



**Discourse Strategies in Promotional Materials of Global ELT
Textbook Series**

Nalina Samarn

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts in Applied English Language Studies
Prince of Songkla University**

2023

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Thesis Title Discourse Strategies in Promotional Materials of Global ELT
Textbook Series

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I hereby certify that this work has not been accepted in substance for any degree, and is not being currently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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ชื่อวิทยานิพนธ์ กลยุทธ์ทางวาทกรรมในสื่อส่งเสริมการขายของชุดแบบเรียนภาษาอังกฤษระดับโลก

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สาขาวิชา ภาษาอังกฤษประยุกต์ศึกษา

ปีการศึกษา 2566

บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษาและวิจัยเกี่ยวกับคตินิยมในสายการสอนภาษาอังกฤษ หรือ ELT (English Language Teaching) ได้รับความสนใจเป็นอย่างมาก โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งกับการวิจัยคตินิยมที่ฝังรากอยู่ในเนื้อหาของแบบเรียนภาษาอังกฤษและในแนวปฏิบัติการเรียนการสอนในห้องเรียน อย่างไรก็ตาม ในปัจจุบันมีงานวิจัยไม่มากนักที่มุ่งเน้นไปที่บทบาทของคตินิยมในการขายและการบริโภคแบบเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ และวิธีที่ผู้จัดพิมพ์คู่มือการเรียนการสอนเหล่านั้นรักษาความไม่เท่าเทียมทางอำนาจไว้ด้วยคตินิยม งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อตรวจสอบการใช้กลยุทธ์ทางวาทกรรมในสื่อส่งเสริมการขายของชุดแบบเรียนภาษาอังกฤษระดับโลกสามชุด ได้แก่ (1) Cambridge English Empower (2) New Headway และ (3) Life โดยยึดหลักแนวคิดการวิเคราะห์วาทกรรมเชิงวิพากษ์ (Critical Discourse Analysis) และใช้แนวคิด Discourse-Historical Approach หรือ DHA (Wodak & Meyer, 2016) ในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล ผลการวิจัยพบว่าผู้จัดพิมพ์ของชุดแบบเรียนภาษาอังกฤษทั้งสามชุด อาศัยการใช้ภาษาส่งเสริมการขายทั่วไปเป็นหลัก โดยเฉพาะกลยุทธ์ Intensification อีกทั้งการส่งเสริมการขายของเนื้อหาในแบบเรียนยังยึดโยงครูและผู้เรียนกับกรรมวาทกรรมเป็นหลักโดยมีผู้กระทำการคือชุดแบบเรียน ผู้จัดพิมพ์ของแบบเรียนทั้งสามชุดยังแสดงให้เห็นถึงความพยายามในการสร้างความน่าเชื่อถือและความไว้วางใจผ่านวาทกรรมซึ่งมีความเชื่อมโยงกับนโยบาย การทดสอบความรู้ และแหล่งอำนาจอื่น ๆ ผลการวิจัยข้างต้นทำให้ผู้จัดทำเล็งถึงความสำคัญของเห็นความสำคัญและคุณค่าของอัตตาณัติ (autonomy) ของผู้สอนที่อาจสูญหายไปจากคตินิยมที่ถูกผลิตซ้ำในบริบทการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษ

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ABSTRACT

In English Language Teaching (ELT), analyses of ideologies on the contents of ELT textbooks and studies of practices in classrooms have been given a lot of attention. However, only few studies to date have focused on the role ideology plays in the sales and consumption of textbooks, and how ideologies strategically help sustain the power of publishers, whose ‘authority’ in pedagogy is represented by those ELT materials. Placed in the field of critical discourse analysis and employing methods of the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) (Wodak & Meyer, 2016), this study aims to investigate the use of discourse strategies in the online promotional materials of three global ELT textbook series namely (1) Cambridge English Empower (2) Headway (3) Life. The study addresses the research question: What discourse strategies are used to promote ELT textbook series on the websites of three global publishers? The results show that the three publishers of the three series *Cambridge English Empower*, *Headway*, and *Life* rely heavily on the use of typical uses of promotional language, particularly intensifications, and the textbooks, rather than teachers or learners, tend to be attributed most actions to the series materials. All three series also show an attempt to validate their reliability and trustworthiness through association to policy, testing, as well as other sources of authority. We conclude by reflecting on the ideologies reproduced through the use of promotional strategies and how important for teachers to reflect on ideologies that threaten to devalue their knowledge and disempower them.

Keywords: Discourse Strategies, Ideology, Critical Discourse Analysis, Global ELT Textbooks

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LIST OF PAPERS AND PROCEEDINGS

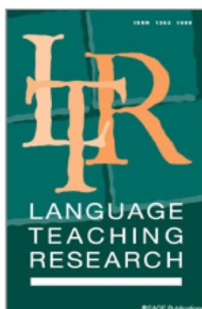
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LETTER OF SUBMISSION

Language Teaching Research



Agency, authority and strategic discourse in the promotion of three global ELT textbook series

Journal:	<i>Language Teaching Research</i>
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Keywords:	textbooks, material evaluation, authority, ideology, agency, language policy
Abstract:	<p>There is at present much focus in ELT on describing and promoting the agency of teachers (e.g. as policy agents) and learners (e.g. as global citizens). However, a defining feature of ELT as a professional field are growing pressures for universalization, particularly evident in practices like global language testing, audit culture and the widespread use of global textbooks. These practices position organizations in the ELT industry as authoritative actors, holding privileged knowledge and able to judge others. Our focus in this article is on the ways that the authority of textbook publishers is represented and upheld through strategic discourse in online promotional materials. Examining online promotional spaces for three contemporary ELT textbook series, we focus on the discourse strategies employed to legitimize the authoritative position of the textbooks and their publishers. We find that publishers focussed on legitimizing their authority by creating strategic links to external forces (policy, testing), in this way foregrounding the universality of the textbooks. In contrast, the websites represented the agencies of teachers and learners in a minimized way, primarily in ways subordinate to the agency attributed to the textbooks themselves. We conclude with a reflection on the need for applied critical scholarship in ELT that can offer practical alternatives and thus disrupt dominant notions of universality and the hierarchization of knowledge these are based on.</p>

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1 INTRODUCTION

One of the teaching and learning practices that has come to define the nature and standard of contemporary language classes is the use of textbooks. Teaching in language classes, especially in academic institutes such as schools, colleges and universities, usually becomes dependent on the use of textbooks, whether it is by personal preference or external requirement. In English language teaching (ELT), despite many critiques of textbooks due to their lack of consideration of local contexts and individual practices, globally published textbooks especially are still in favor of teachers and curriculums. The reasons why textbooks are favored by teachers partly remains the characteristics of published textbooks, such as their facilitating roles of giving direct instructions, being teaching sources, and guiding homework that make teaching easier and more convenient (Ulla, 2019; Hutchinson, 1994). Even though textbooks remain the main source of teaching in ELT, they also pose many criticisms that affect practices in teaching and learning. Although they seem to ease teachers' workload, the roles textbooks play in classrooms tends to reduce teachers' power in managing their lessons because they provide a clear, standardized working plan (Akbari, 2008). Aside from their functions, one of the important reasons that attract the use of textbooks is because they are being perceived to be authoritative and reliable in language teaching (Ulla, 2019; Forman, 2014; Garton & Graves, 2014). Other research points to the presentations of these textbooks as a factor that make them more attractive (Forman, 2014). The issue also poses the lack of cultural relevance, in terms of contents, to teachers and learners especially. According to the analysis of the content, one of the major focuses of textbook analyses so far, the problem of cultural irrelevance or disproportion between presented cultures (e.g. European vs. Asian) is a major issue in textbooks (Labtich & Teo, 2020; Forman, 2014). A number of studies on ELT textbooks have also focused on ideology, finding that neoliberal ideology is most often dominant (Daghigh & Rahim, 2020; Babaii & Sheikhi, 2017; Copley, 2017).

The explanation of why certain ideologies are omitted in ELT textbooks can be traced to Gray (2010)'s clarification on the way the global publishers, whose market aim is not limited to one region, plan the production of the textbook content according to the

production guidelines in order to achieve ‘cultural sensitivity’. For instance, publishers tend to avoid topics that may create cultural conflict. We cannot deny these kinds of underlying ideological effects revolving around ELT publishing market shaping users’ worldview often are operated and reproduced through the use of discourse. Discourse, seen as language use through text or talk, can be used as a tool to construct knowledge, social identity, and maintain a status quo between groups of people. The effects that discourse has on society can shape the way people think of things and, most importantly among other things, people. Those effects then can be considered ideological. Discourse is not only used to convey only meaning via texts, speech, or language per se, but it also implements unequal power to a certain society. The analysis of the discourse in ELT textbook leans more toward the content; however, what goes behind the relationship of the textbooks and the users lies upon their publishers and the users as consumers. Accordingly, this study places importance on underlying ideologies in the discourse promotion of such textbooks by their publishers.

1.1 Research objective

The objective of this research is:

To investigate the use of discourse strategies in the online promotional materials of three global ELT textbook series.

1.2 Research question

The research answers the following research question:

What discourse strategies are used to promote ELT textbook series on the websites of three global publishers?

1.3 Significance of the study

This study aims to raise an awareness to the acknowledgment of ideology presented through the promotion by the publishers of global ELT textbook series which play an important part in English language teaching as a teaching and learning material. As both teachers and learners are engaged in those materials, it is crucial, especially for English language teachers, to take a notice to those ideologies and try to reassure that

they understand and are aware of the issue whether by implicit or explicit ways through teaching and the selecting of the textbooks.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Ideology

There are multiple definitions of the term 'ideology'. The term is defined by Holborow (2007) as '*a set of ideas that emerges from specific social relations and supports the interests of a particular social class* (p. 52).' Wodak and Meyer (2016) defined the term in political science as a '*coherent and relatively stable set of beliefs or values.*' Althusser (1971, as cited in Fairclough, 1991) theorized ideology as not of the mere 'ideas,' but it exists as an apparatus and its practices which functions as a reproduction and resecuring of social relations. Thompson (1987) indicated how modalities in which ideology operates through power. The first modality mentioned is legitimation: the power is worthy of support to sustain domination. The second modality is dissimulation: the relations of domination may be concealed, veiled, and obscured. The third modality in which the power is used to exercise is fragmentation. Thompson referred to a strategy of dominate group as 'divide and rule'. Another modality referred to by Thompson is reification: it is where ideology enables a state to be seen as permanent, natural, and outside of time (p. 521).

2.2 Language and ideology

Referred to as one of the practices of an apparatus, linguistic practices allow language to be seen as a 'material of existence of ideology' (Fairclough, 1991, p. 114) and contributes to the matter of language and ideology. Fairclough (1991) also noted the way ideology occurs within language that it does not position only in the occurrence of structures but also in the occurrence of events (p. 117). In order to connect the concept of language and ideology, language and society should be viewed jointly. In addition, linguistic and social theory relates communicative actions to political considerations that reflect power and inequality (Woolard, 1994, p. 27).

In the English language speaking traditions, many people seem to assume that English is the most useful language in the globalization era, scientifically and culturally; additionally, English is viewed as it is best spoken by native speakers of, especially, the United Kingdom and the United States of America (Piller, 2015). Those assumptions have led to the way each variety of English is seen differently and created hierarchies

between kinds of English language and its users which it consequently has led to a sign of ideology that effects social structures. Ideology was defined by Silverstein (1979) as “sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (p. 193). Silverstein (1979, cited in Piller, 2015) exemplified how the system of personal pronouns in European languages in the 19th century differed informal and formal personal pronouns. Superior speakers would use informal pronoun with people who they considered as inferior to them, such as workers, to make them use formal pronoun in return. Later the concept of language ideologies entered the field of linguistic anthropology where it connects language and society together. Piller (2015) then comprehended language ideologies as ‘beliefs, feelings, and conceptions about language that are socially shared and relate language and society in a dialectical fashion’ based on the reference to the concept of the ‘bridge’ of language and society by Woolard (1994): a bridge between linguistic and social theory relates communicative actions to political considerations that reflect power and social inequality. Piller also stated that when language is present in interaction, language ideologies are present outside that interaction and leads language to be a tool to ‘social manipulation’. She defined language ideologies based on the previous statement as a representation of a language to a particular social group or society. ‘Standard language ideology’ is one of the studies of language ideologies which refers to the belief of a variety of language that is superior to other kinds of language in terms of aesthetics, morality, and intellectuality; the so-called superior variety usually is of the powerful homogenous social group (Piller, 2015).

Holborow (2017) examined the way language and ideology interconnect and remarked the concept of the term ‘ideology’ in three strands:

- (i) ‘Ideology is a set of ideas that emerges from a particular social relation and supports the interests of a particular social group,’ that is, the term carries negative sense as ideologies serve the people in power that a particular belief is considered true.
- (ii) Ideologies can contrast within themselves; what is believed as true according to ideological promotions, might be different from what things

are actually happening which the power may be led into questions; not only one ideological belief exists in the society, the dominate one may be opposed to the other ideologies; and ideologies can fall into its inconsistency due to the change in societies and of the time period.

- (iii) How ideology works can be examined through language. Speakers of a language, who play a role as social actors, may accept some ideological aspects, and use them to challenge others.

The author also marked the relationship between language and ideology as both of the terms can represent reality and interpret the world. However, ideology can appear in language as it is formed under how a language works. It can also form a status and positions of power and the status and positions can be accepted naturally. She referred to Gramsci (1971) of the acceptance, as a result of ideological representation of power, as it was ‘how ruling ideas won consent.’

2.3 Critical Discourse Studies

Wodak and Meyer (2016) differentiated critical discourse studies (CDS) from discourse studies as in the field of critical discourse studies, it does not give stress on linguistic units, but it rather aims to analyze, understand, and explain social phenomena which require problem-oriented approaches in analyzing discourse. Blommaert and Bulcaen (2000) asserted CDA practitioners’ topic preferences as follows: (i) Political discourse; (ii) Ideology, as of how ideologies are reproduced through discourse; (iii) Racism, in relation to the notion of hegemony to explaining the relationship between linguistic practice and social structure.

CDS initially emerged as a network of scholars in Amsterdam in 1991 via a small symposium by the group of Teun van Dijk, Norman Fairclough, Gunther Kress, Theo van Leeuwen and Ruth Wodak. The group discussed individuals’ similar and different approaches to the theories and methods of discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA), the term used earlier at that time. The discussion led them to frame the differences in theories and methods of discourse analysis and the similarities of both as theoretical approaches, during the time, some of the initial scholars of CDS distanced themselves to other theoretical frameworks. Since then, new approaches to CDS have

been created by innovatively integrating traditional theories. For instance, the discourse-historical approach (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016) integrates linguistic theories (particularly systemic-functional linguistics) with critical social theory (particularly the work of Jurgen Habermas). The publication of van Dijk's journal *Discourse & Society* (1990) marked the start of the CDS network. Afterwards, new journals then have been launched as CDS become an established paradigm in linguistics. As of that time, some of the CDS-related journals include, for example, *Critical Discourse Studies*, *The Journal of Language and Politics*, *Discourse and Communication and Visual Semiotics* (Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

Wodak and Reisigl (2016) asserted that every approach in CDS holds the notions of 'critique', 'ideology', and 'power', which all three are considered constitutive concepts to approaches in CDS. The notion of 'critique' adheres to clarifying the political positioning of researchers and embedding the data in social context. Wodak and Meyer (2016) referred to the concept of 'critical theory' as that it should be oriented to critiquing and changing society, contrary to traditional theory, which is oriented to understanding and explaining social phenomena. Critical research hence is oriented towards the reduction of illusion or untruth in society, seeking to understand why specific false beliefs or concepts are held (Wodak & Meyer, 2016, p. 7). What makes discourse analysis distinct to critical discourse analysis is that the latter lies in constitutive problem-oriented, interdisciplinary approach. Though CDS research typically involves study of sources of social inequality, such as racism, the object of the investigation does not necessarily involve negative or serious events, rather, it aims at any social phenomenon or events leading to critical investigation and challenges.

According to Wodak and Meyer (2016), the term 'discourse' does not narrowly refer to text, conversation, or a speech, but it, too, applies to historical monuments, a policy, a political strategy, images etc. In sum, any form of meaning-making (semiosis) can be seen to constitute discourse (*ibid.*). Discourse is seen by critical discourse studies (CDS) as one form of 'language of social practice' (Fairlough and Wodak, 1997, cited in Wodak and Meyer, 2016) as CDS views language as a tool serving social structures. Discourse can configure social condition, event, and structure, and it constitutes relationships between social groups and identities in the sense that it helps reproduce,

maintain, and transform social status quo. On this note, discourse – viewed as social practices – can produce ideological impact. CDS does not aim to investigate linguistic units or grammar structures in a narrow sense (i.e., merely to understand their structure or meaning), rather the investigation focuses on the explanation and understanding the functions that language has on social and cultural notions.

Although there are great differences in methods of and objects in the disciplines in relation to humanities and social sciences, the subdisciplines that deal with discourse, such as semiotics, pragmatics, psycho-sociolinguistics, ethnography of speaking, conversation analysis and discourse studies, all have several dimensions in common (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). These are summarized by Wodak and Meyer (2016) as; (i) they take an interest in the language use that occurs naturally by language users instead of the study of abstract language systems; (ii) they focus on larger units such as texts, discourse, conversation, speech acts, communicative events, than isolated words or sentences; (iii) they study beyond sentence grammar but rather focus on interaction and action; (iv) they extend the study to non-verbal aspects of interaction and communication such as gestures, images, etc.; (v) they focus on dynamic socio-cognitive, interactional moves, and strategies; (vi) they take a study on the contexts of language use; and (vii) they take an analysis of phenomena of text grammar and language use.

2.4 Global ELT and EFL Textbooks

Textbooks are considered to be one of the important materials in a curriculum especially in language teaching. Forman (2014) noted that in the era of foreign-language teaching, ‘textbook is curriculum’ (p. 72) as Akbari (2008) defined methods of how language was taught as ‘textbook-defined practice’ (p. 647). In the field of textbook analysis, there has been a number of studies given to the field especially in analyzing internationally published ELT textbooks. The content in global ELT textbooks is described in critical pedagogy ELT as of containing ideological elements. Forman (2014) linked content analysis directly with pedagogy to see how the key features of the content are presented and are associated in textbooks called Passages and observed teachers’ reaction to the content which the teacher referred to as ‘culture-bound’ contents as the textbooks were written by ‘native speakers’ and its content is observed

irrelevant to the students in the Thai context. His work focused mainly on the teachers' reaction to the textbook content. The content itself however was briefly explained upon ideological issues.

Researchers have also raised concerns regarding cultural appropriateness in ELT textbooks. Nault (2006) discussed in his paper *Going Global: Rethinking Culture Teaching in ELT Contexts* on how culture teaching in ELT contexts should be rethought in order to suit the contexts of globalization of the English language. He stated that even though there were some thoughts of how language should belong to a nation, for example Japanese to Japan and Chinese to China; however, in ELT the notion of 'English language belongs to the United States and the Great Britain' should be reconsidered. Regarding the previous statement, first, English is not spoken merely in Great Britain or the US or even Western countries, thus, to tie the entire English-speaking world with British and American culture is rather illogical (Nault, 2006, p. 316). He also marked that recognition of monolithic Great Britain or the US over non-Western cultures does not occur only in academic issue (p. 317), the belief that L2 learners of English ought to adapt to the monolithic norms can be interpreted as 'linguistic imperialism' which attempts to devalue other cultures (Phillipson, 1992 cited in Nault, 2006). Another argument over the monolithic culture in ELT referred to in his paper is by Asraf (1996), in the context of Muslim societies, the belief of how Western customs should be followed when learning English can impact students' enthusiasm with negative feelings. Having said of the overwhelming British and American cultures in ELT, he suggested ways to rethink the goals of culture teaching. One is to readdress the belief that English learners learn English to speak with native speakers solely. While ELT coursebooks inform students how to communicate with people from the British and American settings, these kinds of aim may not be useful to learners who wish to learn English in order to be in their own country (Nault, 2006). Nault (2006) also mentioned 'deficit model' (Cook, 1999, p. 194–196; Kachru, 1991, cited in Nault, 2006) as the model is problematic, considering the global reality of English language, in the sense that it characterizes learners of English and non-standard Englishes as flawed ones as long as their English fail to equate the so-called native speakers of English.

Apart from the abovementioned study of how culture should be taught in English language teaching context, there are numbers of studies analyzing textbook contents upon social aspects such as gender and user representation. Matsuda (2002) examined the presentation of users and uses of English in Beginning Japanese EFL Textbooks approved by Monbusho (the Ministry of Education) in 1996 and textbooks were used from 1997 to 2002. It was found that the majority of the 74 main characters were from Japan (34 characters) and 30 characters were from 'inner circle countries'; additionally, even though a greater number of characters was from Japan than characters from inner circle countries, The characters from Japan produced fewer words than those from inner circle (p. 189). Jannati (2015) examined gender identity reflected via adjectives and pictures in EFL Textbooks ILI pre-intermediate series in Iran. She found that a greater number of adjectives were used for males than female; adjectives with negative connotation were more common with males. Adjectives referring to physical appearance and personality were mostly used with female: beautiful, slim, young, emotional, sincere, shy, etc.; males were used with adjectives referring to personality: talkative, brave, educated, proud, rude, etc. (p. 217). It is also found in the study that stereotypical gender roles of mothers, wives, and nurturers and domestic activities were associated with women from the image analysis (p. 220). Jannati (2015) referred to the textbooks as having the source to reflect ideology on genders in the society (p.220).

Gray (2010) raised to the concern of teachers' practices played by ELT coursebooks through an autobiographical snapshot. One, as a trainee teacher joining pre-service certificate courses trained by three trainers using global coursebooks as the material, was reported as being frustrated by the material taken from the coursebook featuring an artwork and a reading that advertised McDonald's. It is said by the trainee that coursebooks should not be a space for an advertisement of a company and he refused to teach and promote it in his teaching. This snapshot led the author to the discussion of nature of ELT materials which features two areas of the marketing and the content of textbooks. Even though the inclusion of the advertisement for McDonald's in the material may seemed innocuous to its writer, it however, when considering how language teaching coursebooks were treated as a source of language, cannot be ignored with the function of it as an advertisement. The discussion also raised to the issue of

the authority coursebooks, where pedagogic texts are imbued with, have over teachers and students.

In the sense where language textbooks are considered 'curriculum artefacts' (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991, p.4), Gray (2010) also analyzed the guidelines for authors in producing ELT materials by British ELT publishers. One of the guidelines include a section entitled *inappropriacy* where it addresses topics which writers avoid and are referred to by the acronym PARSNIP (politics, alcohol, religion, sex, narcotics, isms, and pork). Although the alteration in cultural contents to suit *cultural appropriateness* in ELT material is encouraged by many teachers and scholars in order for students to reach connection, effectiveness, and familiarity in learning; however, in the third document - where PARSNIP - is included and the fourth document of the guidelines exclusively refer to 'markets' rather than to 'students' (p. 119) where Gray suggested that it concerned sales in such a competitive market. Examples of 'inappropriacy' such as using the words 'developing countries' instead of 'underdeveloped or third world countries' or any words to describe certain group of people are cautious. In the ELT publishing market in more conservative and religious areas, beyond the UK and northern Europe, such as the Middle East, 'alcohol', 'nudes and flesh', and 'pork' are usually avoided for appropriateness of content to be published and launched into the market. In the same volume of Gray (2010), interviews with the publishers of four publishing houses from different regional markets were drawn from his study in 2002. The interviews were described as being relevant to coursebook content production and regulation as they indicated how the coursebooks content is produced and regulated by publishers; the editorial decision-making process; how the guidelines impact content; and difference and similarity of coursebook segments in the global market. Grey marked out Philip Prowse's (1994) significant point that elements of ELT publishing have been dominated by the focus on developing universal products for the global market rather than for particular regions. The point highlights the role of perceived market sensitivities in the decisions made by publishers with regard to what types of social practice and value are represented in textbooks, and which ones are not. One informant also asserted that 'publishers are 'very, very market driven'' (p. 123) due to diverse elements within the market. She explained that she had been told to not put a

reading passage in a material for Italy as the topic might offend a particular religious group in that context. Considering that writers and editors are aware of the inclusivity regarding gender equality as being a common feature in ELT coursebooks, two informants reported their uneasiness toward the constraints on the inclusivity. One informant expressed her worry to how sexuality is represented with only heterosexuality in the coursebooks, she answered ‘[...] I don’t think we can do it, we couldn’t possibly risk it’; she also added ‘the bottom line is that we want our course to be bought’. Inevitably, compliancy ensues, in accordance with the constraints that originate in the market (Grey, 2010).

2.5 Review of previous studies

2.5.1 Research on ELT Textbooks

While in the previous section, the focus is on global ELT textbooks/coursebooks, in this section some previous studies on textbook analysis in the Thai context are explored. A study by Nomnian (2013) aims to investigate cultural aspects in English language textbooks called ‘World Wonders’ 1 and ‘My World’ Series 2-6. The textbooks were widely used in Thai secondary school. The setting of this research is at a secondary school located in the district of Sai Yok, Kanchanaburi province. Six commercial ELT textbooks including the ones mentioned recently were approved by the Ministry of Education to be used at a secondary school. The selected textbooks were recommended by Kanchanaburi Secondary Educational Service Area. World Wonders 1 was a seventh-grade textbook written by Michele Crawford and published by Heinle Cengage Learning (Hampshire, UK) in 2010 and was reprinted and distributed in Thailand. My World Series 2 – 6 (aimed for eight to twelve graders) were written by Manuel dos Santos and published by McGraw-Hill (New York, USA) in 2006. They were reprinted and distributed by a Thai publishing. For data collection, the textbooks were skimmed for the presentation of content, topics, illustrations, and written texts. The textbooks were then later scanned page by page for representation of cultural information and Thai cultural aspects in terms of written texts. The aspects found were manually coded using Yuen’s (2011) categories and content analysis was employed. The findings were categorized into five categories: products, practices, persons, perspectives, and places. Rice, Sepak-takraw, and tuk-tuk were mentioned in the product categories as Thai

cultural artifacts. For the practices category, eating grasshopper was generally stated in the textbooks as a common Thai practice in Thailand which the researcher referred to the inclusion of it as exaggerating and superficial. Places in Thailand were mostly included because of their relative recognition. Meanwhile, people were least included since foreign students might have trouble with irrelevance. Thai cultural aspects included in the textbooks were recognized and selectively chosen by the authors for the target students to be aware of cultural diversity.

Already mentioned briefly in the section above, the study of Forman (2014) attempts to link analysis of content in the textbook directly with pedagogy and how the teachers respond to the culture and the language in it. The study took place at a Thai university site 'Isara'. The prescribed textbook series Passages was used in the observed lessons. The participants were nine teachers in the English Department: eight were Thai and one was Anglo-Australia, and year 1 students who were undertaking their six credit-point compulsory subject English 101 or 'Foundations English'. For data collection in the study, lessons were audio-recorded, and interviews were conducted individually with the teachers in English, semi-structured. For data analysis, there are four sub-segments which include the analysis of lesson observation, teacher interview, theoretical framework, and focus of the analysis. The foci of lesson observation were how teachers used L1 and L2 in each lesson and to capture diversity of the EFL classrooms witnessed, which in this way the textbook became the subject of the study. The transcription of the classroom was used to analyze pedagogy moment where the author described it 'unusual' (p. 75). The teacher interviews were conducted in two rounds and were then searched for themes. The work of Sunderland et al (2001) was built upon for frameworks for analyzing the pedagogy associated with textbooks in which the discourse of textbooks could be 'endorsed', 'subverted', or 'ignored' by classroom teachers. The discussion of this study reflected all three teachers', whose lessons were taken into the analysis of this study, faithfulness to the text as the content and language were treated by them as *authoritative* and *trustworthy*. Even though the content appeared to be endorsed by the teachers, all three teachers commented the textbook content as lacking relevance to its audience, which referred to the students.

Ulla (2019) investigates how non-native English-speaking teachers in Bangkok perceive and use global ELT textbooks in their classrooms. The study was conducted in three universities in Bangkok. Eleven teachers: 7 Thais and four Filipinos participated in the study. Oxford, Pearson Longman, Cambridge, Macmillan, and Heinle/Cengage Learning ELT printed textbooks were used in their English language classes. Semi-structured interviews with all eleven teachers were employed to explore their concerns and issues in their use of western-published textbooks. The interview lasted 25 minutes to an hour each in person via Facebook chats. Only seven teachers were observed in their classroom due to time constraints. The interview revealed that the teachers felt positive toward the use of the textbooks in the classes. Most of them reported that using global textbooks help learners' capability in using the language because the textbooks provided a good model of the use of the language. The participants also perceived that those textbooks held authority of the English language and were more reliable than locally produced ones. One thing the researcher noted is that there were no locally published textbooks available for them. The reason they used global textbooks was due to its timesaving and students' lesson understanding reinforcement. Those textbooks also provided all language skills and could be used as a syllabus which the teachers viewed it as making them a better teacher. The challenges the teachers faced were that how some words the class went through were not Thai context related. They also added that some activities only provided few authentic language practices for students; thus, the number of authentic practices was not enough to help students master those skills. Findings from classroom observation indicated that global textbooks were used as a primary source for teaching, other printed worksheets were used as a supplementary source for the in-class activities. The teachers were observed following the content and lesson sequence provided by the textbooks entirely.

Another study relating to Thai context is Labtic and Teo (2020). The study focuses on the analysis of the presentation of sources of culture in an English textbook series used in Thailand called *Access*. It aims to answer two research questions of (i) *what sources of culture are presented in a series of Access English Textbooks* and (ii) *how sources of culture are presented in the receptive skills and productive skills of English language learning*. Student's book and workbooks of a textbook series chosen in the study, *Access*, were chosen due to the series being endorsed by the Office of the Basic

Education Commission in Thailand. Content analysis was used in the study by following four steps of coding, categorizing, comparing, and concluding. Double-checking, discussion, and cross-examination were done between the researchers to avoid subjectivity and misinterpretation. Tasks related to listening and reading skills, referred to as receptive skills, and speaking and writing skills, referred to as productive skills, were used as the unit of the analysis. The 979 units were analyzed for frequency of representation of source culture, target culture, and international culture. The analysis of sources of culture was stated to identify the source country by cultural information such as nations and people. Sources of culture were listed in a table: Source Culture refers to Thailand; Target Culture refers to the countries using English as their mother tongue language (inner-circle countries); International Culture refers to countries using English as their second/foreign language; and listing Unspecified Source of Culture for the unspecified source of a country. The result of the analysis showed that the textbook series provided unbalanced proportions of the four sources. Target culture appeared to occur most frequently with the percentage of 47.36. The results of the study revealed that Thailand and other foreign countries were presented in the three series of *Access* textbook series, but the proportion was lesser than that of target culture. This can be highlighted that the textbook series were dominated by the culture of inner-circle countries. It is assessed by the researchers that, regardless the fact that the textbooks were design to fit Thai Basic Education Curriculum B.E. 2551 (2008), the disproportion of the cultural information written by British authors may be affected by their cultural background, and the presentation of the lessons in the textbooks by the authors as a means to serve interest and the influence of Anglo-American power.

2.5.2 Research on website marketization

Because this study focuses on the textbooks which are the products being sold online, it is important to look at previous research on how products are advertised through promotional websites. A significant body of such research has focussed on the context of higher education. Zhang and O'Halloran (2013) examined the changing discourse of marketization on the website of the National University of Singapore over 14 years. Since early 2000s, the university has shifted to an entrepreneurial entity conceptualizing

'Toward a Global Knowledge Enterprise'. Throughout 1998 to 2012, the university had developed six versions of its homepage. The earliest version was commonly used by the member of the university and was not considered as a promoting site for NUS. The second version of the NUS homepage started to shift to the promotion stage of it. NUS launched corporate identity, vision, and mission in its third stage. In its fourth stage, the mission of NUS changed due to the new president in 2009. In order to analyse the data, CDA was adopted in the methods of analysis for the authors to explore social norms and structures as well as the role of the homepage that reinforced them. Hypermodal approach (Zhang & O'Halloran, 2012) was applied for homepage analysis to provide a framework to unpack hypermodality in the reading and navigational dimension on the homepage. To analyse semiotic resources of hypermodal resources on NUS homepage, ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions were undertaken to examine how they were functioned. In terms of reading dimension, the semiotic resource in the study includes colour and image. Before the launch of identity in 2001, colour was not used on the webpage, but in 2001, orange and blue were adopted as the official colours of the university. Orange was used across the homepage as it denoted the 'dynamism, imagination, and passion' which represented the mission of NUS 'advancing knowledge and fostering innovation. Blue denoted 'timelessness, dignity, and wisdom' representing the mission of transforming the way people think. Bright orange was used as the colour on the buttons in the middle of the page for its users, which made it salient for potential consumers. In terms of ideational function of the images, in 1998 and 2000 versions of the homepage displayed teaching and research representing the mission of NUS to excel in teaching and research. Meanwhile, the image in 2012 version presented students' life on campus. This suggest that the offered 'product' by NUS were not courses or programs but the experience and atmosphere. In terms of navigational dimension, it discussed how semiotic resources guide viewers of the webpage to navigate through the site. In the 1998 and 2000 versions of the homepage, the focus was the architecture of the university and available resources, until in the 2008, 2009, and 2012 versions of the homepage, the category 'Global' and 'Enterprise' were added. This means that the university was increasingly operated as business entity. It can be seen that the university shifted the promotional products 'education' to 'lifestyle and experience.'

Another study looking into an online web space is by Ruecker and Ives (2014). With the internet being one of the places people would go to seek a job, the study focuses on professionally designed recruitment spaces for specific schools and training programs and how the texts and images create 'ideal' English language teacher. The following questions guided the author into looking at the issue of native speakerism in the field of ELT and the effect of it resulting in discrimination and unprofessionalism: what characteristics are commonly attributed to the ideal candidate and are the individuals excluded explicitly or implicatively; what working characteristic are attributed to the jobs being advertised; what benefit are emphasized to the teachers; and what characteristic are attributed to the target countries. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is focused on in this study at both sentence level and larger section of discourse to uncover how discourses are shaped about the ideal English language teacher. In selecting sites for the analysis, the authors built a corpus by using Google search terms that were used to search for ELT positions and then narrowed the criteria to find targeted sites for preliminary analysis. The criteria were described as being in English, a recruitment space for specific schools or programs, sites recruited jobs in China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, or Thailand. For broader analysis, 59 sites, including TEFL certification sites, recruitment sites, recruitment sites from schools, Korea, Taiwan, Japan, China-specific recruitment sites, were selected. A list of topois was developed to analyze the sites and take note under each one: teacher qualification, benefits, work environment, and country description. The findings were compared and consolidated, and analytical matrix was constructed in order to quantify some of the trends across sites. Overall trends were analysed from the preliminary analysis. It was found that NES requirement appeared in some instances on 81% of the sites and only 14% required related experience, for example, the Modern English School site in Japan clearly stated that: "WE DO NOT ACCEPT APPLICATIONS FROM NON-NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS AND THOSE NOT RESIDENT IN JAPAN" (p. 742). Moreover, 83% of the sites depicted the ideal teacher as enthusiastic and passionate about teaching, for example, gone2korea.com stated a sentiment as: "Teaching English as a second language is not rocket science! Anyone with a positive attitude, a willingness to succeed and the ability to communicate can be an excellent ESL instructor" (p. 744). Apart from the overall trends across sites from the broader analysis, the authors also examined

TEFL Heaven and Hess International Educational Organization on a micro level. The TEFL Heaven discourse presented a promotional stance by frequently using second person personal pronoun *You* and *your*, 9% of all words. By the use of a statement *We suggest you*, the site emphasized that the visitor's experience is served by the recruitment. The same use of second personal pronoun revealing consumer-centred discourse from TEFL Heaven was found on the Hess International Educational Organization site, 40 times in the introductory statement or approximately 9% of words. Marketing discourse was much present in the analysis of the recruitment sites in the study. The analysis also showed the commercialization of the ELT profession where stereotyping and discrimination toward marginalization of individuals were present.

Lee (2015) aimed to examine web-advertising texts about English language institutes and programmes in South Korea. To collect data, random keyword search for Korean words for 'English language institute' in the Korean internet search engine and it showed the buzz word 'global' as in Korean ELT marketing, the word 'global' is often used as a slogan as the advertising texts. Twenty random ELT institutes' marketing strategies, promotional material about programmes and instructors in particular, were selected and analysed. Lee also took native-speaker favoritism into analysis by comparing ads about native-speaker instructors and Korean instructors. The findings found that most advertisements were made in Korean except catchphrases and main copies, which were advertised in English. Moreover, the concept of 'global' is commonly found in the ELT marketing as the reason why students should learn English. Excerpts in this study illustrated how selected ELT institutes advertised their programmes concerning native-speaker favouritism and being 'global'. The excerpts concerning the issue of being 'global' are, for example, the homepage of Gyeonggi English Village displayed its motto as '*Creating Global Korean' Think in English! Have fun in English! The first step toward the world!*' (p. 238). Another example of global-focusing advertising texts was '*Study anytime anywhere. English is the universal language. It is the most widely used medium in modern society. And for people to be globally competitive, they must be able to communicate using the English language*' (p. 240), which the text was advertised in English to stress the importance of English. In terms of native-speaker favouritism in marketing materials about instructors, one excerpt showed an ELT institute advertising 'native speaker' instructor.

The connection to such prioritised advertisement was with white ethnocentric traits of the instructors where the advertising visual on the web advertising featured only white instructors. Apart from displaying only 'white' instructors, the same picture also held the heading that said 'native kyosacin', translated into English as 'native speaker faculty', which the institute differed itself from other institutes by advertising its careful instructor-selection process. According to the analysis of the study, the concept of 'global' is spotlighted by the web advertising texts to why Koreans need to study English. Moreover, most institute captivated the learners by advertising their program being taught by 'native speaker' instructors which is marketed as the most effective way of teaching and learning.

Since the emergence of open-door policies in Vietnam, the number of bilingual schools has risen. Nguyen (2020) examined Vietnamese bilingual schools' statement of educational outcomes on their websites. By looking into the schools' statement outcomes, the author drew on Bourdieu's (1986, 1991) concept of capital as a framework. Schools can advertise themselves through websites as ideal education providers, thus clients' needs and educational outcomes are the key to reach to (Nguyen, 2020). The data in the study were drawn from school public and accessible websites. Keywords: 'bilingual school', 'international school', 'best', 'popular' and 'Vietnam' were searched to find bilingual schools located in Vietnam only. Criteria were included to select the samples that fit the purposes of the study. The criteria set to collect data are that the schools have to use English and Vietnamese as the mediums of instruction in teaching and learning and the learning program provided for their students has to be integrated due to Vietnamese National Curriculum and a foreign curriculum. Seven bilingual schools were selected as samples. Data related to educational outcomes were collected from specific pages on the website such as The Home and About pages; the Mission, Vision, Philosophy, and/or Message from President pages, and so on. The focus of the study limits to the textual language of the website. The findings are divided into two groups which are explicit outcomes and implicit outcomes. For explicit outcomes, there are some of the selected bilingual schools mentioning 'IELTS', 'TOEFL', 'SAT' and 'international universities in Vietnam or abroad,' this implies that the schools international-standard English certificates would serve as a vehicle of power

that could let the students pursue their dreams and obtain cultural capital through either local or international education. The similar offer also came from one school stating that ‘Upon the completion of high school, students will be eligible to get both the National Certificate of Education and the Western Australian Certificate of Education, which is worldwide recognized’ (p. 744-745). They may imply that the students could be equipped with high accreditations accepted worldwide which would be students’ local and global cultural capital. For implicit outcomes, it is said that ‘comprehensive development’ and ‘life-long learning’ were mentioned as qualification and virtue outcomes by most schools. They may imply that students would maintain their education sustainably from the program they provided. The bilingual schools placed themselves as glocal capital providers to students that their offered education meets parents’ high demands for high-quality for their children. Therefore, the social, cultural, linguistic, and economic capital they provided through schools’ discourse may be used as strategy and their identity to enchant their potential clients.

Relevant findings can also be found in studies of promotional discourse in other fields. In the growing market of healthy snacks, the effective way to construct a brand is through the corporate stories, Chen and Eriksson (2019) investigated how snack brands represent themselves as healthy food producers through their corporate stories on their websites. The corporate story marketization let the company establish symbolic ideas to their brands and can persuade consumers to associate with the company values, thus, it leads to the increasing sales potential. The analysis focused on text and images across the websites of 22 healthy snack brands globally. The concept of integrated design (Ledin & Machin, 2018) were applied in order to analyze the web pages. The findings included the examples from five company stories and were organized into three themes: *morally righteous brands*, *authentic and friendly businesses*, and *brands of healthy snacks*. The companies followed the same pattern in distinguishing themselves from big corporates and expressed companies’ good intentions to maintain the underlying established morality. The moral discourse was recontextualized by the companies to reinforce the business qualifications of being authentic, uncomplicated, and friendly. The recontextualization was achieved by the presentation of the context of *kitchen* and the choice of participants. The companies commonly attempted to create an association of the visitors of the websites with the positive family and home relating connotations

by presenting pictures of people spending their time in their kitchens and lexical choices associating with the context of kitchen such as “[i]t all started in our foudners’ family kitchen;” “fired up the oven and baked some bean chips.” There was also a deletion of certain business participants and activities as the companies’ choice of represented participants. Representation of business actors such as businessmen, sales, etc. and business activities such as market research, transactions, etc. were excluded. The reinforcement of the companies in conveying the home-relating connotations helped constructing the descriptions of morality righteous brands that the companies tried to create in contrast of those bigger-scaled corporate productions. In doing so, the brands were able to approach consumers with emotive associations they had established. The promises by the companies to offer healthier alternative snacks suggested the third theme of the findings. The companies expressed these ambitions and motivations through the mission rhetoric on their websites, the missions of each brand included, for example, “on a mission to help people make better and healthier choices more often;” “to rid the world of unhealthy snacks.” These missions appeared as a form of responsibility the company was taking, and a broad range of buzzword terms were used in order to persuade their healthier product alternatives. The terms however, instead of providing relevant nutritious information, appeared to persuade consumers and only serve marketing purposes.

As evidenced by this review, while much work has been done on analysis of textbook contents, there is at present a shortage of research on how textbooks are actually sold on the market, whether in the Thai context or elsewhere. That is, while the work of Forman (2014), Gray (2010), Labtic & Teo (2020), Ulla (2019) and others has highlighted how the content of textbooks may contain certain cultural or ideological elements, and how their contents are controlled to maximize their value across different context, there is little work at present on how such marketability is achieved in other texts associated with the industry. In the following section, I present the methodology of my study, in which the main focus is on such other texts, in particular web pages through which textbooks are marketed.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research question

What discourse strategies are used to promote ELT textbook series on the three global publishing sites?

3.2 Data sources

Considered as ‘textbook is the curriculum (Forman, 2014, p. 72)’, and ‘curriculum artefacts’ (Apple and Christian-Smith, 1991, p.4), Global ELT textbooks receive a lot of attention in language classrooms due to their authority (Forman, 2014). The necessity of language textbooks in classrooms reflects on how much the instructors/ teachers rely on such textbooks to serve the outcomes (here possibly through taking an assessment or language testing) and follow the criteria enforced by authoritative body/ person (such as the government or schools). As stated earlier that CDS approaches take interests in deconstructing ideologies and power through the investigation of semiotic data (Wodak & Meyer, 2016), the data in this study were collected through promotional websites of the three global ELT textbook series listed below:

3.2.1 Three textbook series

These three textbook series were chosen according to the fact that they are universally and widely used, based on my observation of the Thai context and conversations with teachers and textbook publishers. Additionally, their publishers are also widely recognized ‘big players’ in the ELT market. The three series are bestselling series from each publisher:

- (1) *Cambridge English Empower* is an English textbooks series for adult learners published by Cambridge University Press & Assessment, the United Kingdom. It provides coursebooks in six CEFR levels: A1 (Starter), A2 (Elementary), B1 (Pre-intermediate), B1+ (Intermediate), B2 (Upper intermediate), and C1 (Advanced). The authors for this textbook series include Adrian Doff, Craig Thaine, Herbert Puchta, Jeff Stranks, Julian Oakley, Peter Lewis-Jones, Tim Foster, and Wayne Rimmer. According to its online presentation on the website for this textbook series, all textbooks

claim to represent British English. Each A2, B1, B1+, and B2 level provides twelve choices of products which are (1) Student's Book, (2) Student's Book with Online Assessment and Practice, and Online Workbook, (3) Workbook without Answers with Downloadable Audio, (4) Workbook with Answers with Downloadable Audio, (5) Teacher's Book, (6) Class Audio CDs, (7) Class DVD, (8) Presentation Plus (with Student's Book), (9) Presentation Plus (with Student's Book and Workbook), (10) Combo A with Online Assessment, (11) Combo B with Online Assessment, (12) Student's Book Pack with Online Access, Academic Skills and Reading Plus. A1 and C1 levels provide ten products the same as listed above except for *Presentation Plus (with Student's Book and Workbook)* and *Student's Book Pack with Online Access, Academic Skills and Reading Plus*. The earliest editions were published in February 2015 and the latest editions were published in August 2020.

- (2) *New Headway* is an English coursebook series published by Oxford University Press, the United Kingdom. The series provide six-level English coursebooks which are Beginner, Elementary, Pre-intermediate, Intermediate, Upper-intermediate, and Advanced. Headway Fifth Edition is its latest edition. The authors for Headway 5th edition include John Soars, Liz Soars, and Paul Hancock. The earliest edition of Headway is believed to be released in 1986 which makes it the former textbook series than the two above. The latest edition of Headway is called the Headway 5th edition which is published in the year 2020.
- (3) *Life* is a six-level English coursebook series for young adult and adult learners published by National Geographic Learning, a part of Cengage Learning group, the United States. It provides English coursebooks in six CEFR levels: A1 (Beginner), A2 (Elementary), B1 (Pre-intermediate), B1+ (Intermediate), B2 (Upper intermediate), and C1 (Advanced). There are two editions for Life series, and both editions provide in British English and American English according to its online presentation.

3.2.2 Data collection

In order to ensure the validity of the data analysis, Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) suggests the principle of triangulation to analyze discourse to make them more valid. Wodak and Reisigl (2016) argues that to analyze, data from different and accessible sources are considered. Below are the types of texts from the websites that concern with the concept ‘promotional material’.

- (a) Official website of the series: webspace produced by the publisher devoted specifically to the series, other promotional details about the series can be accessed through it.
- (b) Online brochure: online brochures that contain advertising elements about the materials from the series such as course packages, tools to learning, evaluation framework for the series, sample audios, etc.
- (c) Author biography: the page containing biography of the authors of the series.
- (d) Product information: the information about the product such as main features of the textbooks, comments from their users, learning impact evaluation, etc.

3.3 **Data preparation**

The data were collected as offline files to prevent a loss of access to specific documents on the websites and to make the analysis convenient. The pages were downloaded using a file tool ‘Export as PDF ...’ provided on macOS. The tool captures the whole page on a browser tab that is being opened at the time and automatically make it a PDF file once the file is saved. Any promotional PDF documents provided on the websites were also downloaded. After all the data were downloaded and converted into PDF files, pages across all three websites were mapped in a spreadsheet according to their promotional function. For example, promotional content under ‘What teachers and learners say’ on Empower websites, three comments from users of Headway and a review from a language trainer from Germany presented on Headway website, and promotional content under ‘What Life users are saying’ on Life website were mapped

together under “*Comments from users*” category. It is important to note that during the time of data analysis, access to the promotional website of Empower first edition was suspended due to the release of second edition. The current promotional website for Empower series therefore promotes Empower second edition. Consequently, the promotional web pages of the two editions were compared to ensure that there was no significant change.

3.4 Data analysis

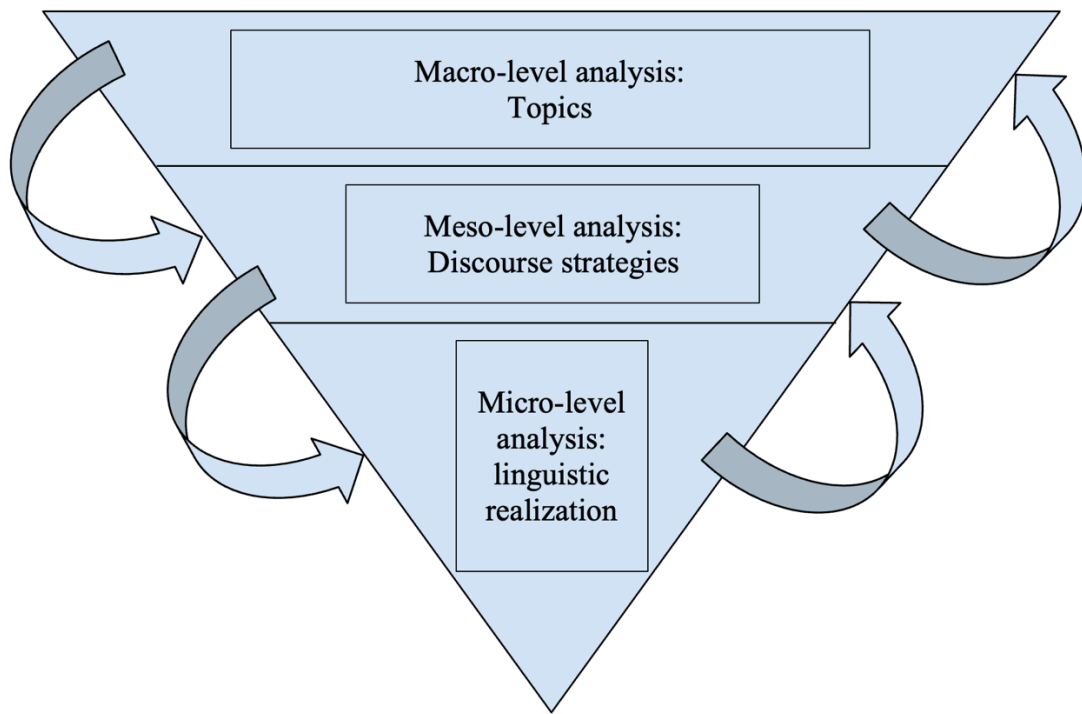
The data were analyzed regarding three concurrent levels of analysis (see also Figure 1):

- Macro-level analysis: the main discourse topics relating to the contexts of the text were identified. In this context, online discourse representing promotional functions on different sections of all three promotional websites, for example, online brochure/online resources, homepage, product information pages, etc. were identified into different functions such as advertising language of texts that describes characteristics of the series, texts that stresses the benefits of the series to the teachers and to the learners, texts that value the validity and reliability of the series’ material, etc.
- Meso-level analysis: the five discourse strategies: nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivization, intensification (Wodak & Reisigl, 2016) were applied to investigate how specific topics are mentioned/referred to. For example, the nomination ‘Headway’ is attributed with the predication ‘trusted’; the nomination ‘Cambridge English Empower’ is attributed with intensified predication ‘potentially a game-changer’; the nominations ‘teachers’ and ‘learners’ in Life are attributed with the actions of being ‘kept engaged’ by the series, etc.
- Micro-level analysis: the use of specific words, phrases, structures, etc. were analyzed to capture linguistic types/realizations.

To ensure the interpretation of the data analysis, the supervisor of this thesis contributed as a second coder. Throughout the analysis, regular meetings were held in which the identification of discourse strategies was discussed and validated through joint examination of raw data.

Figure 1

Three concurrent levels of analysis in the discourse-historical approach



Wodak and Reisigl (2016) proposed five types of discourse strategies based on five main research questions for textual analysis (see Table 1).

Table 1

Five types of discourse strategy

Discourse strategies	Purpose
Nomination strategies:	Discursive construction of social actors:

<p>How are persons, objects, phenomena/events, processes and actions named and referred to linguistically?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empower, Cambridge English Empower, Cambridge, Cambridge Assessment English, Cambridge English, CEFR • Headway, 5th Edition Headway, Headway 5th Edition, Oxford Online Practice • Life, National Geographic Life, NG Life, National Geographic Learning, NGL Life, National Geographic, Cengage • we (Cambridge, Life authors), it (Cambridge English Empower, Headway, Life); you (readers, consumers, teachers), they (teachers, students, learners, schools and colleges) • I, me (a user); we (users of a language program, teachers, teachers and learners/students) • teachers, students, learners
<p>Predication strategies:</p> <p>What characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to social actors, objects, phenomena/events and processes?</p>	<p>Discursive characterization/qualification of social actors, objects, phenomena, events processes and actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Empower, Cambridge English Empower</i>: shaped by unique insights; enables teachers to teach; enables learners to make progress; part of a learning experience that could only come from Cambridge; can save you (teachers) time; combines course content from Cambridge University Press with validated assessment from the experts at Cambridge Assessment English; carefully benchmarked to the CEFR; you can be sure (of it); includes a unique assessment package; provides step-by-step support, guidance, and activities for teachers, etc. • <i>Cambridge English</i>: the world-leaders in language assessment • <i>Headway</i>: delivers the learning outcomes that support students to move to the next level of study; retains the course's trusted methodology; offers flexible teaching and learning tools for every situation; provides fresh and relevant English instruction needed for success today; are names that have become synonymous with English language teaching and learning, etc. • <i>Life</i>: exciting; dazzlingly appealing; a breath of fresh air; mature; brings people together; has awe-inspiring photos and videos; keeps student engaged; so much more

	<p>interesting than other General English coursebooks; doesn't date easily; etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Teachers</i>: provided with a full digital package in one place; can save time and engage learners with ease; trust; feel; believe; choose • <i>Learners, students</i>: to reach their full potential; to learn in an active and memorable way; are engaged (by series materials); kept engaged • <i>Student's Book</i>: containing provoking content; designed to generate an emotional response; get learners and teachers enjoying the class right from the start; provides rich and varied opportunities • <i>Course book</i>: with thought-provoking images and texts and engaging video; designed to generate an emotional response; helping teachers to deliver motivating and memorable lessons • <i>Assessment</i>: reliable; developed and validated by the experts; rigorously pre-tested; validated
<p>Argumentation strategies:</p> <p>Which arguments are employed to try and convince people (to buy Empower, Headway, and Life)?</p>	<p>Persuading addressees of the truth and normative rightness of claims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entertainment • Validity, trustworthiness, reputation • Ease of use
<p>Perspectivization strategies:</p> <p>From what perspective are these nominations, attributions and arguments expressed?</p>	<p>Positioning speaker's or writer's point of view and expressing involvement or distance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main voices: Cambridge, Headway, Life • Voices representing teachers, learners
<p>Mitigation and intensification strategies:</p>	<p>Modifying the illocutionary force of utterances in respect of their epistemic or deontic status:</p> <p>Use of emotive language: far more than 'just another new book', potentially a game-changer, thought-provoking</p>

Are the respective utterances articulated overtly, are they intensified or mitigated?	images and texts, world-leaders in language assessment, unique
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4 RESULTS

This section is organized according to four primary patterns of how discourse strategies were used in the three websites. Data extracts from each website are presented in each section.

4.1 Construction of authority

The three publishers devote much attention to the establishment of the reliability and authority of their products, even though they employ different strategies of doing so. Cambridge English Empower places significant stress on the validity and reliability of the course materials. The series is often attached with the Cambridge brand and its language testing products:

Cambridge English Empower is a general English course for adult and young adult learners which combines course content from Cambridge University Press with validated assessment from the experts at Cambridge Assessment English. [Empower: Homepage]

Assessment developed and validated by the experts at Cambridge Assessment English; rigorously pre-tested to ensure it is accurate, meaningful and fair. [Empower: Homepage]

Cambridge English Empower includes a unique assessment package that has been produced by the experts at Cambridge English Language Assessment. [Empower: Product Details]

The similarity of these extracts, taken from different sub-pages, highlight the first impression that Cambridge English Empower attempts to create by repeating how the course package, content, and materials have been assessed and validated by related Cambridge's language assessment organization. The main and most important social actor 'Cambridge English Empower' co-occurring with 'Cambridge Assessment English' and 'Cambridge English Language Assessment' can be perceived the reliability of the series that is attached by the names of the *Cambridge* organizations. According to the texts presented on the website, 'assessment', an important process/action that is discursively constructed, seems to be the focal point that

represents the validated process in producing the series' course package, accordingly, predications that attributes to the validation and reliability of the main social actor 'Cambridge English Empower' are, for example, 'unique', 'validated', 'from the experts', 'developed and validated by the experts', 'produced by the experts', 'rigorously pre-tested', 'accurate', 'meaningful' and 'fair'.

It is observable that Headway presents its reliability and trustworthiness of the course materials not only by using statistical data and quantitative measures but also by relying on its long-serving material editions and well-known status in the ELT market:

91% of teachers trust that Headway delivers the learning outcomes that support students to move to the next level of study. [Headway: Homepage]

90% of teachers believe Headway has helped their students progress to the next level of study. [Headway: Product Information]

97% of teachers say they are satisfied or very satisfied with Headway. [Headway: Product Information]

The statistical data presented throughout the promotional webpage of Headway 5th edition seem to be the main strategy conveying the idea of how the textbook's potential to guarantee target consumers with expected learning outcomes. The examples above were extracted from the Oxford Impact study, conducted using the Oxford Impact Framework, an approach to evaluating impact of Oxford University Press products and services.

The outstanding use of texts establishing authority and trustworthiness of both the textbook and the publisher is strongly tied to Headway's acclaimed status in the ELT market:

Headway 5th edition retains the course's trusted methodology and has been updated with new texts, topics and digital resources. [Headway: Homepage]

Why do teachers trust Headway? [Headway: Digital Brochure]

Headway and its award-winning authors, Liz and John Soars, are names that have become synonymous with English language teaching and learning. Teach with

Headway's perfectly- balanced grammar and skills syllabus, based on the course's world-renowned methodology. [Headway: Digital Brochure; Product Information]

Headway 5th edition listens to feedback from teachers and focusses on topics and activities that are relevant and useful to today's adult students, whilst retaining the trusted methodology teachers love. [Headway: Product Information]

The texts above highlight the impression of the coursebook the publisher attempts to create of Headway. The claim made by the publisher for Headway as being the *trusted* and *well-known* ELT material is used with similar and repeated predications such as 'trusted' and 'synonymous'; 'world-renowned'. The most important social actors 'Headway' and 'Headway 5th edition' are qualified as being trustworthy, reliable, and most importantly having been assured of its quality by (ELT) teachers by the use of the predications 'retains the course's trusted methodology' and 'retaining the trusted methodology teachers love'. This gives Headway an implicit acceptance by one of the crucial agents in ELT, the teacher, who too is considered as the consumer of the product.

Cambridge and Oxford overall show a similar strategy of building the trustworthiness of their course materials upon the recognition of the publisher in the ELT field: Empower stresses the connection between their products and its relation to Cambridge names and standardized assessment; Headway relies on their reputation in the ELT market and the Headway brand. Life also seems to draw its trustworthiness through association with a well-known brand, the magazine publication and TV channel *National Geographic (NG)*:

Drawing on National Geographic content, *Life* transforms the learning experience into a fabulous journey with irresistible images, articles and videos that engage learners like no series before. [Life: Homepage]

National Geographic Learning proudly presents *Life*, an exciting six-level general English course for adults (also available as twelve split editions that combine the Student's Book and Workbook in a single volume). [Life: About Life]

NGL *Life* is driven by rich National Geographic content and the fundamental values of inspiring people to care about the planet, celebrating human achievement and exploring diversity. [Life: About Life]

National Geographic video on the DVD allows teachers to bring lessons to life. [Life: About Life]

Fully integrated National Geographic video for each unit [Life: About Life]

"LIFE is dazzlingly appealing. Cengage has provided LIFE with awe-inspiring pictures by National Geographic ..." [Life: About Life]

"When students were first given their Life coursebooks, their reaction was 'Wow – National Geographic!'" [Life: About Life]

". . .The NG branding is a strong positive feature. . ." [Life: About Life]

Using *National Geographic* materials, *Life* gives teachers and students the opportunity to explore together the lives of people all over the world. [Life: National Geographic and Life]

These examples show how the National Geographic branding seems to be positioned as the main selling point for Life series, as it is mentioned visibly and frequently throughout the webpage. This reliance on the well-known NG branding to promote the content in the course materials establishes the trustworthiness for Life series as shown in the abovementioned examples. The most important social actors in the texts representing Life are 'Life' and 'NGL Life', which are predicated by connections with 'National Geographic', 'National Geographic Learning', and 'Cengage'. This gives Life the qualification as the series able to deliver a new way of learning: '*Life* transforms the learning experience into a fabulous journey ... like no series before.'. Here, another important social actor, 'National Geographic', National Geographic Learning', and 'Cengage', could be assumed as containing positive traits (authority, trustworthiness) and to be lending those traits to 'Life'. The use of this advertising strategy creates a hierarchy between National Geographic and Life, placing National Geographic in a position of greater prominence and power, while Life is dependent on it for contents.

Another feature found in the three series was the use of intensification strategies, particularly hyperbolic descriptions of the textbook:

Tests developed and validated by Cambridge English, the world-leaders in language assessment – so you know the results are reliable. [Empower: Homepage]

The Student's Book contains thought-provoking content which is designed to generate an emotional response and get learners and teachers enjoying the class right from the start. [Empower: Homepage]

“The more we used Empower and explored the online platform, the more we realised that this was far more than ‘just another new book’ and is potentially a game-changer.”

[Empower: Homepage]

The use of intensification on the promotional website for Empower tends to characterize the course features in this series as being new and unique, while maintaining its image of being accurate and credible in the field of ELT. These are primarily aimed at establishing the authoritative position of the textbook itself, of the institution standing behind it, of the process of developing it, and of the impact it has in users. The social actor of text in the first example, Cambridge English, is qualified with the intensified predication ‘the world-leaders in language assessment’, emphasizing the credibility of the process in producing the course materials, as well as the credibility of its publisher. In a crowded market, where several large publishers compete, such a reference to Cambridge being *world-leaders in language assessment* serves to solidify its position of authority among other publishers by making an appeal across to the highly political field of language testing (Shohamy, 2001). Aside from supporting claims to the authority of Cambridge as an ELT actor, much intensification was linked to Empower itself, as illustrated by the following two examples. Here, *Empower* is described with emphatic terms like ‘*thought-provoking*’, as ‘*far more than just another new book*’ and as ‘*potentially a game-changer*’. The use of such emotive expressions was a feature throughout, with the textbooks rarely described in neutral terms, a reflection of the appropriation of promotional language throughout the website.

The intensification strategies on Life promotional website also tends to convey the characteristics of the series as being the ‘vehicle’ for teachers and students into the exploration of the ‘world’ portrayed in the coursebooks:

“It breathed new life into one of our courses, a topic-based skills course. Teachers started using Life and made use of the visuals. It gave the course more structure and colour. The power of the image was exploited by teachers in class.” [Life: About Life]

“The series is absolutely awesome, I feel like I'm travelling when I teach with it!” [Life: About Life]

“An exciting six-level series that makes learning English an exploration of the world. Drawing on National Geographic content, Life transforms the learning experience into a fabulous journey with irresistible images, articles and videos that engage learners like no series before.” [Life: National Geographic and Life]

More than 70 countries and regions of the world are explored in the *Life* student's books and workbooks, making *Life* a truly global journey of discovery. Using *National Geographic* materials, *Life* gives teachers and students the opportunity to explore together the lives of people all over the world. [Life: National Geographic and Life]

The emphasis on and repetition of the personified actions that are being attached to the coursebooks and materials of this series show how the publisher intends to mimic the National Geographic documentary shows by using intensification strategy to characterize and personify Life as being able to create the experience of travel into different exotic spaces for teachers and students. The nomination ‘it’ and ‘an exciting six-level series’ both refer to the main social actor ‘Life’; ‘Life coursebooks’; ‘Life materials’. The predications ‘breathed new life...’, ‘transforms the learning experience...’, ‘a truly global journey’ are attributed to the main social actors as the core characteristics of the series. Another social actor ‘teacher/s’, also nominated with ‘I’, and ‘learners’ are accompanied with the existence and the actions performed by the series ‘[I] feel like I'm travelling when I teach with it!’, ‘[Life] gives teachers and students the opportunity to explore’. Additionally, taken into consideration of how Life series promotes its trustworthiness by relying on the National Geographic while also meaning to mimic the experience of using the series materials to the experience of [watching and reading] National Geographic become the selling features of this series. The publisher also emphasizes the making process of the series by displaying the sections called *Bringing National Geographic to Life*, *A Design for Life*, and *Explore the World with NG Life* on its promotional website. These three sections are dedicated

to the making processes of Life series materials, including how the author of Life compiled together the contents and photography from National Geographic sources and wrote Life and how the series coursebooks are design in accordance with the design of National Geographic magazines. I will examine the use of intensification, as well as other features of advertising language, in the next section.

4.2 Use of advertising language

In straightforward terms, promotional language can be defined as “a form of discourse which is intended to inform and promote in order to sell ideas, goods or services to a selected group of people” (Bhatia, 2005, p. 214). This can involve a number of specific linguistic features, like use of figurative or emotional language (Cook, 2001), though it is also reflected by a broader reconstruction of readers as consumers (Fairclough, 2003). The three series are found sharing some similar choices in using promotional languages. Despite the different approach in positioning their authority and trustworthiness of each series, the three shared a number of advertising texts in common, particularly in constructing the characteristics of each series. The data also shows additional use of intensification strategy by the attempt to conveying another advertising features to its consumers:

Use in class to deliver engaging lessons and bring your coursebooks to life. [Headway]

Deliver engaging lessons – bring your coursebooks to life in the classroom. [Headway]

Video introductions provide an overview of the content included in each unit. Teachers can play these in class or set as pre-work to bring the unique topic to life. [Headway: Digital Brochure]

Bring unit topics to life with the new unit opener page which include inspiring photographs and accompanying video introductions engage students with the unit topic. [Headway: Product Information]

An exciting six-level series that makes learning English an exploration of the world. Bring Life into your classroom! [Life: Homepage]

National Geographic video on the DVD allows teachers to bring lessons to life. [Life: About Life]

Bringing National Geographic to Life [Life: National Geographic and Life]

“When students were first given their Life coursebooks, their reaction was ‘Wow – National Geographic!’...” [Life: About Life]

The ‘wow’ factor – something to talk about [Life: National Geographic and Life]

I tend to overuse ‘Wow!’ when I’m researching for *Life* – these are the images that win international photography prizes, after all – but I’m pretty sure that there’ll be a few ‘wow’s in the classroom too. [Life: National Geographic and Life]

The extracts show the use of hyperboles in promoting Headway and Life. Even though Headway series, among the all three, seems to display fewer use of intensification strategies on their website; however, it is found using similar wordings in expressing the hyperbolic expressions to Life as in ‘bring your coursebooks to life’, ‘bring the unique topic to life’, ‘Bring unit topics to life’, ‘Bring Life into your classroom!’, ‘bring lessons to life’, ‘Bringing National Geographic to Life’. The abovementioned intensified wordings in the Headway website are used to advertise its teaching tools *Classroom Presentation Tools* conveying its potential to deliver experiences to teachers and learners by personifying the coursebooks.

In the case of Empower, many features of this type of discourse could be observed, including a clear positioning of readers as consumers:

How can the course *save you time*? [Empower: Product Details]

Try our useful *time-saving* calculator to find out how much *time* Cambridge English Empower can save *you* versus marking paper-based tests [Empower: Product Details]

With automatically-marked homework and tests, personalised practice and a variety of digital tools, *teachers can save time* and *engage learners with ease*. [Empower: Product Details]

This extract contains a number of nominations and predications that are intended to emphasize the benefits of the Empower series to users. The two important social actors referred to in this extract are ‘Cambridge English Empower’ and ‘teachers’. While the nomination ‘you’, used here to address readers directly, can in general refer to any

reader of the page, it can be assumed that the audience being addressed here are teachers, considering that they are attributed the activity of ‘*marking paper-based tests*’. While teachers are represented as an actor in this extract and elsewhere, Cambridge English Empower appears as the primary agent (performing actions like ‘saving time’), while teachers, as consumers, are represented in a more passive manner, attributed few actions independently. The perceived benefit of the course to teachers is also reinforced in the predication ‘can [...] engage learners with ease’, which again attributes the ability to act to Empower rather than teachers themselves.

Another significant use of advertising language found on the Life promotional website was communicating to the consumers how it differs itself from other ELT coursebooks in the market:

One of the biggest differences between writing for *Life* and writing other ELT materials is the fact that the text source materials are so completely integrated with visual and video elements. [Life: National Geographic and Life]

“A Breakthrough” [Life: About Life]

“No other textbook offers what this does” [Life: About Life]

“Life is so refreshing and a break from the norm of sanitised, contrived and childish content found in other adult ELT coursebooks.” [Life: About Life]

“Life is so much more interesting than other General English coursebooks on the market! There is something for everyone, and it is all laid out nicely. The pictures are lovely, and we often use them as a basis for discussion” [Life: About Life]

It is significantly observable of Life series to convey readers/users that its course materials are ‘fresh’ and ‘different’ from other ELT textbooks in the market, whether in the way that it gives different experiences in teaching for the teachers with the series; different experiences in creating the materials for the author; or different experiences in learning for the students. Characteristic of the series were described by the use of intensification strategy as being ‘a breakthrough’. Life, as the most important social actor, was attributed the predications as being ‘so refreshing’ and ‘so much more interesting than other General English coursebooks on the market’. These choices intendedly displayed on the website (note that most of these examples were presented

as quotes from the users of Life) explicitly support the representation of the series as being different to other general ELT textbooks, which seems to be another main selling points for Life along with the connection to the National Geographic brand to its coursebooks as mentioned in 5.1. Aside from these choices for the language used to promote the series, Life seems to be the only series out of the three to directly mention the ‘market’ on their promotional website, *‘Our picture researchers and artwork commissioners ensured the images were right for all markets’*. This concern is expressed by the designers of Life in the sub-section *A Design for Life* on Life promotional website. This can well exemplify the ‘market-sensitivity’ and ‘cultural-sensitivity’ in the guidelines to ELT production practices drawn by Gray (2010) that, according to the competitiveness of the ELT market, any sensitivities to consumers that could affect the sales in the potential markets has become an increasing concern to ELT publishers (p. 119).

In addition to the promotional discourse supporting the publisher’s claim that Life delivers different experiences in using its materials than other ELT coursebooks, it is worth mentioning the comments from the users (the teachers) from the comment sections of both Headway and Life to illustrate this phenomenon in a clear picture:

“There is a lesson about Oprah Winfrey's life. The grammar to teach is the simple past and my students really connected the use and importance of this tense with the grammar taught in previous classes.” [Headway: Product Information]

“I like working with Unit 7 of American Headway Level 2, because of the choice of characters and pictures provided. They engage the learners because usually they like the celebrities and their lives, not to mention that it is very illustrative in contrasting present perfect versus simple present.” [Headway: Product Information]

“Teachers like the DVD, the regularity of the book and the fact that the topics are global with no celebrities” [Life: About Life]

These contrasting examples from both series clearly show how Life positions themselves to be offering different kind material contents in the ELT market.

4.3 Visual features and content

When describing visual features of the series materials, similar patterns of attributions to them could be seen in the three series:

Each unit opens with a striking image to grab attention and inspire curiosity.

[Empower: Homepage]

Striking images that surprise and engage learners from the start. [Empower: Content]

A course book with thought-provoking images and texts and engaging video, designed to generate an emotional response; all helping teachers to deliver motivating and memorable lessons. [Empower: Homepage]

"The best bit for me is the Everyday English sections — I really enjoy teaching with the video clips. The situations are hilarious and always make the students laugh, which is a great start to the class!" [Empower: Homepage]

The Student's Book contains striking images and videos along with thought-provoking texts, all designed to generate an emotional response. [Empower: Content]

Entertaining video filmed in the real world. [Empower: Product Details]

Entertaining, high-quality video presents useful language and conversational techniques. [Empower: Product Details]

An inspiring photograph and questions introduce the unit topic and encourage students to think about issues that have an impact on their lives. [Headway: Digital Brochure]

Generate discussion with inspiring photography unit openers [Headway: Homepage]

Bring unit topics to life with the new unit opener page which include inspiring photographs and video introductions engage with the unit topic. [Headway: Product Information]

... This video material involves real people using authentic language. ... [Headway: Product Information]

"LIFE is dazzlingly appealing. Cengage has provided LIFE with awe-inspiring pictures by National Geographic . . ." [Life: About Life]

“Life brings people together, has great topics and awe-inspiring photos and videos.”

[Life: About Life]

"An exciting six-level series that makes learning English an exploration of the world.

Drawing on National Geographic content, Life transforms the learning experience into a fabulous journey with irresistible images, articles and videos that engage learners like no series before." [Life: National Geographic and Life]

“Visually nice with interesting topics, and the DVD is great.” [Life: About Life]

The promotional language in the extracts above shows the similar attributions that the publishers use in order to qualify the visual features of the series materials and contents. It is an observable pattern that despite their different ways of using promotional texts to build the series' brand, the visual characteristics of the course materials seem to be attributed with similar predications across all three promotional websites. The photographs, also referred to as 'photos'; 'images'; 'pictures'; 'photography', are being attributed the qualifications of being 'inspiring/ [to] 'inspire' ('awe-inspiring' in the case of Life). This as well applies to the attributions of the 'video' and 'video content' by the predications 'engaging', 'entertaining.' The common use of advertising language for the description of the visual content across the three promotional websites also features hyperbolic descriptions such as 'striking', 'dazzlingly appealing', 'exciting', 'visually nice', and 'great'. In addition to the commonly used qualifications among the three promotional websites, 'engage' and 'engaging' seem to be one of the commonly used predications attached not only to the visual content, but also to other promotional bits of the series, for example:

Personalised learning paths outside of the classroom give students targeted practice, ensuring they spend their time on what they need most, and keeping them motivated and engaged. [Empower: Homepage]

learners are kept motivated and engaged [Empower: Product Details]

"Headway provides not only material which helps you teach English in an engaging way but it is also packed with ideas on how to present the material in a novel way."

[Headway: Homepage]

"Headway has always offered me diverse and engaging materials which accommodates all my students' social and cultural backgrounds." [Headway: Homepage]

Deliver engaging lessons with interactive activities, set homework, and track student progress [Headway: Digital Brochure]

4.4 Construction of teachers and learners

The publishers of the three series commonly address their series' qualifications, attractiveness of the series materials and components, and especially the benefits that the series materials contribute to both the teachers and the learners whether with the contribution to the ease in teaching, lessened workload for the teachers, the convenience in tracking learners' progress, the ability to help engage the learners and deliver a form of teaching in classroom, etc. Empower addresses teachers and learners in different aspects, placing them in their typical roles in teaching and in learning. Importantly, most of these seem to be represented as enabled by the Empower series:

A course book with thought-provoking images and texts and engaging video, designed to generate an emotional response; all helping teachers to deliver motivating and memorable lessons. [Empower: Homepage]

Teachers are provided with a full digital package in one place... [Empower: Homepage]

It's shaped by unique insights from our extensive research and expertise, all to enable teachers to do what they do best - teach - and learners to reach their full potential. [Empower: Homepage]

Try our useful time-saving calculator to find out how much time Cambridge English Empower can save you versus marking paper-based tests. [Empower: Homepage]

With automatically-marked homework and tests, personalised practice and a variety of digital tools, teachers can save time and engage learners with ease. [Empower: Homepage]

Teachers can see learners' progress at a glance in the Gradebook and see which areas require more focus in class. [Empower: Product Details]

Empower's unique mix of engaging classroom materials and reliable assessment, with personalised online practice, enables learners to make consistent and measurable progress. [Empower: Homepage]

Personalised learning paths outside of the classroom give students targeted practice, ensuring they spend their time on what they need most, and keeping them motivated and engaged. [Empower: Homepage]

After each test, students are directed to personalised practice, depending on the score they achieved, so they focus on the areas that will benefit them most. [Empower: Homepage]

Learners are provided with a unique CEFR report which reliably benchmarks their level in each of the four skills, and provides clear evidence of progress made during the course. [Empower: Homepage]

The Student's Book contains thought-provoking content which is designed to generate an emotional response and get learners and teachers enjoying the class right from the start. [Empower: Homepage]

“...The situations are hilarious and always make the students laugh, which is a great start to the class!” [Empower: Homepage]

This encourages and enables students to learn in an active and memorable way. The book also provides rich and varied opportunities to practice the target language, developing productive skills for effective, real-world use. [Empower: Content]

Each unit opens with striking images for instant learner engagement. 'Can Do' statements immediately focus learners on their unit objectives. [Empower: Product Details]

Each level of Cambridge English Empower is carefully mapped to the appropriate CEFR level in accordance with English Vocabulary Profile, guaranteeing that the student's encounter the right language at the right level. [Empower: Product Details]

learning is tailored to meet individual needs [Empower: Product Details]

learners are kept motivated and engaged [Empower: Product Details]

The teachers are mostly represented as captivated with the textbook because of how convenient and easy (sometimes ‘easier’) teaching the series can offer them. The series materials are advertised as a ‘support’ for the teachers, which means that they are said to be helped by its tools and materials from the very first step, such as planning lessons, to assessing, grading and marking learners’ tests or assignments. Meanwhile when addressing the students, the stress shifts to the engagement generated by its material contents and progress making accommodated by the series’ learning tools. However, by stating the emphasis of the progress making, the narration is often associated with the help to ease teachers’ workload. The use of words such as ‘helping [teachers/learners]’, ‘enables [teachers/learners]’, ‘[teachers/learners] are provided’, ‘get/give/keep [teachers/learners]’ puts focus on the book as a benevolent actor, enabling teachers and learners to act. In general, few cases were found of teachers or learners being represented as performing actions that did not involve the book.

While promotional discourse on the Empower website put more focus on agency of teachers and learners, Headway on the other hand seems to address ‘teachers’ in a different way:

91% of teachers trust that Headway delivers the learning outcomes that support students to move to the next level of study. [Headway: Homepage]

Why do teachers trust *Headway*? [Headway: Digital Brochure]

Click below to find out how teachers from around the world has been inspired by *Headway*. [Headway: Digital Brochure]

An impact study was conducted in order to gain an in-depth understanding of how teachers feel that the Headway series has delivered the learning outcomes to support students to move to the next level of study. [Headway: Digital Brochure]

90% of teachers believe Headway has helped their students progress to the next level of study. [Headway: Product Information]

Headway 5th edition listens to feedback from teachers and focusses on topics and activities that are relevant and useful to today’s adult students, whilst retaining the trusted methodology teachers love. [Headway: Product Information]

Teachers believe that the biggest influence on students' ability to progress is the way that *Headway* improves their ability in one or more of the four skills (Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing). [Headway: Product Information]

97% of teachers say they are satisfied or very satisfied with *Headway* [Headway: Product Information]

The top three reasons teachers choose *Headway* are: [Headway: Product Information]

Which lesson did Headway teachers feel helped their students the most? [Headway: Product Information]

Whether you're teaching face to face, remotely, or both, Headway 5th edition offers flexible teaching and learning tools for every situation. [Headway: Homepage]

An easy-to-use Learning Management System allows you to track the progress your students are making on the Online Practice. [Headway: Digital Brochure]

"Headway provides not only material which helps you teach English in an engaging way but it is also packed with ideas on how to present the material in a novel way." [Headway: Homepage]

All the language and skills your students need to improve their English, with grammar, vocabulary and skills work in every unit. [Headway: Digital Brochure]

An inspiring photograph and questions introduce the unit topic and encourage students to think about issues that have an impact on their lives. [Headway: Digital Brochure]

Updated with new texts, topics and themes, Headway 5th edition provides fresh and relevant English instruction that is tailored to your students' needs. [Headway: Product Information]

Students can look again at activities from previous lessons, do extra skills practice, and check their progress with instant feedback. [Headway: Digital Brochure]

Its balanced methodology of vocabulary, grammar and integrated skills provides the right level of challenge for students. [Headway: Product Information]

Combining practical, real life content for today's students with flexible digital resources that are clearly linked to the Headway syllabus, the course ensures students are engaged and motivated for success. [Headway: Product Information]

These things are all the more meaningful in the context of lockdowns and restrictions and give a learner a fertile ground on which to found their expression. [Headway: Product Information]

Headway uses much of the same pattern as Empower, mainly positioning the book itself as an actor. However, the promotional discourse puts more stress on the teachers as an agent and assigns more actions to them. Even though acting as an agent, 'teachers' however are assigned only with limited types of actions such as 'trusting', 'feeling', 'believing' and 'loving', mainly actions which involve acceptance and appreciation of Headway. These actions can be traced back to how the publisher of Headway establishes its authority throughout the promotional website by emphasizing the trustworthiness and acclaiming its status in the ELT (see 4.1). The teachers here are being represented as the beneficiary of this relationship.

While the pattern when addressing the teachers and learners still remains similar to the other two series, *Life* appears to put more attention toward the students and direct-addresses learners more often than it does to the teachers:

National Geographic video on the DVD allows teachers to bring lessons to life. [Life: About Life]

"...The course respects adult learners as thinking individuals and the inclusion of local and global topics / themes / articles enables teachers to strongly personalise their lessons." [Life: About Life]

Life gives teachers and students the opportunity to explore together the lives of people all over the world. [Life: National Geographic and Life]

You can feel confident that users of *Life* will be just as interested in reading about the photos as you are. [Life: National Geographic and Life]

A practical, competency-based syllabus helps learners in their development of grammar, vocabulary, functions, pronunciation and skills through appropriate communicative tasks. [Life: About Life]

Real life lessons model and practise everyday functions, preparing learners to use language in the real world. [Life: About Life]

The carefully designed Critical thinking syllabus challenges learners to understand texts at a deeper level. [Life: About Life]

Sample IELTS tests allow learners to benchmark their learning [Life: About Life]

“Life is a mature coursebook for a serious learner who wants to learn real English for use in the real world. It is so refreshing and a break from the norm of sanitised, contrived and childish content found in other adult ELT coursebooks. The course respects adult learners as thinking individuals and the inclusion of local and global topics / themes / articles enables teachers to strongly personalise their lessons.” [Life: About Life]

“... Life transforms the learning experience into a fabulous journey with irresistible images, articles and videos that engage learners like no series before.” [Life: National Geographic and Life]

I’ve found that users of *Life* can very easily use the images to start to build their ideas of the context, topic and story before they start to deal with the text. This kind of mental framework is useful enough for native speakers but is invaluable for learners. [Life: National Geographic and Life]

“The students found learning about different cultures really interesting. It was nice to use this to engage them in the lessons.” [Life: About Life]

“When students were first given their *Life* coursebooks, their reaction was ‘Wow – National Geographic!’. The students indeed found the NG content and DVD to be the most positive elements of the book. They also liked its academic nature and found it interesting to learn about the world.” [Life: About Life]

“*Life* keeps students engaged, and is visually appealing, very cultural, with a broad range of topics.” [Life: About Life]

“We adopted *Life* because of the presentation and subject matter. We have academically-focussed students so a book like this is ideal.” [Life: About Life]

And it's all the kind of language that easily lets students generate new, simplified or parallel texts of their own. [Life: National Geographic and Life]

Using *National Geographic* materials, *Life* gives teachers and students the opportunity to explore together the lives of people all over the world. [Life: National Geographic and Life]

This as well points to the matter of the said authenticity of the contents that Life is said to deliver to the learners. When comparing the construction of the discourse about teachers and learners between Headway and Life, they adapt their way of advertising and shift their weight according to the group of customers they primarily wish for the materials to attract. Headway states its reliance on the continuing reputation in ELT market and its accredited and traditional grammar syllabus, thus target audience it aims is more likely toward through '*teachers*' and '*teaching*'. Life is represented as offering a different environment in the market by bringing series' distinctive features, which are presented to be the critical thinking syllabus and its serious National Geographic-linked content into its promotional site. Life publisher puts the attention of its promotional discourse not only toward the practices in teaching but also toward the practices in learning.

The discourse about teachers and learners displayed by Empower, Headway as well as Life shows how the teachers and learners are being treated as a patient in transitive construction – compared to the mostly agentive representation of series materials, coursebooks, and assisting tools in a way that a form of teaching or learning seems to come from the assistance of the series mostly and dependently. The pattern emerges through a specific use of words and phrases in all three promotional websites. They usually attach action words such as 'help', 'enable', 'give', 'let', 'provide', 'help', 'allow', 'ensure', etc. to the coursebooks, materials, materials' qualifications or even the publishing organizations. These action words always act for the series' materials as agents regardless of voices. The agents are usually referred to, such as, coursebooks, the course, series, series content, series tools, to which most of them are attached attributions. In most times where the publishers use these action words, the only recipients of those actions are teachers and/or learners. This occurrence unveils the unequal power in the relationship between the publishers and teachers and learners. The

course materials and tools to teaching and learning are assigned a sense of authority, reliability, and trustworthiness to.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Discussion

Overall, the findings of this research show clear strategies in the approach to product marketing of three global ELT coursebook series, Empower, Headway, and Life, on their promotional websites. The publishers of these series were found using similar discourse strategies, which are nomination, predication, and intensification. Main social actors that were nominated in the promotional discourse across three websites were series' names (Empower, Headway, Life) and teachers and learners. Most of the social actors relating to the series and series materials were attributed with the predications that qualify their coursebooks, materials, teaching and learning tools to have benefited teaching and learning experiences. The prime characteristics that all three publishers prioritize in their advertising discourse are the focus on establishing trustworthiness and reliability of their series. The findings indicate similar patterns of terms used by each of publishers to differentiate themselves. Empower builds its reliability upon the 'Cambridge' name, particularly in connection to assessment, while Headway claims its reputation in the ELT market and Life relies on National Geographic contents and its self-representation as being different from mainstream ELT. Moreover, when taking into account of the promotional discourse on [4.2 Use of advertising language](#) and [4.3 Visual features and content](#), the findings also reveal how all three publishers attempt to create the *entertaining, exciting, fun, engaging, etc.* atmosphere, as well as the offering of fulfilling individual's self-achievement in learning the English language, into teachers and learners' experiences in using their course materials especially the coursebooks. The offering of experiences/journey in teaching and learning practices and self-development by the publishers have served the influence of product marketization that what are being sold are not entirely the concrete products but also the 'transformation of individual through learning' (Zhang & O'Halloran, 2013, p. 483). The cases are similar to the finding of Chen and Eriksson (2019) that food companies market their products by creating emotional associations with the consumers as well as the tactics to distinguish their business from one another in the market.

All of the websites appear to convey a common underlying ideology, namely the implicit acceptance of the authoritative position that publishers create for themselves

through the promotion of their coursebooks and their guarantee of reliability and trustworthiness. The argumentation and narrative acclaiming positive traits of the series materials and the state of being reliable teaching and learning sources to the consumers expressed through the promotional texts are consistent with Thompson (1987)'s four modalities upon which ideology operates. The way discourse about how the series coursebooks are being treated as a trustworthy, reliable, and credible thing is reproduced by the publishers through repetition of text stressing the prime qualification of each series can be seen as 'legitimation' (Thompson, 1987, p. 521). Statements about the reliability and credibility are being made to qualify and attach to the products to constitute the standards they made perceived as valuable, in consequence, the qualifications they create legitimize the publishers through their products. Although this is noticeable in every series, when realizing how the legitimate is represented through the 'worthy of support' system (p. 521), Headway seems to portray this strategy most clearly with its said claims to being '*trusted worldwide*' and '*trusted by teachers*'. The other modality worth mentioning is reification (Thompson, 1987, p. 521), which we can see through representation of language teaching practices and language acquisition as universal to all contexts and all people. On all of the websites, language learning is referred to as something standardized that can be benchmarked to a standard framework (CEFR) regardless of learner background or context, and which can be achieved throughout the world by following the same overall method – as represented by the textbook.

The three series share a focus on the same fundamental skills syllabus and potential learning and teaching environments using similar discourse strategies yet conveying different values that each of them foregrounds. Despite having different values over teacher and learner positions, some of the offers and qualifications displayed among all three websites are similar to one another. It is evident in all three series that there is an attempt for the series' tools and/or materials to fit students' individual needs or their objectives in learning the language. It is understandable in the case when a series uses their technological individual learning tools to personalize their lessons or learning to fit each learner's needs in learning; however, in the sense of different groups or classes learners using its ubiquitously sold coursebooks and materials with identical

instructions and syllabus within the series materials, the claim to fill learners' individual needs in learning language seems to background the importance of the teachers. Another promotional discourse in parallel to this limitation of the individual learning lands on the assistance of the series materials to benchmark learners into each level. While grouping learners into each level of the study is said by the publishers to assist and ease teachers in assigning the suitable work to their learners, the offer seems to be more difficult in the teaching practice when considering the context of a class especially in a public school where the number of students has always been a major concern for the limited opportunity to monitor each of the learners in a limited amount of given time. It is near impossible for a coursebook to fulfill individual needs and objectives in learning in such a big size class that exists in most public schools.

In addition to the consideration of the teacher autonomy by the publishers, it is being recognized to a certain degree on each of the promotional websites. On the Life website, there is the section *Customize Life to your course hours* where it allows teachers to be active in their own teaching practices with the customization of its course material. Although Life materials are open for adjustment, they set the limit to the amount of time with no mention of material adaptation. The case differs on the Headway website, the offer is marked as one of the *Key Features* of the fifth edition where it states that teachers can 'download and adapt material for your students with the *Teacher's Resource Centre* which provides all your Headway resources...'. Despite the fact that the materials, in this case, are likely more open to a higher degree of teacher autonomy than Life, but the teachers are not totally encouraged to make their own decisions in accord with the consideration of ones' own sociocultural contexts. It is thus especially crucial for teachers, at risk of losing their autonomy and power in the profession, to take note of the discourse strategies used to promote this new order, and to make use of their roles to promote alternative visions of English language education.

One of the commonly mentioned features offered by the three series is technological supports for teaching and learning which includes, e.g., digital format of materials, learning management system (LMS), digital teaching tools, online tests and workbooks, online resources, etc. It is claimed by some of these series that these technological supports make digital/remote/online teaching easier and more convenient. Among the reasons why digital and remote teaching are often raised to attraction might be because

of the emergence of the pandemic that had made online/remote teaching and learning become a big part of education. Although Empower and Headway make digital supporting tools and system for teaching and learning alternative, yet they are remarked as a major convenience for teaching. When the promotional discourse relating to these facilitating tools are put/positioned as a universality, it is important to consider these technological supports toward different cultural contexts of individual learners and teachers. They are claimed to be able to ease and facilitate teachers and their practices, but the limitation/concern lies upon the limited access to technological gadgets or machines. The lack of access to technology or even the lack of convenience in using it remains a concern to an education system in some regions (Vanpetch & Sattayathamrongthian, 2020; Taneri & Engin-Demir, 2011). The lack of technological access can occur not only to teachers but also to learners; additionally, when one lacks access or convenience to using it whether it is a teacher or a learner, the universality disappears, consequently the teacher is burdened with additional work.

5.2 Limitations

This study has potential limitations. The analysis of the data is of the promotional written texts on the promotional websites, this excludes the analysis of texts represented in other form of presentations, i.e., promotional videos and photography, webpage design, external sample content files, and external pedagogical files. Another limitation was that the conclusion and discussion were drawn from the results of the text analysis. This means that the results of this study do not represents teachers' views and voices on the points that were raised in this study.

5.3 Recommendations for future research

For future research, further examination on ideologies that are being produced and portrayed through other forms of presentations such as promotional videos, sample contents of a series or through another types of data sources such as semiotic sources and designs that are used on these kinds of promotional webpages are also worth investigating. A deeper investigation on the discourse in their impact studies could also determine the values the publishers hold in a deeper aspect. It is important to note that more conclusions can also be drawn from another perspective in regard to direct voices

from the consumers and users of these ELT textbook series. Another perspective to consider for further research is to investigate how English educators make sense of these promotional materials and they affect the extent of English educators' choices in choosing materials.

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Ideologies in Promotional Materials of a Global ELT Textbook Series

Nalina Samarn¹Kristof Savski²

Abstract

Ideologies are belief systems that help reproduce unequal power relations in society. In English Language Teaching (ELT), analyses of ideologies have been given a lot of attention, particularly in research on the contents of ELT textbooks and studies of practices in classrooms. However, only few studies to date have focused on the role ideology plays in the sales and consumption of textbooks, and how ideologies help sustain the power of publishers, whose 'authority' in pedagogy is represented by those ELT materials. Placed in the field of critical discourse analysis and employing methods of the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) (Wodak & Meyer, 2016), this study aims to investigate how ideologies were reproduced through online promotional materials for a global ELT textbook series. The study addresses the research question: What discourse strategies are used to promote the ELT textbook series *Cambridge English Empower* (hereinafter referred to as '*Empower*')? Preliminary results show that *Empower* relies heavily on the use of typical promotional language, particularly intensifications, and that the book series tends to be attributed most actions (and not teachers or learners). The series also makes efforts to stress its validity and trustworthiness, particularly by referencing its compatibility with global language policy, particularly the Common European Framework (CEFR). We conclude by reflecting on the need for teachers to reflect on ideologies that threaten to devalue their knowledge and take away their power.

Keywords: ideology, ELT textbooks, critical discourse analysis, discourse strategies

Introduction

Ideologies are belief systems that help reproduce unequal power relations in society. The term is defined by Holborow (2007) as 'a set of ideas that emerges from specific social relations and supports the interests of a particular social class'. Wodak and Meyer (2016) stated the definition of it in political science as a 'coherent and relatively stable set of beliefs or values'. Holborow (2007) marked the relationship

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between language and ideology as both of the terms can represent reality and interpret the world. Ideology can appear in language as it is formed under how a language works; it can also form a status and positions of power and the status and positions can be accepted naturally. To connect the concept of language and ideology, language and society should be viewed jointly, since it is from social meanings of language that ideology emerges (Piller, 2015).

In English Language Teaching (ELT), textbooks are considered to be one of the important materials in a curriculum especially in language teaching. Forman (2014) noted that in the era of foreign-language teaching, 'textbook is curriculum' (p. 72). Akbari (2008) also defined methods of how textbooks determine teachers' practices in the classroom as 'textbook-defined practice' (p. 647). In the field of textbook analysis, there has been number of studies given to the field especially in analyzing internationally published ELT textbooks. The content in global ELT textbooks is described in critical pedagogy ELT as of containing ideological elements (see also Gray, 2010; Labtic & Teo, 2020; Ulla, 2019; Forman, 2014). Forman (2014) also asserted that global ELT textbooks tend to be favored by many due to their authority, prestige, and presentation. The 'authority' global ELT textbooks hold reflects how the power of publishers, as representatives of 'native speaker' English culture, over teachers and students is passed through ELT materials. Hence, what underlies the relationship between textbooks and users is the consumerization of ELT and actors involved in it. This study aims to raise awareness of how ideology is maintained by publishers of global ELT textbook series.

Objectives/Research Questions

This study attempts to investigate how ideologies are reproduced through the promotional materials of a global ELT textbook series on a publishing site of a global textbook publisher by employing methods of Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) proposed by Wodak and Reisigl (2016). This study aims to answer the research question: What discourse strategies are used to promote ELT textbook series on the website of a global publisher?

Research Methodology

CDS (Critical Discourse Studies) approaches take interests in deconstructing ideologies and power through the investigation of semiotic data (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). The data in this study was collected through a promotional website of a global ELT textbook series as claimed to target adult and young adult learners: *Cambridge English Empower*. *Cambridge English Empower* is an English textbooks series for adult learners published by Cambridge University Press & Assessment, the United Kingdom. It provides coursebooks in six CEFR levels: A1 (Starter), A2 (Elementary), B1 (Pre-intermediate), B1+ (Intermediate), B2 (Upper intermediate), and C1 (Advanced). The authors for this textbook series include Adrian Doff, Craig Thaine, Herbert Puchta, Jeff



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Stranks, Julian Oakley, Peter Lewis-Jones, Tim Foster, and Wayne Rimmer. The selected textbook series represents an example of a global and widely used ELT textbook series produced by a common/notable name of a publisher in ELT. According to its online presentation on the website for this textbook series, all textbooks claim to represent British English. The earliest editions were published in February 2015 and its latest editions were published in August 2020. The data that this study focuses on concern promotional texts; thus, below are the types of texts from the website that were taken into the analysis:

- a. Homepage of the series: a main webpage devoted to the series. Other promotional details about the series are outlined here and sub-pages can be accessed through it.
- b. Presentation of the series' design: course design, unit and content design, course syllabus design, learning impact evaluation/learning framework for the series, and language acquisition theories.
- c. Online resources: advertising pages for a preview of sample content

The data collected were categorized into sections according to its position on the website. It was then analyzed at three concurrent levels: macro-level, meso-level, and micro level. The main discourse topic relating to the contexts of the text was identified in the macro-level analysis. For example, when analyzing the discourse about online brochure/online resources preview page, the texts representing the promotional function on the brochure were identified into different functions such as advertising language of texts that describes the uniqueness of the series, texts that stresses the benefits of the series to the teachers and to the learners, and texts that value the validity and reliability of the series' material. For the analysis in the meso-level, the five discourse strategies: nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivization, intensification (Wodak & Reisigl, 2016) were applied to investigate how specific topics are mentioned/referred to. For example, the nomination of the texts representing the social actor 'Cambridge English Empower' is used by the predication "*far more than 'just another new book'*" and *'potentially a game-changer'*. Specific linguistic types/realizations (use of specific words, phrases, structures, etc.) were identified in the micro-level. (see Appendix).

Findings and Discussion

In straightforward terms, promotional language can be defined as "a form of discourse which is intended to inform and promote in order to sell ideas, goods or services to a selected group of people" (Bhatia, 2005, p. 214). This can involve a number of specific linguistic features, like use of figurative or emotional language (Cook, 2001), though it is also reflected by a broader reconstruction of readers as consumers (Fairclough, 2005). In the case of Empower, many features of this type of discourse could be observed, including a clear positioning of readers as consumers:



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How can the course *save you time*?

Try our useful *time-saving* calculator to find out how much *time* Cambridge English Empower can *save you* versus marking paper-based tests

With automatically-marked homework and tests, personalised practice and a variety of digital tools, *teachers can save time and engage learners with ease*. [Product Details]

This extract contains a number of nominations and predications that are intended to emphasize the benefits of the Empower series to users. The two important social actors referred to in this extract are 'Cambridge English Empower' and 'teachers'. While the nomination 'you', used here to address readers directly, can in general refer to any reader of the page, it can be assumed that the audience being addressed here are teachers, considering that they are attributed the activity of '*marking paper-based tests*'. While teachers are represented as an actor in this extract and elsewhere, Cambridge English Empower appears as the primary agent (performing actions like 'saving time'), while teachers, as consumers, are represented in a more passive manner, attributed few actions independently. The perceived benefit of the course to teachers is also reinforced in the predication 'can [...] engage learners with ease', which again attributes the ability to act to Empower rather than teachers themselves.

Another feature of advertising language found was the use of intensification strategies, particularly hyperbolic descriptions of the textbook:

Tests developed and validated by Cambridge English, the world-leaders in language assessment – so you know the results are reliable. [Homepage]

The Student's Book contains thought-provoking content which is designed to generate an emotional response and get learners and teachers enjoying the class right from the start. [Homepage]

"The more we used Empower and explored the online platform, the more we realised that this was far more than 'just another new book' and is potentially a game-changer." [Homepage]

The use of intensification in this promotional website tends to characterize the course features in this series as being new and unique, while maintaining its image of being accurate and credible in the field of ELT. These were primarily aimed at establishing the authoritative position of the textbook itself, of the institution standing behind it, of the process of developing it, and of the impact it has in users. The social actor of text in the first example, Cambridge English, is qualified with the intensified predication 'the world-leaders in language assessment', emphasizing the credibility of the process in producing the course materials, as well as the credibility of its publisher. In a crowded market, where several large publishers compete, such a reference to



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Cambridge being *world-leaders in language assessment* serves to solidify its position of authority among other publishers by making an appeal across to the highly political field of language testing (Shohamy, 2001). Aside from supporting claims to the authority of Cambridge as an ELT actor, much intensification was linked to Empower itself, as illustrated by the following two examples. Here, *Empower* is described with emphatic terms like *'thought-provoking'*, as *'far more than just another new book'* and as *'potentially a game-changer'*. The use of such emotive expressions was a feature throughout, with the textbooks rarely described in neutral terms, a reflection of the appropriation of promotional language throughout the website.

The results also showed a further prominent theme, which placed significant stress on the validity and reliability of the course materials. An example of this strategy is the continuous link established between the textbooks and the field of language testing, highlighted above and evident throughout the website:

Cambridge English Empower is a general English course for adult and young adult learners which combines course content from Cambridge University Press with validated assessment from the experts at Cambridge Assessment English. [Homepage]

Assessment developed and validated by the experts at Cambridge Assessment English; rigorously pre-tested to ensure it is accurate, meaningful and fair. [Homepage]

Cambridge English Empower includes a unique assessment package that has been produced by the experts at Cambridge English Language Assessment. [Product Details]

The similarity of these extracts, taken from different sub-pages, highlight the first impression that Cambridge English Empower attempts to create by repeating how the course package, content, and materials have been assessed and validated by related Cambridge's language assessment organization. The main and most important social actor 'Cambridge English Empower' co-occurring with 'Cambridge Assessment English' and 'Cambridge English Language Assessment' can be perceived as the reliability of the series that is attached by the names of the *Cambridge* organizations. According to the texts presented on the website, 'assessment', an important process/action that is discursively constructed, seems to be the focal point that represents the validated process in producing the series' course package, accordingly, predications that attributes to the validation and reliability of the main social actor 'Cambridge English Empower' are, for example, 'unique', 'validated', 'from the experts', 'developed and validated by the experts', 'produced by the experts', 'rigorously pre-tested', 'accurate', 'meaningful' and 'fair'.

The use of such testing-specific language is perhaps not unexpectedly accompanied by widespread references to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR):



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By using English Profile in the development of Cambridge English Empower, you can be sure that each level is carefully benchmarked to the CEFR. [Homepage]

Manageable learning with a syllabus that teachers can trust, with Corpus-informed content and alignment to the CEFR, so that learners can clearly and measurably see their own progress in each of the four language skills. [Homepage]

These skills tests place learners on a CEFR scale to accurately demonstrate their progress in each of the four skills. [Product Details]

The Common European Framework of Reference is a standard guideline across all of Europe to recognise a learner's level of language fluency. Each level of Cambridge English Empower is carefully mapped to the appropriate CEFR level in accordance with English Vocabulary Profile, guaranteeing that the student's encounter the right language at the right level. [Product Details]

The reference to the CEFR can be identified in the main page and most subpages of the website. The main and most important social actor 'Cambridge English Empower' is significantly and repeatedly attributed 'carefully benchmarked to the CEFR'. Other than implying the reliability and validity of the series' materials and the fact that the series is being *carefully* and *accurately* produced according to the *'standard guidelines'*, the stress of its attachment and reference to the CEFR levels can be assumed the deriving authority the course holds over the users. Considering the wide use of CEFR as a language policy text in different contexts around the world (Savski, 2023), it can be assumed that stressing the close link between Empower and the framework is seen as giving the series a competitive edge – for users in contexts where CEFR has been adopted by the government, Empower can seem a natural way to achieve targets (e.g., B1 for senior high school students) and guarantee success in CEFR-aligned standardized tests.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have highlighted the promotional strategies used on the website presenting the Cambridge Empower series of textbooks. The key strategies highlighted were the general use of language associated with promotional genres (particularly intensification) as well as the many claims to validity and trustworthiness (stressing the research underlying the series and its alignment to the CEFR and Cambridge tests). The way the publisher used these promotional strategies to market the series illustrates how English language teaching, as well as the language itself, is increasingly treated as a commodity in today's market-driven economy (Gray, 2010). This is a clear indication of the central role played by textbooks in the spread of neoliberal ideology in contemporary ELT. Neoliberalism, broadly, can be defined as the latest iteration of capitalist ideology, in which the traditional focus on profit and competition is extended to new fields, particularly education (Flubacher & Del Percio,



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2017). While one aspect of this is the increasing stress placed on the economic motivations underlying language learning (i.e., employment, individual development, see De Costa et al., 2016), another is the more prominent role played by global organizations, like textbook publishers. This paper has highlighted some of the discursive strategies through which this neoliberalization of ELT takes place, though more work is needed to make sense of the dynamics of this process in a holistic way.

The gradual neoliberalization of ELT merits further investigation because it involves a transformation of the roles of teachers and learners, and of the relationship between them. Teachers are increasingly positioned as service-providers whose market valuation is not derived from expertise or ability to respond to the needs of their particular context, but from their ability to deliver standardized teaching, following models established by global textbooks and aligned to targets established by global policy frameworks and tests (Block, 2001). It is thus especially crucial for teachers, at risk of losing their autonomy and power in the profession, to take note of the discourse strategies used to promote this new order, and to make use of their roles to promote alternative visions of English language education.

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Paper 2

Samarn, N., & Savski, K. (2023). *Agency, authority and strategic discourse in the promotion of three global ELT textbook series*. Manuscript submitted for publication.

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Agency, authority and strategic discourse in the promotion of three global ELT textbook series

Abstract

There is at present much focus in ELT on describing and promoting the agency of teachers (e.g. as policy agents) and learners (e.g. as global citizens). However, a defining feature of ELT as a professional field are growing pressures for universalization, particularly evident in practices like global language testing, audit culture and the widespread use of global textbooks. These practices position organizations in the ELT industry as authoritative actors, holding privileged knowledge and able to judge others. Our focus in this article is on the ways that the authority of textbook publishers is represented and upheld through strategic discourse in online promotional materials. Examining online promotional spaces for three contemporary ELT textbook series, we focus on the discourse strategies employed to legitimize the authoritative position of the textbooks and their publishers. We find that publishers focussed on legitimizing their authority by creating strategic links to external forces (policy, testing), in this way foregrounding the universality of the textbooks. In contrast, the websites represented the agencies of teachers and learners in a minimized way, primarily in ways subordinate to the agency attributed to the textbooks themselves. We conclude with a reflection on the need for applied critical scholarship in ELT that can offer practical alternatives and thus disrupt dominant notions of universality and the hierarchization of knowledge these are based on.

1 Introduction

There is at present significant tension in ELT between the promotion of grass-roots agency of actors in different local contexts and the growing influence of universalizing, particularly transnational forces. In part, this appears not simply a conceptual tension but one associated with different loci of enunciation (De Figueiredo & Martinez, 2021). The focus on local agency has in recent years emanated most notably from the academic field, both with regard to theoretical pieces which have sought to offer alternatives to existing universalizing conceptualizations of language and competence (Flores & Rosa, 2022) as well as in terms of practical proposals for new pedagogical approaches in which space is afforded for the voices

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of grass-roots actors (see e.g. the proposals for ‘post-method pedagogy’ originally put forward more than two decades ago by Kumaravadivedu [2001] as well as more recent calls for plurilingual or translanguaging pedagogy by Lin [2013] and Li Wei & Garcia [2022]). While this increased focus on agency has in many cases involved work with practitioners in different contexts (see e.g. the special issue introduced in Netta & Avineri, 2021), it is somewhat at odds with the development of ELT as an increasingly transnational and universalized professional field. Underlying this development are well-documented mechanisms, including global language policies (Author, 2020) and language testing (Jenkins & Leung, 2019), both of which, while not being in any way separate from ELT scholarship, are closely intertwined with business interests in particular.

Our focus in this paper is on an artefact closely associated with this universalizing tendency, the globally-marketed textbook. By this we refer to pre-packaged sets of teaching materials which are developed for and sold across linguistic and cultural borders in a largely unchanging form, typically in the form of multi-level series and almost invariably by large for-profit organizations. Since their boom in the 1990s (Mishan, 2021), textbooks have become ubiquitous in ELT practice, in many cases not as facilitators but determiners of teaching practices, as observed by Akbari (2008) over a decade ago. It is thus unsurprising that textbooks have received significant attention from critical scholarship in ELT and applied linguistics. In particular, much has been written about the cultural contents of global textbooks, notably with regard to how these seek to present a ‘culture-neutral’ world which eschews issues that may endanger their universal appeal in particular contexts (see discussion of the ‘PARSNIP’ rule in Gray, 2010), though much research has also highlighted that this purported neutrality typically translates into a representation of a generic affluent middle-class Western lifestyle (Gray & Block, 2014). With regard to the presentation of language in global textbooks, it has been pointed out that this typically presupposes a fixed, universal linguistic norm, with little or no consideration for the diversity of global Englishes, for the multilingual repertoires of their users, or for the different social practices their uses are embedded in (Rose & Galloway, 2019). Some work has also attempted to understand how the contents of textbooks translate into classroom practice, with Forman (2014) documenting the ways in which the linguistic and cultural elements of a global textbook was conformed to and resisted by language instructors at a Thai university (see also Rathert & Cabaroğlu, 2021; Smith, 2021; Ulla, 2019).

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3 This article aims to expand the debate surrounding global textbooks with a new perspective
4 which examines not their contents, whether cultural or linguistic, but rather the discourse that
5 surrounds them as commodities on the global ELT marketplace and as authoritative artefacts
6 in ELT practice. Our interest is therefore in the nexus between marketing and authority in ELT
7 as a professional field – we see textbooks as products which are advertised and sold in the most
8 conventional sense, but at the same time also acknowledge that their monetary value on the
9 market is pegged to the authority with which they are imbued by ELT scholarship and practice.
10 The focus article thus centres the question of how the authoritativeness of textbooks is
11 legitimated in the promotional discourse around them, and in particular of how publishers of
12 global textbooks construct this discourse strategically to legitimate their own authority in ELT.
13 Additionally, we examine how other agencies and authorities are represented in this
14 promotional discourse, particularly how teachers and learners are positioned vis-à-vis the
15 textbooks and their publishers. The conceptual rationale for such an approach, which sees
16 textbooks as part of a broader set of universalizing forces in ELT, is laid out in the following
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31 **2 Textbooks, authority and ideologies of universality in globalized ELT**

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34 In this article, we broadly locate global textbooks within an array of universalizing practices in
35 ELT as a professional field. The nexus of practices in which they are embedded is thus one in
36 which the notion of decontextualized universality is afforded higher value than locally situated,
37 often variable and rarely generalizable knowledge and experience. The global use of textbooks
38 is in this way most clearly comparable with the global use of language tests, where the high
39 prestige and economic value afforded to tests like IELTS (as compared to tests developed
40 locally in individual contexts, see Dimova et al., 2020) is ultimately derived from the (however
41 misguided) notion of universality of competence in English – just as there is one type of English
42 that ultimately matters (i.e. standard ‘native speaker’ English), there should be one globally
43 applicable test to evaluate proficiency in that code (for a critique and an alternative perspective,
44 see Jenkins & Leung, 2019). Textbooks have a similar tendency to presume universality of
45 language and background the natural variation of form and use in global Englishes (Rose &
46 Galloway, 2019), though existing work indicates that it is their cultural ‘universality’ that is an
47 equally prominent concern for publishers when it comes to maximizing their market value. As
48 demonstrated comprehensively by Gray (2010), textbook publishers invest significant work
49 into ensuring the transferability of products across cultural boundaries, eschewing for this
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purpose not only much context-specific knowledge but also explicit mention of topics considered taboo in some cultures (e.g., alcohol consumption).

Related tendencies toward universalization can also be observed in language policy, where the increasingly widespread use of global policies like the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) is often driven by presumptions of universal applicability, this often being at odds with the need for local agency in interpretation and adaptation of any such text (Author, 2021, 2023a). A further part of the shift toward universalization is the appropriation of audit culture – an orientation toward continuous, purportedly neutral external evaluation, typically as part of a regime of neoliberal governance (Shore & Wright, 2015). In language education, global policies like CEFR are part of a shift toward this model (De Costa et al., 2019), as is the increasing visibility of English proficiency rankings in media and their impact on policy decisions (Author, 2023b). On the whole, these practices nudge ELT toward universalization by constructing an affective regime (Wee, 2016), associating notions of individual and collective development with the adoption of particular measures (the appropriation of a specific policy, the learning of a specific language).

Such universalizing practices cast ELT as a complex, globalized professional field characterised by a multitude of overlapping, often antagonistic forces associated with different centres of authority. Here, there is a need to consider both the horizontal dimension (i.e., how authority is associated with the power structure of different fields) and the vertical dimension (the association of authority with different scales, see Blommaert, 2021). One field of authority construction is ELT scholarship, but several fields beyond academia must also be considered. Much of ELT practice across the world is subject to the authority of the state, for instance with regard to how the setting and monitoring of policy objectives affects what happens in classrooms – while washback is a phenomenon conventionally ascribed to the power of tests (Shohamy, 2007), it is often the top-down imposition of a test by the government that imbues tests with the authority that ends up driving practice. For instance, the way IELTS drives much ELT practice around the world is not simply a product of the power of the test itself, but also of its association with the language policies of particular states, like the UK and Australia, which have both appropriated IELTS as part of their immigration policy (Hamid et al., 2019). This underlines the fact that the global ELT industry, represented not only by major testing organizations and publishing houses but also smaller, more localized institutions, is in a complex, semi-dependent relationship with the power of the state. The spread of English-

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3 medium programmes at primary and secondary level, where materials marketed by major
4 publishing houses are often used, for example, is contingent upon the state liberalizing
5 medium-of-instruction policies (Author & Author, 2023).
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9 Our focus in this paper is to examine how textbooks are strategically located within this
10 network of authorities in contemporary ELT. Our perspective on textbooks is thus one in which
11 they are seen not simply as lifeless texts to be studied exclusively through detailed examination
12 of their content, but rather as cultural artefacts that end up being appropriated as mediational
13 means in a variety of social actions and practices (Scollon, 2002). From the perspective of
14 teachers and learners in grass-roots settings, textbooks are typically vehicles of what Bakhtin
15 (1981) describes as an authoritative discourse, imposed top-down by external forces and rarely
16 conducive to agentive appropriation, but rather to straightforward acceptance and endorsement
17 (Forman, 2014; Jindapitak & Boonsuk, 2018; Rathert & Cabaroğlu, 2021). Their power in such
18 grass-roots contexts is the product of a discursive process in which textbooks, as forms of
19 pedagogical knowledge, are de-contextualized – detached from contexts of production and
20 imbued with a sense of universality in their representation of language and culture – and re-
21 contextualized as forms of absolute knowledge into the hands of practitioners (Bernstein,
22 1990). It is as part of this process of de- and re-contextualization that the infusion of textbooks
23 with authoritativeness takes place. While such infusion may be passive, occurring simply
24 through the association of a textbook with a particular institution, such as its publisher or others
25 (e.g. the power of individual states, when textbooks are officially approved for use in the public
26 education system), we focus particularly on the strategic efforts of publishers to construct
27 authoritative discourse around their textbooks.
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44 **3 Methodology**

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47 Our aim in this research was to examine how the promotional websites of major publishers
48 contribute to the strategic construction of authoritative discourse around contemporary ELT
49 textbooks. To roughly reflect the competitiveness of today's textbook market, we chose to
50 focus on three textbook series offered by different major global publishers. Our choice of
51 textbooks was driven by different factors, including observations of the market and informal
52 conversations with representatives of the publishers at conferences, as well as the aim to
53 conduct three broadly comparable case studies. With this in mind, we elected to choose three
54 examples of best-selling textbooks which are offered in the same overall structure, a series of
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six textbooks arranged according to different proficiency levels (though the labels used to describe the levels differ, see below). Ultimately, the websites associated with the following series were chosen:

- 1) *Empower*¹, marketed by Cambridge University Press & Assessment, authored by Craig Thaine, Adrian Doff, Peter Anderson, Lynda Edwards, Tim Foster, Ruth Gairns, Rachel Godfrey, Peter Lewis-Jones, Rob McLarty, Julian Oakley, Herbert Puchta, Stuart Redman, Wayne Rimmer, Jeff Stranks;
- 2) *Headway*², marketed by Oxford University Press, authored by Liz Soars, John Soars, Paul Hancock;
- 3) *Life*³, marketed by National Geographic Learning, a Cengage Learning Company, authored by John Hughes, Paul Dummett, Helen Stephenson.

We started by mapping out the contents of each website according to its different sub-pages, noting the similarities and differences that existed between them as part of the process. This helped us generate a broad typology of promotional sub-genres and map out their presence and distribution across the three websites. We observed that significant parallels existed between the contents of the three websites despite the differences between their design, potentially indicating their alignment with a broader set of practices when it comes to the advertising of contemporary global textbooks. We also noted the presence of different multimodal data, ranging from images to video clips, as well as various types of downloadable (PDF) documents, including brochures, impact studies, samples of the textbooks and teacher guides, etc. Considering the size and variety of these data, we ultimately decided to focus only on the contents that were visibly displayed on the websites (including embedded videos or PDFs) but not those which required downloading of additional files (e.g. PDFs) or redirected us to an outside page (e.g. Youtube). The data-set this generated is summarized according to sub-genre and textbook series in Table 1. We note that changes occurred during the research process in the case of two websites (*Empower* and *Life*) because new editions of the series were released – in both cases, the website of the newer edition was examined for changes, and these are described where relevant in the findings below. To ensure comparability, we also reviewed the website of the previous edition of *Headway*, though a new edition of this series was not

¹ <https://www.cambridge.org/th/cambridgeenglish/catalog/adult-courses/empower-2nd-edition>

² https://elt.oup.com/catalogue/items/global/adult_courses/headway/?cc=th&selLanguage=en

³ <https://www.ngllife.com/>

published during our analysis. Finally, we note that two of these websites (*Headway* and *Empower*) were localized to our context (Thailand) through geolocation – we note that users in other geographic locations may observe differences with regard to content.

The analysis was conducted broadly following the discourse-historical approach to critical discourse analysis (DHA, see Reisigl & Wodak, 2015). In line with the focus on the strategic construction of authoritative discourse, the primary aim was to identify discourse strategies, or “more or less intentional plan[s] of practice [...] adopted to achieve a particular social, political, psychological or linguistic goal” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2015, p. 33). In DHA, strategies are identified as part of a multi-level analysis, observed as patterns emerging from concrete, salient uses of particular semiotic elements at the micro-level, and indicative of an overall set of ideological dispositions toward a macro-level topic. The semiotic elements observed at the micro-level in this case were examined with reference to five core research questions offered by DHA (Table 2). Practically, the analysis took the form of an abductive process, where observations at the macro-level (topic), meso-level (strategy) and micro-level (language) were made concurrently, with continuous switching between levels and continuous reference to previous literature. This process allowed for the holistic identification of strategies while also keeping transparent the links between them and specific linguistic realizations (e.g., characteristic naming of social actors, attribution of actions and characteristics, etc.). Both authors participated in the analysis, comparing their impressions of the data throughout.

Content \ Website	<i>Empower</i>	<i>Headway</i>	<i>Life</i>
Product homepage	[Catalogue: Adult & Young Adult]	[Catalogue: Teaching Adults/Young Adults]	Stand-alone website
Basic presentation	[Homepage]	[Homepage: Key features, Read more ...]	Author’s narrative [National Geographic and Life: Bringing National Geographic to Life]
Pedagogical design presentation	[Product Details: Assessment package] [Product Details, Methodology and Research]	[Digital Brochure] [Teaching Resources: The Common European Framework of Reference]	[About Life: Course Overview] [Teacher Resources: CEFR Correlations]

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	[Overview: Benchmarked to the CEFR]		
Content presentation	[Product Details: Learner engagement]	[Digital Brochure]	[National Geographic and Life: Bringing National Geographic to Life, A Design for Life]
Author presentation	Short bios included [Product Details: Methodology and Research]	Named only [Homepage]	Extended bios [About Life: About the Authors]
User comments	[Overview: What teachers and learners say]	[Homepage: Reviews]	[About Life: What Life users are saying]
Other	[Time-saving calculator] Book covers [Components]	Book covers [Catalogue Homepage]	Book covers [Homepage]

Table 1: Cross-mapping of analysed content across websites and sub-pages

Discourse strategy	Research question
Nomination	How are persons, objects, phenomena/events, processes and actions named and referred to linguistically?
Predication	What characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to social actors, objects, phenomena/events and processes?
Argumentation	What arguments are employed in the discourse in question?
Perspectivization	From what perspective are these nominations, attributions and arguments expressed?
Mitigation/intensification	Are the respective utterances articulated overtly, intensified or mitigated?

Table 2: Discourse strategy types and research questions in the DHA (adapted from Reisigl & Wodak, 2015)

4 Results and discussion

4.1 Legitimizing the textbook as authoritative text

As mentioned above, our first focus in analysing the websites was to identify how the textbooks were being strategically legitimated as authoritative texts in ELT as a field. In this regard, while overlaps were observed, each of the series took a distinct approach. Of the three, the most explicit examples of self-legitimation strategies were to be found on the website of *Empower*:

Content you love. Assessment you can trust. [Empower: Homepage]

English Profile is a ground-breaking collaborative research programme, which aims to describe the specific language that learners need in order to perform the ‘can do’ statements in each Council of Europe Framework of Reference (CEFR) level. By using English Profile in the development of Cambridge English Empower, you can be sure that each level is carefully benchmarked to the CEFR. [Empower: Overview/Insights]

Empower Second edition includes a unique assessment package that has been produced by the experts at Cambridge English Language Assessment. The rigorous validation process involved over 35,000 trials in 43 countries to ensure that all tests are accurate, meaningful and fair. [Empower: Product Details/Integrated Learning and Assessment]

These three examples illustrate the core self-legitimation strategy observed on the *Empower* website, namely a continuous effort to place the book into a close relationship with assessment practices as well as with global language policy, as represented by CEFR. Such efforts can be read against a Bourdieusian perspective on ELT as a field in which large testing organizations like Cambridge, the publisher of *Empower*, control significant amounts of not only economic but also symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986) as a result of the wide use of tests like IELTS, in particular for purposes of migration control (for a critique of such uses, see Hamid et al., 2019). Furthermore, such organizations are able to mobilize strong connections to language testing scholarship as a means of legitimizing their authority as ELT power players (for a critique of the often unacknowledged links, see Isbell & Kim, 2023). The efforts made on the *Empower* website suggest an attempt to imbue to book with this pre-existing authority, more than likely as a means of establishing its brand as a relatively new entrant in a congested market. Such attempts are furthered by the use of CEFR, a language policy which is used widely by governments and which has become particularly closely associated with assessment (Deygers, 2021). Indeed, it is striking how explicitly CEFR is re-entextualized (Author, in press) on the

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cover of *Empower*, featuring more prominently as part of the textbook's branding than more traditional terms like 'beginner', 'intermediate' or 'advanced'. This illustrates how malleable CEFR is as a language policy text when it comes to strategic uses: while claims regarding the representability of vague terms like 'beginner' may be questioned, CEFR provides a solid, almost unimpeachable background for integrating new products into the ELT market. Indeed, the use of vocabulary from the field of language testing, like 'trust', 'be sure', 'carefully benchmarked' and 'rigorous validation', is remarkable when considering the relatively vague, open-ended nature of CEFR (Author, 2023a; in press).

The explicit authority-building efforts observed in the case of *Empower*, as a relatively new entrant into the textbook market, stood in significant contrast to the much more established *Headway*. Its website appeared to invest little explicit work in legitimating the series with reference to outside sources of authority, instead simply appealing to the recognizability of the *Headway* brand and to the familiarity of its authors:

Trusted worldwide. Inspired by you. [Headway: Homepage]

Headway 5th edition retains the course's trusted methodology and has been updated with new texts, topics and digital resources. [Headway: Homepage]

Headway and its award-winning authors, Liz and John Soars, are names that have become synonymous with English language teaching and learning. Teach with Headway's perfectly-balanced grammar and skills syllabus, based on the course's world-renowned methodology. [Headway: Digital Brochure]

The first of these extracts is a reproduction of the slogan, and presents a striking contrast with *Empower*'s slogan: "Content you love. Assessment you can trust." Both mobilize the concept of 'trust', but while the *Empower* website makes use of it to link the textbook series to assessment, 'trust' is in the case of *Headway* represented as closely associated with the textbook itself, evidenced by its widespread popularity. These concepts are repeated in the next two extracts, where authority again appears to once again be represented as something emanating from the book itself as a result of its 'methodology' or 'syllabus'. On this point, it is key to note that *Headway* was the only one of the three series whose promotional website explicitly referenced 'grammar' as a selling point, a seeming acknowledgment of the close association of its brand with form-focussed instruction (for a critique of *Headway*'s apparent rejection of the communicative, function-driven syllabus, see Thornbury, 2016). Indeed, on

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3 reviewing the website of the previous edition, we found that it had even more explicitly touted
4 the series' "strong grammar focus" [Homepage]. The presence of such strategic references
5 suggests that while *Headway* did not attempt to assume authority through association with
6 assessment as *Empower*, nor with policy – CEFR levels are referenced on some *Headway*
7 textbook covers but not as prominently as with *Empower*, and the website only references the
8 framework on a few sub-pages – there were attempts to peg the series to external loci of
9 authority. In particular, the references to 'grammar' can be seen attempting to legitimize the
10 textbook by invoking the notion of 'standard English', which while itself a highly ideological
11 construct is routinely positioned as a natural, unquestionable authority.
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20 In the case of *Life*, we observed a rather different approach to establishing authority, with the
21 predominant strategy appearing to be to try and distance the series from mainstream ELT, and
22 instead stressing its association with the National Geographic brand:
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26 NGL *Life* is driven by rich National Geographic content and the fundamental values of
27 inspiring people to care about the planet, celebrating human achievement and exploring
28 diversity. This material is brought together in a design that is unique in an ELT context while
29 the language syllabus surpasses expectations. [Life: Course Overview]
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33 Whilst meeting the image sourcing budget, all the photography needed to maintain the 'NG'
34 look & feel. Breaking away from a more traditional ELT brief provided a new and unusual
35 challenge for our picture researchers. Every situation featured needed to appear natural, not
36 posed and the style of all the photography had a very unique tone. Our picture researchers and
37 artwork commissioners ensured the images were right for all markets. We also cleared the
38 rights for all zones and all media across numerous sources, even having to contact NG
39 explorers around the world! [Life: A Design for Life]
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45 "Life is so refreshing and a break from the norm of sanitised, contrived and childish content
46 found in other adult ELT coursebooks." [Life: What Life users are saying]
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50 The focus on establishing a close intertextual relationship with National Geographic was
51 evident throughout the *Life* website, with the slogan for instance positioning the series as
52 making "learning English an exploration of the world". Where *Empower* and *Headway* tended
53 to appeal to other loci of authority and simply cast their contents as 'fun', the depth and
54 authenticity of the textual and visual content was given significant attention in *Life*. Rather than
55 'fun', the content was billed as oriented toward developing learners' critical thinking skills, not
56 simply English. Visuals were touted particularly strongly, both through narratives of how the
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images were selected and through overt displays throughout the website, including on the covers of the textbook series, which were prominently featured on the front page. Content was also the focus in user testimonials, which tended to support the overall promotional narrative, namely that *Life* was visually and culturally more appealing than other mainstream textbooks. As a discursive strategy, we may describe such self-differentiation as a form of dialogicity (Bakhtin, 1981), since *Life* appears to be constructing its own identity relationally, as a counterpoint to more mainstream books like *Empower* and *Headway*. However, it must also be noted that *Life* did not completely eschew the strategies employed by the other websites, since it did make efforts to legitimate its contents through policy (CEFR levels are referred to on the front cover of each textbook) and testing (by touting “IELTS-style tests” supplied with the books).

Looking across all three websites, the general observation can be made that all the instances of authority construction described above involved a similar strategic manoeuvre, namely appeals to higher loci of authority, or upscaling (Blommaert, 2021). The authority of ELT textbooks, like the validity of tests, can to a large extent rely on the perception of users that they are authentic representations of ‘English’ as a regular, consolidated and bordered system, with the presentation of linguistic features like grammar being particularly central in this regard. While such systemic visions of language have been questioned in applied linguistics scholarship in recent years (see e.g. Li Wei, 2018), they remain predominant in the discourse of ELT as professional practice, as evidenced by the way this trope continues to be appropriated in the service of promoting *Headway*. The authority of language-as-system is also relevant to the promotion of *Empower*, though in this case in a secondary manner, with the textbook being positioned as authoritative by way of its close association with tests and policies seen to be representative of ‘English’. Both these websites illustrate how products on the ELT market depend on the construction of an imagined, decontextualized notion of ‘English’, one which can be neatly organized into a sequence of consolidated, universal proficiency levels, like those presented in CEFR (Author, in press), somewhat contradicting the demonstrated complexity of the reality of communication (Leung, 2013) as well as the diversity of Englishes found in such communication (Rose & Galloway, 2019). Such distortion was perhaps less evident on the *Life* website, where the focus of upscaling was instead on content, invoking the higher-order authority of National Geographic through imagery and notions of cultural authenticity.

4.2 Representing people and agency in ELT practice

Above, we examined efforts made by the publishers of *Empower*, *Headway* and *Life* to establish the authoritativeness of their textbooks on the ELT market. A further focus of our analysis was on how the textbooks were integrated into ELT practice by the websites – how they, as cultural artefacts, were represented vis-à-vis the people involved in ELT (in particular, teachers and learners) as well as their actions. Our general starting point in this analysis was that ELT is a form of practice in which agency should be seen as central, both to the work of teachers (who exploit existing agentive spaces while also crafting new ones, see e.g. Forman 2014; Hayes, 2009; Smith, 2021) and learners (who plan and moderate their learning as well as making meaningful contributions to classroom interaction, e.g. Larsen–Freeman, 2019). On the whole, our observations were that the three publishers did acknowledge the central role teachers and learners play in ELT, since they made a concerted effort to represent both groups throughout the websites, including through direct representation of their voices through user testimonials. Such representation, however, is also a common pattern in the advertising genre, which often makes efforts to involve products in the lives of their targets. From this perspective, the following examples seem rather logical:

It's shaped by unique insights from our extensive research and expertise, all to enable teachers to do what they do best - teach - and learners to reach their full potential. [Empower: Homepage]

Empower's unique mix of engaging classroom materials and reliable assessment, with personalised online practice, enables learners to make consistent and measurable progress. [Empower: Catalogue Homepage]

91% of teachers trusts that Headway delivers the learning outcomes that support students to move to the next level of study. [Headway: Homepage]

Headway 5th edition listens to feedback from teachers and focusses on topics and activities that are relevant and useful to today's adult students, whilst retaining the trusted methodology teachers love. [Headway: Homepage]

More than 70 countries and regions of the world are explored in the *Life* student's books and workbooks, making *Life* a truly global journey of discovery. Using *National Geographic* materials, *Life* gives teachers and students the opportunity to explore together the lives of people all over the world. [Life: Explore the World with NG Life!]

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Through stunning National Geographic content, video, and engaging topics, *Life* inspires a generation of informed decision-makers. With *Life*, learners develop their ability to think critically and communicate effectively in the global community. [Life 2nd edition: Homepage]

The general pattern of these examples, observed throughout the websites, involves clear syntactic relationships – nearly all the examples position the textbook as an agent in its own right, performing actions which affect teachers and learners such as ‘enabling’, ‘listening’, ‘focussing’ ‘giving’ and even ‘inspiring’. This syntactic pattern tends to position both teachers and learners as patients, undergoing actions rather than engaging in them, with textbooks thus represented in personified form, as ELT actors imbued with the authority (see above) to determine the scope of others’ agency. This extends to cases where teachers or learners were represented in more agentive form, since the actions ascribed to teachers are merely to ‘trust’ and ‘love’ the textbook, and the actions of learners are represented as enabled by, and thus subordinate to the textbook (e.g. ‘With Life, learners develop...’). The affective dimension being inserted in the relationship between the textbooks and their users through references to ‘trust’ and ‘love’, paralleling other such features of the websites, are of particular interest, since they appear to establish not only the notion that textbooks are of practical use to ELT practitioners, but indeed that their use constitutes a moral imperative (for more on affect and power in language policy, see De Costa et al., 2019). Overall, these features contribute to a discourse where the agencies of teachers and learners are acknowledged only partially, merely to the extent that they are enabled by and directly involve the textbook being marketed. In line with this trend, we observed only few examples of teachers being represented as acting autonomously by, for instance, adapting the textbook, despite the fact that such adaptation is a common phenomenon in teachers’ use of textbooks (e.g., Forman, 2014; Smith, 2021).

The discursive phenomenon observed on the websites is one of hierarchisation, since a clear distinction is being drawn between the textbook as an authoritative text, imbued with the power of policy, standards and trust, and teachers/learners as actors who are subordinate to this authority. However, where the hierarchy being represented is less explicit is with the positioning of the publishers, where only *Empower* featured consistent representation of the organization behind it:

The tests within Empower Second edition are developed and validated by Cambridge Assessment, the world-leaders in language assessment – so you know the results are reliable. [Empower: Homepage]

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3 The language in the course is informed by our unique multi-billion-word language database,
4 the Cambridge English Corpus, which includes formal, informal, written and spoken
5 language. [Empower: Homepage]
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9 We want to ensure that you're well equipped to teach this new course. On Cambridge One
10 you'll find a modular 2-hour training course that can be completed in your own time.
11 [Empower: Product Details/Resources for Teachers]
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14 These extracts exemplify the ubiquitous references to 'Cambridge' found across the *Empower*
15 website, underlining yet again the way that the promotion of this textbook engaged in
16 constructing strategic intertextual relationships, in this case to 'Cambridge' as an authoritative
17 testing organization and a locus of academic research. A second notable feature here is the use
18 of synthetic personalization (Fairclough, 2001), both through direct address of the generic
19 reader as 'you' and the self-reference to 'we'. It may be presumed here that 'we' represents
20 Cambridge as the organization standing behind *Empower*, but this is not made explicit, and the
21 uncertain reference may well also be read as referring the textbook's authors. Indeed, while the
22 other websites engaged in similar synthetic personalization, the key difference was that the
23 first-person subject position tended to be filled not by the publisher but by the authors, as was
24 the case with *Life*:
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34 Welcome to the second edition of *Life*. It's been a fantastic experience to use the feedback
35 we've collected from teachers and learners from around the world to revisit the first edition
36 and build on its strengths.
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43 We would like to emphasise that we have examined every exercise and activity for its
44 relevance and effectiveness based on comments and suggestions made by users
45 worldwide. We hope you are happy with the results – we certainly are.
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48 Paul, John and Helen [Life: Welcome to Life]
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51 In the case of *Headway*, numerous references to authors John and Liz Soars could be found,
52 including a textbox relating Liz Soars' view of the new edition:
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55 I love the new openers. It's been quite fun trying to find really interesting opening pictures
56 and it's been one of the delights of the new edition. [Headway: Digital Brochure]
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In the case of all books, clear efforts were observed to create an affective bond between the writers of the books and their users. Here, this is done through intended common experience of ‘happiness’, ‘fun’ and ‘delight’, whereas in the case of *Empower* the focus (as mentioned above) tended to be on the entertaining nature of the content. While this personalization may be interpreted as an attempt to counter-act the otherwise clear focus on establishing authority, it can also be read as part of the ‘celebrity culture’ pervasive in contemporary ELT, where textbook writers (and/or scholars) are granted positions of increased visibility vis-à-vis ‘regular’ practitioners. It is not a coincidence that nearly all of the authors foregrounded in all this way on the websites have quintessentially ‘Anglo’ names – as highlighted by Kiczkowiak & Lowe (in press), the notion that ‘native speakers’ have greater authority when it comes to perceptions of knowledgeability in ELT is still very much alive.

An overall assessment of the key dynamics of how the three websites represent actors and agency in ELT, namely the foregrounding of textbooks as actors and of their authors as experts, as well as the concurrent backgrounding of teachers and learners as agents, is that they end up obscuring the role of publishers as actors with a vested economic interest in ELT. While Cambridge is referred to on the *Empower* website, mentions of it primarily come in an externalized capacity, as a source of additional authority in testing and policy, whereas its role as a publisher and ELT actor is generally backgrounded, made visible only through the consistent presence of its branding on the website template. On the whole, publishers thus appear to take up a detached position, as neutral, benevolent organizations which provide grass-roots actors in ELT with the means to achieve their own goals. Such assumed neutrality is similar to that observed with institutions that take up the position of auditors, or external performance evaluators, where appeals to scientific expertise are often made use of despite clear ideological underpinnings of their methods. For instance, organizations which construct university rankings take up such a neutral position, backed up by claims to the objectivity of quantitative methods, despite the fact that they directly benefit from the practice of conducting rankings (Brankovic et al., 2022).

5 Conclusion: Reflecting on agency, universality and authority in ELT

Overall, our analysis of the websites of three major global textbooks has highlighted a number of characteristics of strategic discourse constructed by publishers to try and maximize the value of their products on the rather congested market for ELT materials. We note at this point that

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3 we do not consider the mere existence of such strategic discourse or the overall orientation of
4 publishers toward maximizing their sales through marketing as a significant finding. Indeed,
5 the commodified nature of ELT materials is well accounted for by existing literature, which
6 has examined in detail the efforts that go into making textbooks a sellable product (see Gray,
7 2010), as is the case with other types of pre-packaged resources, like teacher training courses
8 (Block & Gray, 2016). Building on this research (particularly analyses of cultural content of
9 textbooks by Gray, 2010), our key finding with regard to the nature of the strategic discourse
10 of global textbook publishers is its centredness on notions of universality, a trait shared by all
11 despite their somewhat different approaches to achieving it. As highlighted above, all three
12 publishers made clear strategic efforts to upscale their textbooks by anchoring them to higher
13 centres of authority, particularly notions of English as homogenized and standardized through
14 global policy like CEFR as well as through high-stakes global tests like IELTS.

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17 Such efforts to strategically entangle teaching materials with policy and assessment are not
18 exclusive to global publishers – in Thailand, a local publisher has for instance produced
19 textbooks with titles like *CEFR Playground* and *Can Do English*⁴ – though it is crucial to read
20 them against the background of discourse around global policy in different local contexts. The
21 appropriation of global language policies like CEFR, while not in any way mandatory for
22 nations (with the exception of those in the European Union), is driven by powerful discourses
23 of development and comparison, where the educational results of highly developed contexts
24 are held up to developing nations as a mandate for policy change (Author, 2021; 2023b). Thus,
25 though the adoption of CEFR in a nation like Malaysia is most certainly a matter of local choice
26 than external imposition, it was justified in rather stark manner in policy texts: “Any country
27 or other body that makes use of the CEFR is free to take as much or as little from it as is desired.
28 But as in the case of the metric system, it makes sense to adopt the system as a whole”
29 (*Roadmap*, p. 62). Likewise, the focus of the policies on raising the English proficiency of the
30 Malaysian population was legitimated by the view that “we [Malaysia] have to move up a level
31 if we are to take our place among the advanced nations of the world” (*Agenda*, p. 18; for
32 extended analysis, see Author, 2021). Considering the stakes that are assigned to global policies
33 like CEFR in the discourse around them, we may make the observation that the copious
34 references to the framework on the websites and cover pages of series like *Empower* and *Life*
35 (as well as *Headway*, to a lesser extent) are meaningful to a degree that exceeds mere validity.

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⁴ A reference to the signature ‘can do’ phrasing of descriptors in CEFR, e.g. “...”.

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That is, they anchor the textbooks into policy-driven narratives of development, positioning them as part of the know-how needed to achieve educational progress and raising their legitimacy vis-à-vis alternative materials. The impact of such anchoring is quite practical, namely that the marketability of the textbooks is greatly enhanced – indeed it is worth noting that a key step in Malaysia’s appropriation of CEFR was a transition from locally developed materials to CEFR-aligned global textbooks.

We started the paper by highlighting the increasing focus on agency in contemporary ELT, a shift which aims to provide practitioners with a basis for pedagogical decision-making that productively draws on the different professional, geographic and cultural settings in which they are active (e.g. Kumaravadivelu, 2001). It was in this regard that the most significant blind spot of the strategic discourse around the textbooks could be observed, since we observed relatively little attention to the many differences in ELT practice and context across the globe. For instance, while the websites touted the potential of the books to save teachers’ time (in the case of *Empower*, even providing a “time-saving calculator”), they made little effort to represent the work of teachers in developing settings, where high teaching hours are typically compounded by large class sizes. Indeed, where classrooms were represented (e.g. in video-recorded example lessons by *Life*), these typically featured 10 learners or fewer, much smaller than the classes of 30 or above often found in non-elite learning spaces, and already highlighted as a determining factor for teaching practice in such contexts (see e.g. Copland et al., 2014; Duong & Nguyen, 2021; Watson Todd, 2012). Equally backgrounded was the plurality of cultures of learning across the world, a topic that has seen much attention particularly with reference to Asian contexts (see Jin & Cortazzi, 2011). The implicit assumption regarding the universal effectiveness of the books also extended to the cultural content of the textbooks, where concerns over suitability (shown by Gray [2010]) to be of significant internal concern to publishers, e.g. through strategic avoidance of potentially problematic topics such as alcohol or politics) went almost entirely unmentioned. *Life*, perhaps owing to its greater claims to depth and authenticity of content when compared to the other series, was the only website to make efforts in this regard, explaining that they had worked to ensure “images were right for all markets”. In the case of *Empower* and *Headway*, the tendency instead was to highlight the universal affective appeal of the ‘fun’ and ‘entertaining’ content, and little acknowledgement could be observed of the kind of back-stage content policing described by Gray.

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3 On the whole, these findings underline the importance of critical applied scholarship in ELT.
4 That is, while it continues to be crucial to undertake research which questions the too often
5 unquestioned notions underlying ELT as a global professional field, it is equally important to
6 conduct research which offers plausible, practical alternatives that can be taken up and adapted
7 by practitioners in different settings. This by necessity means continuing to open up ELT
8 scholarship to researchers (and researcher-practitioners) from different global settings, since
9 only such widespread participation in the critical enterprise can hope to disrupt the notions of
10 universality observed here in the marketing of textbooks and promoted with equal strength by
11 global language policies and global testing regimes. All these mechanisms contribute to the
12 reproduction of the equation observed long ago by Pennycook (2006), where knowledge
13 produced in elite academic settings in the Global North is de-contextualized, repositioned as
14 neutral and universal, and then re-contextualized as a form of intellectual norm to peripheral
15 settings in the Global South. Continuing the practical struggle for the inclusion of scholars
16 active in different settings is thus key, including through the continuous re-evaluation of gate-
17 keeping practices in ELT as an academic field (e.g. finding ways to make not just publishing
18 but also leadership of major journals open to scholars from outside elite settings). Only in this
19 way can we hope to disrupt the hierarchy powering the type of universalist discourse observed
20 around textbooks, where a distinction is drawn between producers of knowledge (in the elite)
21 and its consumers (outside the elite).
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