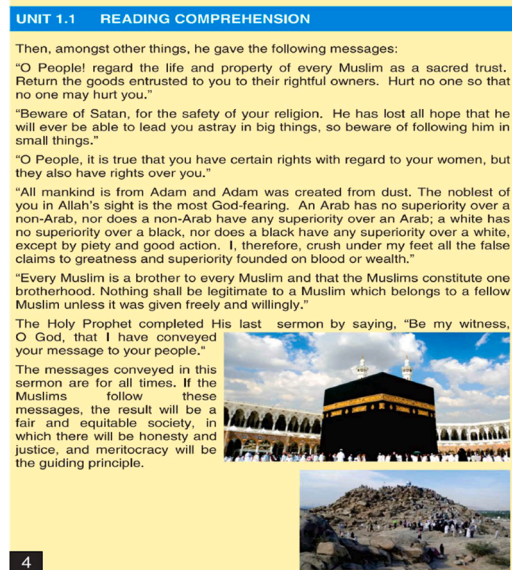


Fig 4. Grade 9, Unit 1.1. p. 4.

Muhammad (peace be upon him) is presented. As noted by Qazi (2021), textbooks reinforce religious national identities through a particular version of Islam. While nationalist identity is discursively constructed, it also reflects how social structure characterized by religious values influence the text as a discursive event. Fairclough (2001, p. 232) argues that discourse mediates social reality, other elements, such as social structures, relationships, values, desires, and material conditions co-exist with discourse that are causally effective. They are dialectically related to each other. Excerpts 4, 5 and 6 below illustrate how discursive and non-discursive processes interact in the construction of the national subject through 'religion' as a key determinant.

Excerpt 4

However, this is because we have forgotten the noble example of our last Holy Prophet (peace be upon him). He would never ask anyone to do anything that he himself would not do (Grade 10 Unit 2.1 p. 26).

Excerpt 5

He wakes up early in the morning and first goes to the mosque to offer prayers. The mosque is in front of his house. After prayer, he goes to fields. ...In the evening, they [Allah Wasayo – the farmer with his friend] walk towards their home. Allah Wasayo thanks Allah, the Almighty for a safe and peaceful day (Grade 5, Unit 2.4 p. 34).

Excerpt 6

After lunch, I help my elder sister clean our home and she help me with my homework. After that, I go for my Quran classes. Every day, after dinner and Isha prayers, I go to bed early to get up early.' (Grade 6, Unit 4.1, pp.61–62)

Excerpt 4 shows experiential value associated with text's formal features that indicate the text producer's subjective experience of reality (Fairclough, 1989, pp. 93–97) through expressive modality, i.e., 'is' and 'would' in this case (Fairclough, ibid, p. 107). In Fairclough's view, modality contributes to establishing authenticity/truth claims. As a result, the excerpt builds specific identity through religion. In the unit associated with excerpt 4, dialogues related to other historical (religious) characters, such as Abu Bakar, Omar, Ali and Fatima, as well as other caliphs like Omar Bin Abdul Aziz and Mamun-ur-Rasheed illuminate this point. Additionally, excerpts 5 and 6 related to religious practices in Pakistani society also strengthen an element of religion to

construct a Pakistani national identity. In excerpt 5 and 6, life is shown as centered around religious practices e.g., praying in a mosque, thanking Allah, attending Quranic lessons, offering 'Isha' prayer (last prayer of the day). There is a tendency for such discourses to mold English language learners into 'Muslim national subjects,' regardless of the diversity of identities in the classroom.

Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999, p. 14) assert that texts have social, political, cognitive, moral, and material consequences. The portrayal of a universal Pakistani citizen who follows Islam foregrounds one identity while obscuring other identities. Moreover, it is worthwhile to suggest that the discursive framing of these texts arises from a social context where a religious social order is embedded. In October 2020, tensions arose over the omission of a Muslim belief from English textbooks, such as the finality of the prophet of Islam. Then Education Minister of Sindh, Saeed Ghani ordered the textbook's revised edition to be corrected right away. It was alleged, however, that such an omission was intentional and those responsible should be punished on the grounds of blasphemy laws. Due to Pakistani socio-political realities, textbooks are also religiously linked to nationalistic identities. The notion of interdiscursivity is important here to understand how one discourse is linked to other discourses, including religious discourse with nationalistic identity discourse through the enactment of different genres and styles (see Fairclough, 2003). This is also seen in the following excerpt where militarism is integrated with national subjectivity.

Excerpt 7 Salman: Who is your **hero**?

Jaffer: My hero is Rashid Minhas Shaheed (Grade 3, Unit 5.1, p.56)

This excerpt talks about Rashid Minhas Shaheed (martyr) - a Pakistani Army officer (GD Pilot in Pakistan Air Force) with a picture in army uniform. In English language textbooks, a military idealization and warfare is strengthened. Scholars note that texts can affect our knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and values (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p.8). This idealization invests in building learners' sense of militaristic national identity (Qazi, 2020). Thus, an Army officer is a very preferred and prestigious job in Pakistani society. To eliminate a social wrong, Fairclough (2001, p. 238) writes that it is necessary to first determine whether the social order requires racist, sexist, or chauvinist representations. In such a case, what are the 'interests' that it serves? In light of this argument, it is pertinent to note that these representations (religious, military) or gendered female identities, as illustrated in Fig. 5,

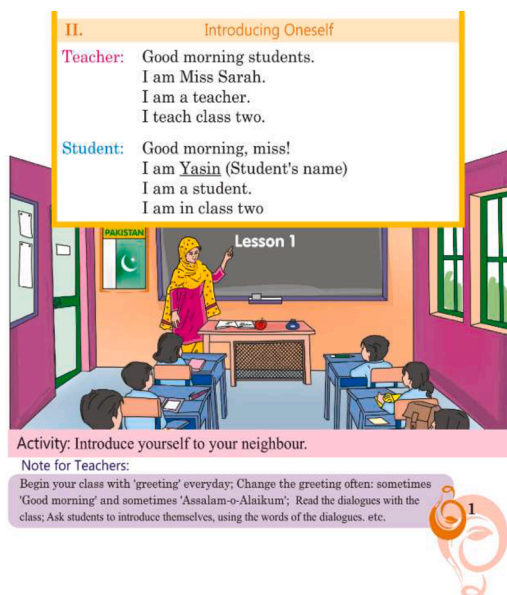


Fig 5. Muslim 'gendered identity' (Grade 2, p. 1).

serve the interests of Pakistan's ruling political elite, who use these values to manipulate the consciousness of the people in order to achieve their goals without allowing them to consider alternatives to resist power structures. Aziz (2010) states that ignorance has been intentionally harnessed in Pakistani textbooks to produce a generation with traits including docility, inability to ask questions, pleasures in illusions, accepting things they are told, and disregarding gaps in their knowledge. Channa et al. (2017) and Mahboob (2009) also assert that English language textbook discourses create docile subjectivities and religious identities to conform to the country's ruling elites.

Fig. 5 illustrates the interdiscursive relationship between female gendered identity and national subjecthood. It is built through hijab, an Islamic symbol obligatory for Muslim women. As can be seen in the flag hanging on the wall next to the teacher standing near the blackboard, this gendered female identity intersects with Pakistani identity. Fairclough's (N. 2010, p.230) use of 'semiosis' explains how discourse analysis examines the use of various semiotic modalities, including language and visual images. Hijab and flag establish semiotically what it means to be a Pakistani woman. The following excerpt illustrates more explicitly how nation is negotiated in classrooms:

Excerpt 8

It goes beyond doubt that **a nation's destiny is made in classrooms**, therefore, the co-ordination between the teachers and the parents is must so that the **destiny makers should** be led **in right direction** (Grade 11, Unit 2.4 p. 31).

A learner is depicted as the destiny maker of the nation who needs to be led in the 'right direction'. The excerpt does not explicitly illustrate this direction, but parents and teachers are argued to cooperate to establish it. Conversely, learners who receive the text are exposed to various discourse types that serve ruling class interests. Textbooks, for example, direct learners' thinking towards fixed ideological beliefs that transform the 'self' into a national subject. As Siddiqui (2016, p. 218) has noted, the content of textbooks may not be sensitive to gender, class, and religion. Interestingly, the excerpt above describes classrooms as sites of learner identity negotiation. Language scholars have endorsed classrooms' socio-political and cultural role in learning a foreign/second language (see McNamara, 2019; Pennycook, 2021). In the next section, I discuss how the constitution of national subjects is contrasted with conflicting discourses and diverse values, and how the Other appears as both empowered and marginalized.

5.2. Alterity, conflicting discourses, and diversity

In this section, I present findings relating to otherness, conflicting discourses and diversity, which establish that textbooks are not merely tools for the discursive construction of dominant identities and narratives. As Walkerdine (1990) notes, subjectivity construction in the classroom is partly historically shaped as well as culturally produced often as acts of resistance. As such, references in textbooks were identified relating to both external and internal Others and how their positions have shifted at different places. As an example, the following excerpts show how India has been depicted as an external Other in English language textbooks through historicizing and orchestrating national narratives.

Excerpt 9

When the plane took off, the instructor turned it away. Rashid realized that the plane was being hijacked. He fought very bravely to get control of the plane. The plane crashed about 51 kms from India. Both Rashid and the instructor were killed. Rashid gave his life for his country. He was awarded the highest military award Nishan-e-Haider. Pakistan is proud of Rashid Minhas Shaheed, Nishan-e-Haider, for his bravery and sacrifice (Grade 3, Unit 5.2, pp.57-58).

Excerpt 10

One of the biggest curses from which India is suffering is bribery and corruption (Grade 11, Unit 1.1., p. 3).

Excerpt 11

The Hindus believed in a caste system, which made it a sin for those at the top of the hierarchy to eat with the so-called lower human beings or in some cases even to touch them; the Muslims believed in the equality of all men, regarding even priesthood as unnecessary and a negation of the bond which between God and each of His-creatures (Grade 12, unit 4, p. 45).

An English language textbook of grade 3 as shown in excerpt 9 depicts two military officers as martyred as a result of a plane crash during the Pakistan-India war in 1971, perpetuating a discourse of war. The excerpt 10 comes from a biography of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the originator of Pakistan, who describes India as a place where corruption and bribery are rampant. Consequently, these statements place both countries at daggers drawn given the conflicted history of political and ideological conflicts in British India leading to Pakistan's independence in 1947 (see Aziz, 1967; 2010). Rosser (2003, p. 9) argues that Pakistan's past is intentionally written in contrast to Indian interpretation of history. Similarly, most Indians still view Pakistan as invalid, created without any real contribution to the freedom struggle. Alternative narratives coexist, however. According to Aziz (1967), a Pakistani historian, complex political circumstances in British India contributed to the creation of Pakistan. This can be explained in Foucault's view who argues that human sciences are discursively constructed, making such differences in history inevitable (Foucault, 1972). As he further notes when power relations are institutionalized, it becomes difficult to suppress them as evidenced in the present study where some discourses in schools are historicized and stabilized resulting in Otherisation (see Foucault in Rabinow, 1994, p. 169). Similarly, excerpt 11 is taken from a speech by Liaquat Ali Khan, Pakistan's first prime minister, at an American university. Based on cultural and religious differences between Hindus and Muslims in united India during British colonialism, this speech fabricates India as the Other. The negative portrayal of Hindus is overt in sentences discussing their caste system, while Muslim culture is portrayed as immaculate. The external Other in these instances is a result of discourse constraints on knowledge in textbooks (Foucault, 1975). In representing the internal Other, however, there are conflicting subject positions shown as both marginalized and included. As Baxter (2002, p. 839) explains, the relative powerlessness of subjects, specifically minority groups, is the function of discourse. Yet the frequency of units referencing minorities is very low; for instance, only 4 out of 434 units had a reference to Hindus or Christians as included. Fig. 6 illustrates the religious festivals of Muslims, Christians,

and Hindus, in addition to events such as Nauroz, which marks the first day of the Persian calendar and is observed by diverse ethnolinguistic groups around the world.

Foucault (1980) argues that the self is not fixed within a set of socialized, transferrable roles, but rather constantly positioned and repositioned by means of discourse. Accordingly, the above figures place Others (e.g., Hindus, Christians, or other minorities) at an advantage by empowering them through such festive celebrations at the same time. Fig. 6, however, separates all ethnic and religious groups by their festivals as shown in their specific greetings. This results in an absence of 'inter-faith dialogue', which a society like Pakistan needs given its current state of affairs. As an example of inclusion, Fig. 7 combined with the text describes the national flag of Pakistan with two colors: green and white, where white represents the minority and green represents peace and prosperity. Moreover, the crescent and star symbolize Islamic grace and spiritual progress. This can also be seen in the words of the nation's founding father in the following excerpts:

Excerpt 12

While Pakistan would be a state where the Muslims would be free to practice the teachings of their faith and to prosper economically. This is no way meant that the people of other faiths, living in the geographical boundaries of the new state, would, in any way, be lesser citizens (Grade 9, Unit 4.1. p. 79).

Excerpt 13

You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to your mosques or to any other place of worship in this state of Pakistan. We are starting in the days when there is no discrimination, no distinction between on community and another. We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one State (Grade 11, Unit 1.1. p. 4).

In excerpts 12 and 13, the words of Quaid-e-Azam - the man who created Pakistan - are quoted to guarantee the security and protection of religious minorities in the country. According to him, all citizens are equal regardless of faith. When he was elected first president of Pakistan's constituent assembly on August 11, 1947, he expressed the kind of freedom he envisioned for all communities. On ethnic lines, however, some scholars maintain Quaid-e-Azam did not address this equality, as he declared Urdu the national language of Pakistan in 1948 at Dhaka University, now called Bangladesh (see Mustafa, 2010). In the aftermath of his death, this led to the Bengali language movement and the killing of Bengali students on February 21, 1952, which was later declared International Mother Language Day by the UN. The issue of language has also been critiqued by Aziz (2010, p. 184) who argues that no national language in the world is spoken by only 2% of the population, i.e., Urdu.



Fig 6. Grade 3 Unit 4.1., p.44.

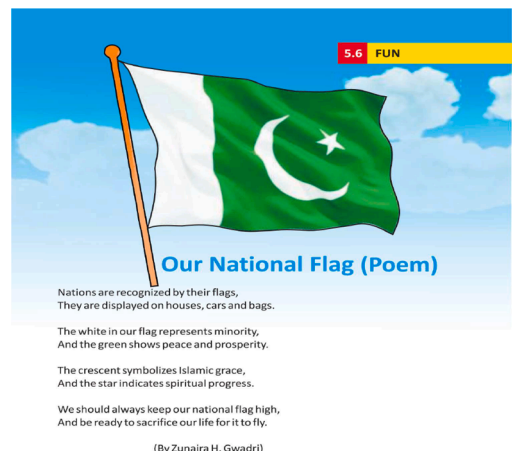


Fig 7. Grade 5, Unit 5.6.

Because of its affiliation with the ruling elite, it became the national language.

In textbooks, such ethnic otherness has been avoided, yet religiously, it has been emphasized to ensure security and protection. Foucault (1980, p. 98) describes power as a netlike organization. As individuals circulate between its threads, they are also always in the position of simultaneously exercising and undergoing power. According to him, 'discourses are tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations; there can exist different and even contradictory discourse within the same strategy' (Foucault, 1976, p. 102). In this case, the English language textbooks contain contradictory discourses that celebrate as well as exclude others from officially sanctioned knowledge. It is a consequence of stable power relations exercised in the institutionalization of discursive practices that ethnic and linguistic omissions occur in textbooks. In fact, words on religious pluralism as uttered by the founding father of the nation contradict considerably with how textbooks represent minorities.

Excerpt 14 Hassan: okay. Can we slaughter one of your cows?

Jawad: We will ask Baba [father]. I am sure he will allow us to slaughter one of his ten cows. (Grade 7, Unit 7.1 p. 150)

Hindus revere cows. In spite of that, there is an explicit reference to slaughtering cows, which is a religious tradition (e.g., animal sacrifice) observed by Muslims worldwide, in memory of Prophet Ibrahim and his son Prophet Ismail. The content is sensitive for Hindu students and teachers in Pakistani schools. There is apparent insecurity among English language teachers and students in schools when it comes to contrasting religious belief systems, with Muslim belief being emphasized more heavily (Lashari, Shah & Memon, in print). This process is described by Foucault (1971) as power producing discourse through social exclusion, selection, and dominance. The rules of prohibition, division and rejection, and truth versus falsehood further marginalize people. In an institutionalized discourse operating through school textbooks, Hindus' worship of cows is rejected as a false belief. As a contrast, excerpt 15 below in another English language textbook ensures the protection of different beliefs as follows:

Excerpt 15

The first duty of a government is to maintain law and order so that the life, property and religious beliefs of its subjects are fully protected by the State (Grade 11, Unit 1.1 p.3).

The subject positions addressed in excerpt 14 and excerpt 15 are conflicting since the former protects the dominant religious beliefs, while the latter violates them. Consequently, these discourses produce conflicting subject positions of EFL learners addressed in textbooks. Foucault (in Rabinow, 1994, p. 290) contends that subject is not always identical since it is constituted historically as a result of 'truth games' that come into play through practices of power. Paul (2014) has noted this violation of religious freedom in Pakistani textbooks that is legally protected in Article 22(1) of the constitution. Textbooks on the one hand claim minorities to have their voice, freedom, security, and sanctity, but on the other hand exclude them from the school knowledge-making process and dissemination as can further be witnessed in Fig. 8 and excerpt 16 below.

Excerpt 16 Juma: Assalam-o-alaikum. Welcome to our school.

Agricultural expert: Walekum Assalam. Welcome to the agricultural stall (Grade 8, Unit 4.1 p. 64)

Fig. 8 and the excerpt 16 represent classroom and educational exhibition settings, respectively, where greetings are predominantly Islamic e.g., *Assalam-o-alaikum* meaning 'peace be upon you'. A single reference to other cultural or religious greetings in Pakistan was not found. Foucault (1971, p. 50) explains discourse as violence done to things or as a practice imposed on them. Such a view can explain how

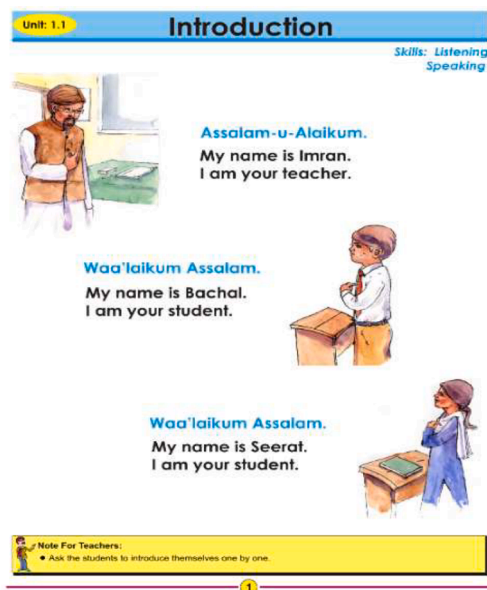


Fig 8. Grade 1, Unit 1, p. 1.

greetings enact semiotic violence on other groups by excluding their culture and religion. This alterity in the constitution of nations has been noted by several researchers across the world (Chaturvedi, 2002; Gürsel, 2018; Hagren, 2021; Jubran, 2002). Meanwhile, textbooks seem to be promoting diversity of languages, faith, and culture simultaneously as follows:

Excerpt 17

All mankind is from Adam, and Adam was created from dust. An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab; a white has no superiority over a black, nor does black have superiority over a white, except by piety and good action (Grade 9 Unit 1.1. p. 3)

Excerpt 18

People in different parts of the world speak different languages, follow different religions, eat different types of food, and celebrate different occasions. They also enjoy doing different things and playing different sports. But we are all human beings, so we must respect each other's culture and religion (Grade 6, Unit 5.3 p. 79)

Excerpt 19

Knowing Children from other nations 'Beneath our skin and bone and mind, most of our colors are amazingly the same' Anonymous (Grade 6, Unit 5.1. p. 79)

Excerpt 20

There is so much ancient history here that we will need months, if not years, to really visit each site in order to understand and appreciate this variety of culture and diversity of faiths that has shaped this country over several millenniums. We are, indeed, the proud inheritors of a great and ancient heritage (Grade 7, Unit 5.1 p. 100)

Since these excerpts are inclusive in terms of content, they are empowering. In excerpt 17, for example, prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) words are quoted to reject any racial or ethnic supremacy. Also, excerpt 19 conforms to this view of human beings as being equal. As a result, these excerpts from textbooks offer learners opportunities to take on a subject position that values other races, cultures, ethnicities, and faiths in a wider sense of their identity. As Baxter (2002, p. 829) argues, individuals negotiate and are shaped by their subject positions within multiple and often conflicting discourses derived from historical, social, and cultural contexts. Students' subjectivities are thus negotiated

as embodying agency rather than being passively constituted. Excerpts 18 and 20 also emphasize the diversity of languages, religions, food, and festivals while directing learners to respect them. Foucault (1976, p.167) argues that there are always possibilities of changing the situation. According to him, though there is no point where one is free from power relations, yet some power relations are mobile that allow subjects to negotiate their positions and reclaim alternative subjectivities. The discourses of diversity as represented in textbooks open up a space for identities that go contrary to dominant forms of subject positions articulated in hegemonic discourses. Thus, this establishes that while textbooks emphasize a single identity through institutionalized school discursive practices, they also allow students possibilities to articulate alternative and conflicting discourses that may lead them to negotiate their subject positions. As Walkerdine (1990, p. 3) points out, the subject isn't unique, it is produced as a nexus of contradictory subjectivities in constantly shifting power relations, rendering them powerless at times and powerful at others.

6. Conclusion

The present study analyzed 12 English language textbooks in one province of Pakistan using Fairclough's dialectical relational approach (DRA) as well as Foucault's writings to understand how discourses of nation building are constructed at the stake of the Other. Moreover, the study also looked into what competing discourses were available to learners coming from diverse linguistic, cultural and religious backgrounds in Pakistan. The findings suggest that the textbook discourses create a national subject that is shaped through several constituent elements, such as singular epistemic version of religion i.e., Islam, patriotic sentiments, local geographical affiliations, historical (religious and political) heroes, Muslim gender identity, promotion of specific heritage languages (e.g., Persian and Arabic) and Pakistani literature. Such discursive shaping takes place both through the written texts as well as visual images embedded in English textbooks. Consequently, these discourses that orient to national unity result in the formation of the Other i.e., both internal (Christians, Hindus and others) and the external (i.e., India). However, findings also reveal that the discourses of constituting alterity in English textbooks are found to be contradictory and offer different subject positions to learners. For example, some of the discourses are identified as empowering marginalized communities living in Pakistan i.e., Christians and Hindus as shown in their celebrations of religious festivals. Likewise, ethnic inclusivity was also shown in textbooks examined.

Such evidence in Pakistani English textbooks as found in the present study (see also Shah, Umrani, & Lashari, forthcoming on poetry section in English textbooks) indicates a progressive shift in discourses since the previous studies in Pakistan have shown a considerable erasure of the Other as a result of overloaded ideological discourses. In particular, the study has implications for learners from diverse backgrounds in Pakistan as well as other countries where learners when exposed to content of such kind can enable them to negotiate their different subject positions and think of multiple perspectives and discursive practices that interact in English classes. Teachers can also benefit from findings of this study globally to re-envision their pedagogical beliefs and use of resources that underrepresent their learners in classrooms. Lastly, the textbook producers/publishers can also use these findings to further improve the content of learning materials by addressing diverse learner identities in English as F/L2 classrooms. As in the case of Pakistan, I believe that there is still a lot that can be done in the way of inclusive education and to ensure that everyone is valued and respected equally in academic and social spaces. The findings of the study are country-specific i.e., Pakistan and focused on one province e.g., Sindh. Moreover, the study has examined only English textbooks. Therefore, generalizations may be avoided to different subjects and contexts. As such, the findings of the study indicate the power of textbooks to shape learner positionalities in English language classes.

Declaration of Competing Interest

Author expresses no conflict of interest.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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