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Multimodality in critical language textbook analysis

ABSTRACT

Increasingly, studies are taking account of multimodality when analyzing language textbooks. Due to the diversity of multimodal frameworks used in analyses, and the interdisciplinary nature of language textbook studies, conceptual differences arise that are important to discuss – which is the purpose of this paper. Specifically, I argue that multimodal analyses of language textbooks can be divided into two groups based on how they conceptualize meaning. One examines how textbooks' textual-visual content encodes and communicates *ideas about the world*, treating meaning as *representation*. A second set of research studies is focused on how multimodal elements in textbooks foster interpersonal relations between text producers and readers, thus viewing the meaning textbooks communicate as *interaction*. While each approach is valid, I argue that neither places sufficient emphasis on the fact that textbooks are a didactic genre where learners' engagement with any meaning is heavily guided. As such, critical textbook analysis should attempt to demonstrate the ideological nature of meaning-making by examining the interplay of multimodal representations, the interactive meaning of textbooks' multimodal material as well as the pedagogic-didactic frame within which learners encounter them. The article utilizes an example from a popular English as a foreign language textbook to illustrate these points.

KEYWORDS: textbook analysis; multimodality; meaning; social semiotics; critical discourse analysis

Introduction

Discourse analytic scholarship of the last fifteen years has seen an expansion of theory and research into the multimodal aspects of meaning-making, no doubt in recognition of the growing dominance of visual and spatial aspects of communication in an increasingly screen-mediated communicational landscape (Kress, 2003). Within educational linguistics, a field concerned with the applications of linguistic theory in contexts of teaching and

learning, the multimodal turn has spawned theory and research on multimodal literacy, exploring what it takes to create and interpret meaning from multiple semiotic modes or systems (Jewitt & Kress, 2003; Kress, 2010; Serafini, 2014). Several analytic frameworks have also been developed in order to offer tools for the analysis of multimodal meaning-making, many of them underpinned by Systemic Functional Linguistic theory (e.g., O'Halloran, 2004; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Multimodality and multimodal literacy have been researched as a goal of literacy education, as well as a foundational aspect of the semiotic activities of classrooms and instructional materials that aim to promote learning.

As a result, the multimodal turn has also influenced analyses of language textbooks, as published research increasingly scrutinizes not just the linguistic aspects of textbooks but a range of other semiotic modes. This shift is timely given that today's textbooks are highly visual in their design and given that most textbook publishers now offer a plethora of digital supplements to their print-based materials. However, despite the proliferation of multimodal analyses, I argue in this paper that there is some room for more attention to conceptual detail and clarity. In specific, my goal is to draw attention to conceptual distinctions concerning the notion of meaning and to show how these distinctions engender different types of analysis, and more importantly, enable researchers to make different types of claims about textbooks. This is important if critical language textbook analysis is to develop as a theoretically more unified field of study. But first, in order to make the applicability of my arguments clear, I provide a brief overview of what I mean by 'critical language textbook studies' in the rest of the Introduction.

Textbooks are researched from a variety of disciplines and perspectives. Within applied linguistics, the study of language textbooks is an established field of research that broadly falls into two traditions or perspectives. In materials development, textbooks are studied primarily as *pedagogic* aids in the classroom-based acquisition of a second or foreign language. Researchers in this field are concerned with identifying principles for designing and evaluating language teaching materials that take account of language learning theory as well as the needs and characteristics of the target language learners (Tomlinson, 2011; 2012). A second research orientation that starts from a broader theoretical base examines

language textbooks primarily as *cultural* artefacts; as repositories of meaning about the world that learners encounter as they acquire the target (first or foreign) language (Curdt-Christiansen, 2017; Risager, 2018; Weninger & Williams, 2005). Often, such studies of language textbooks take an explicitly critical perspective in their analyses and highlight biases, omissions and misconstruals in the way textbooks represent various aspects of the world. In doing so, they conceptualize textbooks as curriculum selections: "purposive and normative inclusions of specific texts and discourses, skills and competences, knowledges and ideologies from a virtually infinite archive of possible selections" (Luke, 2015, p. 214). In a sense, both materials development and culturally-oriented analyses of language textbooks are normative. But while the former rely for the most part on theoretical criteria of evaluation, the latter often evoke principles of social justice and equity in assessing language textbooks.

This paper is concerned with the second strand of language textbook research. While the field is not unitary, possibly due to the variety of theories, topics and analytic frameworks employed, it constitutes a recognizable body of work that has problematized language textbooks as powerful ideological tools. Studies have explicated how textbooks reinforce normative assumptions about gender and sexuality through the linguistic and visual depiction of men and women (e.g., Gray 2013; Lee 2014; Lee & Collins, 2010). Others have scrutinized how textbooks often perpetuate ethnic and racial stereotypes through the texts and images they contain (e.g., Horii, 2015; Weninger & Williams, 2005; Yamada, 2010). Research has also drawn attention to how language textbooks serve national-political interests through their visual-textual content (e.g., Chapelle, 2016; Gulliver, 2010; Stranger-Johannessen, 2015). Finally, a growing number of researchers are documenting the imprints of capitalism and cultural globalization in the ways language textbooks offer up identities, cultures and languages for consumption (Bori, 2018; Gray, 2010; Kramsch & Vinall, 2015). In most studies, examinations of textbooks from a multimodal perspective is quickly becoming the norm.

Analyzing textbooks multimodally

At its simplest, a multimodal analysis of language textbooks entails researchers examining meanings expressed not only via linguistic means, but also through non-linguistic systems of signification. This very broad understanding of multimodality covers a wide range of studies that can be further subdivided based on whether or how they connect the different semiotic modalities in their analysis. A significant number of studies have treated visuals quite independently from the textual material found in textbooks; in other words, while they recognize the central role of images in representing and communicating meaning, visual analysis takes place as a separate albeit complementary step. For instance, researchers often use content analysis to code and count instances of a particular visual representation, as did Yuen (2011) in her analysis of the frequency with which various foreign cultures appeared in Hong Kong English language textbooks. In Yuen's study, textual and visual material was coded and analysed using the same categories, but their interconnection was not explored.

Qualitative analyses of visuals also often analyze images in relative isolation from texts. For instance, Kramsch & Vinall's (2015) poststructuralist analysis of Spanish language textbooks unearthed how the language as well as visuals of the textbooks represent an exotic Latin American culture that is available for consumption through the learning of Spanish – thus promulgating an instrumentalist, means-to-end rationale for foreign language learning. Again, the analysis of text and image are clearly connected through a common analytic category or theoretical focus. However, in their study and others like it (e.g., Joo, Chik & Djonov, 2019; Horii, 2015) potential interconnections between the different modes do not constitute the primary focus of investigation.

A second, much smaller strand within textbook research entails researchers conducting multimodal analyses by looking at the intermodal relations between texts and surrounding images. Importantly, in these studies, intermodal relations constitute the starting point for analysis, although there is some diversity in terms of how those relations are theorized and how their significance is articulated. One prominent line of research draws on multimodal theoretical frameworks that have been developed from systemic functional linguistics. In one of the earliest studies of this kind, Chen (2010a) used Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005) to examine how character voice, editor voice and reader voice are negotiated through

various multimodal resources in the textbooks such as labelling, dialogue balloons and illustrations. More recently, Teo and Zhu (2018) analyzed EFL textbooks from China in order to scrutinize how the co-deployment of visuals and text fulfil the curricular goals for affect and attitude education.

Not all language textbooks studies exploring intermodality have relied on systemic functional linguistic theory. Stranger-Johannessen (2015) for instance examined text-image connections in a Ugandan EFL textbook for their potential to facilitate dialogue on intercultural topics. He looked at whether text and image were topically related, whether images had captions, what exercises followed the text/image, and whether the image was a drawing or photograph. In short, his analysis took a more pedagogical angle while also being critical in its assessment of the textbook's multimodal material as inadequate source of cultural learning. Weninger and Kiss (2013) have similarly argued that when analyzing culture in language textbooks, it is important to take the pedagogic genre of textbooks as a starting point; in other words, the fact that meanings in textbooks are overtly mediated through the didactics of tasks and exercises. Chapelle's (2016) analysis underscores a similar point. In characterizing intermodal connections in French as a foreign language textbooks, she contends that a strong cohesion of image and text and accompanying activities facilitates a richer understanding and deeper learning of culture and language (p. 177).

In reviewing the field of multimodal textbook analysis, it is rather difficult to do justice to the complexity of most studies. This is because even if researchers rely on similar theories, they are often operationalized differently, in light of each study's specific focus and context. In the following section, my aim is to momentarily bracket this context-driven diversity in order to examine multimodal language textbook studies with regard to the fundamental concept underlying them all; that is, how we can understand and study meaning in textbooks.

Meaning as representation vs. action

To guide the discussion, I will draw on theoretical ideas about the functions of language that have been more recently and most comprehensively addressed in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL).[1] SFL was developed by Michael Halliday as a theory of language that rests

on two fundamental tenets. First, that languages must be understood above all as resources for the construal of meaning (Halliday, 1975); the internal organization of a language reflects the social functions which it has evolved to serve. Second, any language must be understood as networks of meaning potential that are instantiated in the contextual use of language as text. The meaning of a text thus derives partly from the choices that were selected (in contrast to what was not) from the system of available resources (Halliday, 2013).

Further to the first tenet, systemic functional linguistics posits that human language has evolved to serve two basic functions in relation to our eco-social environment: to make sense of human experience and for people to enact social relationships (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 30). Within the theoretical framework, the first function is called the ideational metafunction and refers to how we use language to represent aspects of the physical, social or mental world – the fundamental idea that language construes experience. The second basic function is called the interpersonal (i.e., interactive and personal) metafunction and captures the recognition that texts enact social relations and act on others; i.e., that language is fundamentally addressive. The theory also postulates a third, *textual* metafunction, which is considered to be an 'enabling or facilitating function' (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 30) and as it is not of central concern to this paper it will not be elaborated on here.

Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) further explain the difference between the two metafunctions or 'modes of meaning' the following way: "if the ideational function of the grammar is 'language as reflection', this [the interpersonal metafunction] is 'language as action'." (p.30). Fairclough (2003) echoes this distinction in his theorization of discourse as part of social practices, although the three types of meaning he proposes – action, representation and identification – do not exactly map onto Halliday's. Nevertheless, the idea that representation as a basic function of language is separate from a more action-oriented function (captured in SFG's interpersonal metafunction and in 'action' and 'identification' in Fairclough's model) is clearly present in both theories. This is important because, as discussed above, SFG and CDA are two key theoretical frameworks that critical

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language textbook research draws on. Further, I argue that this conceptual distinction between types of meaning or functions of language is quite crucial for understanding what kinds of claims one can make about the meanings that textbooks communicate. Yet it is also important to add that the distinction has more general applicability beyond textbook analysis and maybe useful for any kind of research that is centrally focused on meaning and meaning-making.

Meaning as representation in textbook analysis

A good majority of studies that analyse language textbooks from a critical perspective do so with an understanding of meaning as representation (Weninger, 2018). To be sure, this is rarely explicitly discussed in theoretical terms, unless the study draws directly on SFG theory. When examining textbooks from the vantage point of representational or ideational meaning, researchers ask questions such as: *What/who is represented in the textbooks and how? Which cultures are represented in language textbooks and how (and which are excluded)? What kind of language is represented as legitimate?* When the analytic focus is on meaning as representation, textbooks themselves are conceptualized primarily as cultural and curricular artefacts. In other words, they are examined as repositories of shared meaning and knowledge about the world (culture) and more specifically, as repositories of *legitimate* knowledge about the world (curriculum) – in the case of language textbooks, also about particular aspects of the world to do with languages. Crucially, because of their focus on representation, language learners do not really enter the picture in such analyses other than through the assumption that these representations will impact them one way or another. Such analyses view discourse *as text* rather than discourse *as process* (Canale, 2016); the latter being learners' interaction with the textbook.

Let us look at an example to illustrate what a focus on (and multimodal analysis of) representation in textbooks would likely entail. Figure 1 is an excerpt from *Headway* (Soars & Soars, 2003, p. 24), a highly popular, global series of commercial English as a foreign language textbook from Oxford University Press.
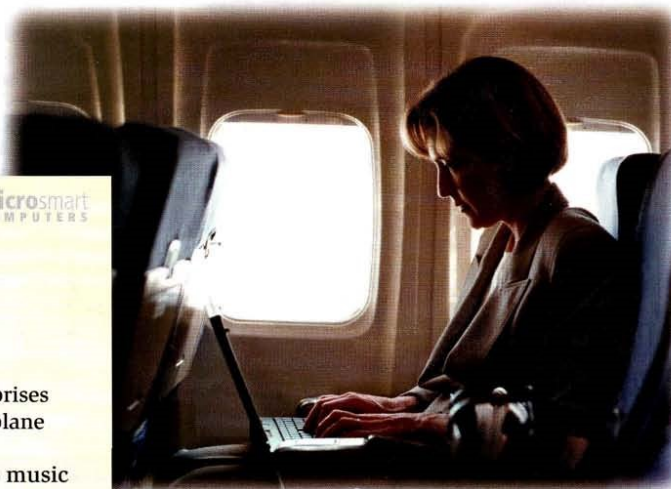
Figure 1. Example activity from *Headway* (Soars & Soars, 2003, p. 24)

One could analyse the text and image in Practice section 1 in terms of representation of gender and work. There are multiple ways we could go about this, but almost certainly, we could focus on the image and the accompanying text as representations of values and beliefs attached to the role of working women in developed economies. Depending on the analytic approach, one could examine the series of active verbs (or material processes in SFG) associated with Judy as subject (actor), such as *got up*, *packed*, *drove*, *flew*, *visited*, *wrote*, and infer a representation of Judy as a dynamic individual engaged in a range of activities that span both public and private domains. In terms of the visual, one may note the woman's attire, her gaze at the laptop, the fact that it is a photograph rather than a cartoon, and argue that it is a realistic representation of a female professional, immersed in her work. We could applaud this representation as progressive for depicting a woman working in the field of IT – a heavily male-dominated industry. The text and also the image represent a woman jet-setting to business meetings, balancing work-life as she gets home in time to put her child to bed, and still has time to relax in the evening. Of course, we could also critique this representation as a highly idealized depiction of the life of working women

that remains silent on domestic chores, the need for support networks and the stress associated with work travel. My main point here is not so much about the details of this particular case, but rather what a focus on meaning as representation enables us to say as analysts. Examining textbooks as repositories of ideational or representational meaning gives us a somewhat static understanding focused on the textual product and presumed interpretations of the ideological meanings it communicates. It does not deal with the interactivity of meaning-making in textbooks; how learners are positioned, addressed or implicated in/through the semiotic details of the represented world. As such, while it enables researchers to critique the cultural politics of curricula, it gives them very little empirical license to draw conclusions about the impact of representations on learners and on the process of learning.

Meaning as interaction in textbook analysis

An increasing number of studies are investigating textbooks by looking at the interactive meanings that texts and images communicate. In contrast to studies of textbook meaning as representation, readers/viewers are a central element in the conceptualization of this line of research. A starting question for such analyses might be: *How do textual and visual elements in the textbook engage readers?* A framework commonly drawn upon for this type of work is Kress & van Leeuwen's (2006) approach to visual analysis, which itself is situated in the broader field of social semiotics and has close theoretical links to SFL. Kress and van Leeuwen adopt the SFL distinction between ideational and interpersonal metafunction, and develop a rich analytic apparatus of visual resources to describe how elements of visual depiction function to communicate meanings about social relations between text producer and consumer, or between the viewer and people represented in images. It is precisely this latter that studies of language textbooks have drawn on to analyse meaning as interaction.

Let us return to the example from Figure 1 to illustrate what researchers may be looking at when examining interpersonal and interactive meanings in textbook images. Using the analytic tools of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), we could identify the image of the woman in Figure 1 as an *offer* – she is engaged in her work, looking at her laptop rather than gazing at us. This offer image positions the viewer as an observer; there is no direct contact to the represented participant as there would be if the woman gazed directly at us. Given that the

picture is framed as a medium close shot, with a frontal horizontal angle and an eye-level vertical angle, we may argue that viewers are invited into a somewhat disengaged, neutral social relationship with the represented participant – a position that is quite common in textbooks, especially in the higher grades (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 133ff.). While a single textbook image is rarely ideologically consequential, we could, as part of a larger study, analyze all images in a textbook to see if there is a pattern in the manner or level of interactivity with different types or groups of represented participants.

I have discussed the above type of analysis as interactional meaning, separate from the first type, which was meaning as representation. This is according to the theoretical model sketched earlier, which itself is based on systemic functional linguistic theory. Yet in an important sense, the second analysis of the image of the woman working in an airplane is still an analysis of representation. Yes, the focus here was on how the image engages or positions the viewer, and as such, the analysis is not restricted to the text alone. But the social relationship that the analysis posits is merely an imaginary one. This is readily acknowledged by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) when they state:

> The disjunction between the context of production and the context of reception has yet another effect: it causes social relations to be *represented rather than enacted* […] When images confront us with friendly smiles or arrogant stares, we are not obliged to respond, even though we do recognize how we are addressed. *The relation is only represented.* We are imaginarily rather than really put in the position of the friend, the customer, the lay person who must defer to the expert. (p. 116, emphasis added)

For this reason, analyses of images that use visual semiotics are still analyzing representation. The difference is that in addition to asking, *What/who is represented in the textbooks and how?* They also try to answer the question, *What kind of **imaginary** engagement does the textbook promote with/for the viewer*? Another drawback of an approach focused solely on interactive meaning of this type is that it runs the risk of divorcing the analysis from the social-historical context of semiosis which is needed for critical understanding. While the addressivity of textbook meaning is laid bare and the impact of visual meaning on learners explicated, there is less emphasis on the interest and

motivation of the sign maker (Kress, 2010). To use Kress' (2010) distinction, the focus of analysis rests on *design* as a semiotic activity rather than on *rhetoric* as the politics of communication (cf. p. 49f).

Meaning as action in textbook analysis

In what follows, I want to argue that in order for us to analyse interactive meaning, meaning-as-action, in language textbooks, it is essential to also consider textbooks as *pedagogical* artefacts; as a particular genre that provides explicit (and implicit) guidance or instruction as to what learners should do with the represented materials. Relevant questions guiding the analysis from this vantage point include: *How does the language textbook engage the learner with the knowledge represented? What do the learners have to do with this represented knowledge?* where knowledge is understood as meanings assembled and presented as legitimate in language textbooks. The key point is that learners are typically not free to interpret or use language textbooks in personalized ways; their interpretive and productive efforts are very much guided (Weninger & Kiss, 2013). When they read texts or view images, it is almost always done as part of a task or activity set by the textbook. To return to the quote from Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) above, in most classrooms, learners *are* obliged to respond in the manner set by the textbook. Naturally, textbook usage is mediated by the situated interactions of classrooms within which they get used; and in fact teachers may deviate from tasks and activities prescribed by the textbook.[2] However, here we are concerned with research on textbooks outside their contexts of use. And examining the pedagogic aspects of language textbooks, I argue, gets us possibly the closest to an understanding of interactive meaning.

Once again, let us turn to Figure 1 to illustrate and discuss what a multimodal analysis of this kind might entail. The first step may involve establishing the relationship between the verbal and visual elements as part of the activity. Chapelle (2016, p. 162) proposed five types of relevant relationships between texts/tasks and accompanying images: 1) task essential; 2) text enhancing; 3) generally orienting; 4) theme building; 5) independent. In the case of Figure 1, the text (Judy's schedule for the day) and the accompanying tasks (asking and answering questions about what Judy was doing at particular times during the day, and then doing the same for oneself) can be completed without the image of Judy. In this case, the

relationship between the two may be best described as text enhancing: "The image illustrates some specific aspect of the text, making the text potentially more meaningful to the student. The image appears to have been selected precisely to cohere with and make more vivid an image in the text." (Chapelle, 2016, p. 162). In other words, while the visual in Figure 1 is not essential to the completion of the task (since the task is entirely focused on language), it invites us to imagine that this is Judy, the person described in the text, that this is what a female working professional looks like. Crucially, this connection between text and image is not made explicit through a caption or through any explicit linguistic reference in the instruction that would connect the two; the connection is established by spatial proximity through a partial overlay of Judy's image and her daily schedule.

There are a number of points to be made based on this simple examination of the visual-textual links within this activity. First, while learners may look at the image and ponder its meaning or significance, the pedagogic task does not explicitly ask them to do so. In other words, while an analysis of representation may uncover a range of ideological meanings that the image communicates, it is likely that learners would not scrutinize the image, or even dwell on it very long. This is because they are not required to do so in order to complete the task, which is firmly focused on the production of sentences using the past progressive. This relates to the second point: the image is not presented in a context that would cue students to ideological interpretations focused on gender and work. There is solid experimental evidence from cognitive and social psychology (e.g., Franconeri et al., 2013; Miyake & Shah, 1999) showing that the relevance or perceived value of information (including visual information) to a current or future task or goal has a predictive influence on what is seen and read, and at what level of detail. As mentioned before, the immediate task set by the textbook is firmly focused on information exchange using the correct target form (*What was Judy doing at 8am? What was she doing at 3pm?*). The image has no immediate relevance or value to the completion of this linguistic task. The broader context of the unit, titled *Telling tales*, is grammatically anchored through a focus on the past tense. Apart from Judy's workday schedule, the learners read an Algonquien (a North American indigenous tribe) tale of a warrior and biographical texts on Pablo Picasso and Ernest Hemingway, all written in past tense. There is no thematic emphasis on gender or on work which could make the image of Judy, as an example of gendered representation, relevant to students' viewing.

Third, and somewhat obvious at this point, none of the tasks explicitly instruct students to engage critically with the represented knowledge, be it in linguistic form (e.g., Judy's daily schedule) or in the visual mode (e.g., the image of Judy). The ideological meanings ascribed to the representation of gender and work are likely to remain hidden and uncontested – this lack of critical pedagogical framing in my view is as much a concern for critical analysis as the representational meanings language textbooks communicate.

There are numerous ways in which this activity could be expanded to make the ideological meanings of the image and the text the focus of attention. With a spotlight on gender, there could be a discussion about how realistic this representation is. What is omitted from the picture? What is omitted from Judy's schedule? What would this schedule look like for Mark (i.e., a male professional)? Learners could be encouraged to create or search for a different illustration that depicts what is not included (e.g., the woman falling asleep while reading to her child at the end of the day). To draw out class ideologies, the activity could be expanded through a comparative aspect, asking questions such as: What is a typical work routine for females in different types of jobs? In what ways are those different from Judy's? What kinds of consequences do the differences mean? (For instance, do they get home in time to put their children to bed?).

As illustrated through this brief example, a multimodal analysis focusing on interactive meaning makes the pedagogic aspects of language textbooks an important part of the analysis. It does not negate or neglect analyses of representation but rather takes them a step further: given the representations of gender and work (or any other issue under scrutiny) identified in the text and image, how are learners invited to engage with this knowledge? In the example analysed above, we saw that learners' task required interaction with the semantic meaning of Judy's schedule only, and did not expect them to even look at the image, let alone discuss sociocultural meanings embedded in the linguistic-visual material of the activity. In sum, a combined examination of the knowledge and pedagogy of textbooks promises to give analysts the broadest base from which to assess and critique the ideological impact that language textbooks exert through their interplay of text, image and task/activity.

Implications

My main argument in this paper has been that we can enhance the conceptual strength and coherence of research into language textbooks by considering the distinction between meaning as representation and meaning as interaction. This is particularly important in light of the growing interest in multimodal analyses of language textbooks where researchers explore the links between various semiotic modes employed by textbooks to communicate meaning. Recognizing this conceptual distinction does not merely boost the conceptual clarity of research. For critical research in particular, I argue, the distinction is necessary as it opens up slightly different pathways for critique. Figure 2 aims to capture this multimodally. In essence, when we analyze textbook content in terms of representation, we can situate our critique in a broader discussion of curriculum and the cultural, political-economic factors that have shaped the process of curricular selection. This is in fact what many researchers do, and there is a rich body of work on textbooks within critical curriculum studies and also language education (e.g., Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991; Dendrinos 1992; Luke 1988; Risager 2018) that can frame the discussion theoretically. In short, critiquing language textbooks for what they depict (represent) multimodally and how constitutes a *critique of curriculum.*
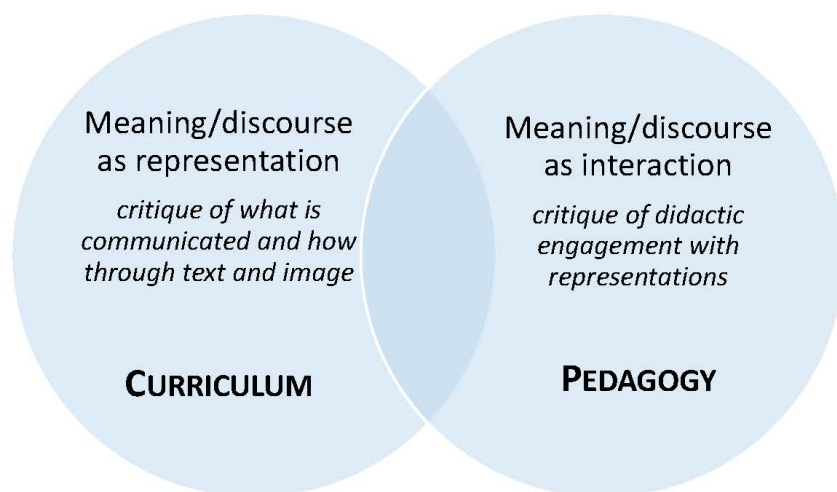

Figure 2. Conceptual framework for critical multimodal language textbook analysis

When we analyze meaning in textbooks as interaction, we are, or at least in my view should be, mounting a *critique of pedagogy*. This can be based on an examination of how the textbook guides learners to engage and interact with the represented material; i.e., which types of tasks, activities dominate the textbook, whether visuals are explicitly drawn on as meaning-making resources (and thus foster more than linguistic competence), or whether learners have opportunities to reflect on and make connections to their lives and experiences. Theoretically, such work could engage with the rich body of critical pedagogical scholarship that has developed in relation to language and literacy education (e.g., Kubota & Lin, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1992; Norton & Toohey, 2004; Paris & Alim 2017; Phipps & Guilherme, 2004). Theories and concepts from this field of scholarship could provide a normative basis for the critical analysis and evaluation of the pedagogy of contemporary language textbooks.

While the two types of meaning, and the two aspects of analysis discussed in this paper are of course interrelated (as indicated in Figure 2), they are not the same. Curriculum is not the same as pedagogy; the former has to do with knowledge while the latter with how learners are instructed to engage with the knowledge (cf. Young 2010); it is their interplay that shapes learning. Given that language textbooks are both curricular artefacts and a pedagogic genre, it stands to reason that analyses that aim to critique textbooks should pay equal attention to their dual nature. Doing so would also go a step in the direction of bringing critical textbook analyses with their focus on culture and meaning in closer alignment and possibly in dialogue with the tradition of materials development.

What are some of the methodological implications of the arguments presented here for multimodal language textbook research? As discussed above, the field is already characterized by a diversity of focus and method, although a few frameworks such as critical discourse analysis, systemic functional linguistics and multimodal approaches derived from them (social semiotics, visual semiotics, Appraisal Theory) seem to be prevalent. Analyses of meaning as representation, the more sizeable body of work with a longer history, are well-served by the established analytical methods of these theories since an examination and critique of knowledge/representation has been a central concern of this tradition (e.g., Bezemer & Kress 2009, 2010; Christie & Martin, 2007; O'Halloran, 1999). For researchers

who wish to study the interactive meanings and the pedagogical work of textbooks, there are analytic tools for the examination of intermodal relations (e.g., Chan, 2011; Liu & O'Halloran, 2009; Royce, 2007; van Leeuwen, 2005) although these have not been specifically developed to critically investigate the multimodal didactics of textbook. Some existing empirical studies, such as Chapelle (2016), Stranger-Johannessen (2015), and Weninger & Kiss (2013), have proposed contextually developed tools for the empirical analysis of textbooks' pedagogic work, which others could draw upon.

Future work exploring textbook meaning as interaction could also be usefully anchored and informed by Bezemer and Kress' (2008) notion of directionality. Directionality denotes "the 'order of engagement' or navigation path suggested to the reader/learner by the designer" (Bezemer & Kress, 2008, p. 9). In the analysis of Figure 1 above, I only commented on the linguistically explicit directions given to learners. However, as Bezemer and Kress argue, directionality can be achieved multimodally through such semiotic resources as highlighting, layout and placement, all of which steer learners' attention toward particular aspects of the textbook's represented content. In other words, pedagogic intent can be communicated in textbooks through different modes, and critical analysis could scrutinize the directionality of textbooks both in terms of linguistic instructions as well as more implicit, visual-spatial ways of shaping learners' engagement with the represented knowledge in textbooks.

Conclusion

Textbooks have figured centrally in the teaching and learning of languages in many different contexts. Given their popularity worldwide, they are likely to remain a valued mediational tool in the pedagogic repertoire of language teachers. Given this popularity, there is also continued need for research to critically investigate language textbooks as instruments of the ideological practice of (language) education. In this paper, my goal was to offer some ideas for strengthening such research conceptually, which I argued would also help to unify the field by enhancing the robustness of the critique it can offer. When we recognize that textbooks are both curricular and pedagogic artefacts, we can mount critique on either dimension, or on both dimensions. Studies of representations in textbooks can draw attention to larger curricular ideologies about what counts as legitimate knowledge in a given country or educational context, while analyses of how textbooks direct or guide

students' engagement with knowledge can critique pedagogy as ideological practice. It is also possible, in fact desirable, to examine both simultaneously, especially for projects that have the time and resources for a larger-scale investigation. As many others have asserted before, the content of language textbooks matters; to understand exactly how it matters, we must take account of the multimodality of both curriculum and pedagogy.

Notes

1   At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that ideas about the various (social) functions of language were articulated by linguists throughout the 20th century and also influenced Halliday's thinking and theory (e.g., Bühler, 1934; Jakobson, 1960; Malinowski, 1923).

2   Given that language textbooks' popularity with teachers derives specifically from the fact that they cut down on lesson preparation, it is quite likely that many teachers follow textbooks closely, with small modifications.

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