

UNDERSTANDING THE NECESSITY FOR CRITICAL AND CONTEXTUALIZED PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE IN SRI LANKA: AN ANALYSIS OF SOME SELECT ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS

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Textbooks are the basis for teaching and learning of English (ELT) in Sri Lanka, and hence, they have a major influence on what takes place in the classroom. Textbooks are often revered as established doctrine consisting of unassailable and officially sanctioned truth and can become indoctrinating documents that influence the types of knowledge and attitudes students acquire and the attitudes students develop towards the language and learning and teaching process. Building on the argument that ELT is not only a linguistic process but also an ideological one, it is important that the English as a Second Language (ESL) textbooks reflect the multiplicity inherent in a heterogeneous society like Sri Lanka and engage students in a process of uncovering and confronting cultural and gender biases as opposed to perpetuating the dominance of hegemonic groups while developing positive attitudes towards the learning process without paving the way to learner and teacher opposition and resistance. The intention of this study is promoting the need for critical and contextualized pedagogic practices in ELT. This study attempts to determine the extent to which the Lankan ESL textbooks are sensitive to the needs of the Lankan students and are designed in ways which are receptive to and respectful of local classroom realities. In addition, it attempts to identify the ways in which the textbooks challenge the dominant (oppressive) normativity of the larger socio-political context with regard to gender, ethnicity, and religion. Both primary and secondary data is based on Pupils' English Textbooks of Grades 03, 05, 07, 08, 10, 11 and Advanced Level that are taught in Sri Lankan schools. Lesson materials that are symptomatic of the absence and presence of culture and gender sensitivity are examined in order to derive conclusions. Hence, the research is largely qualitative. Moreover, the theoretical framework is based on the scholarly works of researchers such as S.Canagarajah, T.Kandiah, A.Parakrama, L.Cumaranatunga, P. Freire and E.Shohamy. A close examination of the select textbooks reveals that textbooks have not only failed to combat prejudices and biases against minorities and women, but they have promoted and perpetuated such prejudices and biases without making an attempt to challenge and problematize them. Therefore, the conclusions emphasize that there is a need for an adoption of critical and contextualized pedagogic approaches in the select textbooks. It is neither possible nor desirable to separate the linguistic aspect of a language from its surrounding ideologies. Thus, there is a need to redesign textbooks taking into account the equity pedagogy so that students of all ethnic, religious, social, and gender backgrounds achieve their learning targets while developing inclusive and tolerant attitudes.

Keywords: ESL Textbooks, ELT Practice, Contextualization, Ideologies, Sri Lanka

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