

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Citizenship Education Textbook for Primary School Students in Singapore

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Abstract : This study focuses on how the Character and Citizenship Education textbook in Singapore primary schools deliver preferred and desired qualities to students and therefore reveals how discourse in textbooks can facilitate and perpetuate certain social practices. In this way, this study also serves to encourage the critical thinking of textbook writers and school educators by unveiling the nuanced message through language use that facilitates the perpetuation of social practices in a society. In Singapore, Character and Citizenship Education is a compulsory subject for primary school students. Under the framework of 21st Century Competencies, Character and Citizenship Education in Singapore aims to help students thrive in this fast-changing world. The Singapore government is involved in the development of CCE curriculum in schools from primary schools to pre-university. Inevitably, the CCE curriculum is not free from ideological influences. This qualitative study utilizes Fairclough's three-dimensional theory and his framework of three assumptions to analyze the Character and Citizenship Education textbook for Primary 1 and to reveal ideologies in this textbook. Data for the analysis in this study are the textual parts of the whole textbook for Primary 1 students as this book is used at the beginning of citizenship education in primary schools. It is significant because it promotes messages about CCE to the foundation years of a child's education. The findings of this study show that the four revealed ideologies, namely pragmatism, communitarianism, nationalism, and multiculturalism, are not only dated back in the national history but also updated and explained by the current demands for Singapore's thriving and prosperity in a sustainable term. This study ends with a discussion of the implications of this study. By pointing out the ideologies in this textbook and how they are embedded in the discourse, this study may help teachers and textbook writers realize the possible political involvement in the book and therefore develop their recognition of the implicit influence of lexical choice on their teaching and writing. In addition, by exploring the ideologies in this book and comparing them with ideologies in past textbooks, this study helps researchers in this area on how language influences readers and reflects certain social demands.

Keywords : citizenship education, critical discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, textbook analysis

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