

Evaluating *Passages 1* and *First Certificate* Textbooks: A Discourse Perspective

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Abstract

Adopting the critical discourse analysis framework, in general, and Fairclough's (1989) critical text analysis, in particular, the current study aims at examining 3 aspects of meaning, namely social relations, subject positions, and contents in the conversation as well as vocabulary and grammar parts of *Passages 1* (an American textbook) and *First Certificate* (a British textbook) to find out whether there would be any discernable differences between these 2 instructional textbooks. To evaluate the textbooks, content analysis was employed. The results revealed that the primary emphasis of both ELT textbooks was on the cooperative learning. Additionally, in both textbooks, social relations were mostly equal, and conversations often took place between a male and a female with equal social status and power. Regarding subject positions, the data analysis showed that *Passages 1* favored *friends* social relation, whereas *TV reporting* was the dominant social relation in *First Certificate*. Besides, *Passages 1* mostly focused on uncontroversial issues, whereas *First Certificate* concentrated on controversial and market-oriented topics more than *Passages 1*. After all, both these textbooks tended to represent the discourse and culture of Western countries, which can exert specific ideologies on language learners.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis; Evaluation; ELT Textbooks;
Passages 1; First Certificate

1. Introduction

The field of English as the second or foreign language (L2) moved from structural teaching approaches to communicative, humanistic, and learner-centered approaches (Stevick, 1990). Through this transitional movement from structural methodology to communicative approach, the vital role of textbooks has been taken for granted (Riazi, 2003). Textbooks are often employed as teachers' guidebooks in language classes. However, mere familiarity with how to use a textbook will not, by itself, be sufficient, and teachers need to judge how effective, practical, and appropriate for a given context the textbook can be. Without a good textbook available, it is really difficult, if not impossible, for an L2 teacher to deliver his or her teaching to the learners effectively. With regard to the focal role of textbooks in teaching, Hutchinson and Torres (1994, cited in Litz, 2005) suggest that “the textbook is an almost universal element of teaching” (p. 4). Consequently, selecting an appropriate and suitable textbook for a class has been one of the most important tasks for teachers.

In the wake of the new millennium, evaluating textbooks has been proven to be among the major areas of interest for many researchers (e.g., Ansary & Babaii, 2002, Jahangard, 2007; Litz, 2005), and a number of descriptive and empirical studies (e.g., Alavinia & Siyadat, 2013; Gholami, Rimani Nikou, & Soultanpour, 2012; Zu & Kong, 2009) have been done to evaluate different instructional textbooks. However, as Taki (2004) states, among the various pieces of research in the literature, not much evidence of textbook evaluation can be traced from the perspective of critical discourse analysis (CDA), which has recently become one of the most dominant approaches to discourse and culture (Keshavarz & Akbari Malek, 2009). CDA is concerned with the different forms of social cognition that are shared by knowledge, attitudes, ideologies, norms, and values (van Dijk, 2001). According to Pennycook (2004), approaches to CDA are concerned with understanding “texts and practices of reading and writing in relationship to questions of social change, cultural diversity, economic equity, and political enfranchisement” (p. 787). Considering the vital role that the ELT textbooks play in EFL learning, the present study aimed at examining two ELT textbooks—*Passages 1* (Richards & Sandy,

2008) and *First Certificate* (Haines & Stewart, 2008)—with regard to three dimensions of meaning: social relations, subject positions, and contents, following Fairclough's (1989) text analysis model. The rationale behind selecting these two textbooks is that both textbooks are commonly used in many English language institutes of Iran. One is American and the other is British, but both of them target advanced-level EFL learners and are published in the same year (i.e., 2008). Besides, both consist of 12 units. Thus, it was assumed that their evaluation from the CDA perspective, an effective tool, could produce fruitful results and make L2 learners and teachers better regard textbooks not just as linguistic devices, but as parts of specific social practices that would have implications about issues of status, equality, and distribution of power.

2. Literature Review

According to McCarthy (1991), the study of language in the past was merely limited to the study of the sentences and smaller components of language, but in early 1970s, discourse analysis grew out of work in different disciplines like linguistics, semiotics, psychology, anthropology, and sociology. Nowadays, discourse analysis entails a series of interdisciplinary approaches that can be used to explore many different social domains in many various kinds of studies (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). Hewitt (2009) defines discourse as a term that is used in everyday language interchangeably with discussion or dialog. In other words, one of the main objectives of discourse analysis is scrutinizing a discussion or dialog. Such analysis aims to picture patterns and hidden rules of how language is used and narratives are created.

Apart from discourse analysis, the importance of CDA has been recently touched in several fields of study (e.g., teaching, literature, testing, and sociolinguistics). This interdisciplinary approach to discourse considers language as a social practice. Additionally, it concentrates on the social and political domination in any form of language. According to van Dijk (2001, p. 363), CDA is generally viewed as the study of "the relationship between discourse and power." This type of analysis considers discourse as a "social phenomenon" and attempts to reform the

“social-theoretical foundations for practicing discourse analysis as well as for situating discourse in society” (Blommaert, 2005, p. 27). Fairclough and Wodak (1997) summarize the main tenets of CDA in the following manner:

CDA addresses social problems, power relations are discursive, discourse constitutes society and culture, discourse does ideological work, discourse is historical, the link between text and society is mediated, discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory, discourse is a form of social action. (pp. 271-280)

Thus, as De los Heros (2009) points out, CDA studies how texts demonstrate and construct reality within a specific ideological system through implicit messages based on what is said and left unsaid. It is believed that Fairclough's (1989) model of CDA is a practical model for analyzing texts and uncovering what is left unsaid (Taki, 2004). This model is an application of Halliday's (1985) well-known systemic-functional grammar (SFG) for analyzing texts. In this model, there are three dimensions of meaning: content, social relation, and subject position. According to Fairclough (1989), content refers to the topic of discussion; social relation refers to the nature of the relationship between participants and includes an understanding of their roles and their status in the social and linguistic context, and subject position is defined as the social identity or the social role of participants. Topics such as health problems and transportation system are examples of content. Employer-employee, teacher-student, and interviewer-interviewee can be represented as the social relations that exist between interlocutors in conversations. Subject positions can be, for instance, employers, chefs, and security guards. Following is a brief description of Fairclough's (2001, pp. 125) framework.

- Dimensions of meaning
 - Social relation: It has to do with the nature of the relationship between participants, their roles, and their statuses within the social and linguistic context.

- Subject position: It refers to social identity or the social role of the participants.
- Content: It has to do with topic of the conversation.
- Vocabularies
 - Experiential value: It has to do with what ideas or meaning is attributed by the text with reference to synonymy, antonym, hyponymy, collocation, repetition, and emphasis.
 - Relational value: It has to do with the social relationships enacted via the text.
 - Expressive value: It has to do with subject position or social identity.
- Grammar
 - Experiential value: It has to do with the types of process and participants that predominate.
 - Actions: They are realized as SVO patterns; for example, *John moved to California.*
 - Events: They are realized as SV patterns; for example, *Mary agrees.*
 - Attributes: They are realized as SVC patterns; for example, *I think people that use cell phone in the public places should be fined.*
 - Relational value: Among the grammatical features which have relational values are modes of sentences, modality and pronouns.
 - Expressive value: The expressive values of grammatical features are the authenticity claims to knowledge.

To move further, textbooks as a model of routine discourse can reproduce the values of a specific culture. Moreover, despite the significant role of ELT textbooks as a means of socialization and forming students' worldviews, they are

sometimes replete with social and cultural biases. Hence, the choice of effective and appropriate L2 textbooks is the most demanding responsibility which L2 teachers are faced with. In this regard, textbook evaluation is one way to gain the necessary information about the suitability and practicality of textbooks. Reviewing practical studies on textbook evaluation, Tavakoli (1995) used Searle's (1969) model of speech act to analyze dialogs of three English textbooks used in Iranian high school English textbooks to see whether different forms of speech acts were correctly used and to determine the frequency of each function. He asserted that only representative, directive, and expressive language functions were presented in the textbooks, whereas commissives and declarations were completely overlooked.

Some instructional textbooks are dominated by the unnoticed and stereotypic role of male or female social actors. Investigating gender bias in EFL textbooks has recently brought much enthusiasm. Ansary and Babaii (2003), for instance, investigated the status of sexism in two English language teaching textbooks: *Right Path to English I* and *Right Path to English II* (Birjandi & Soheili, 1999) taught to Iranian students at secondary schools. They concluded that these two textbooks could be regarded as sexist, in that they would expose Iranian EFL students to a partial and unjustifiable representation of women. Additionally, Amal Saleh, Sajjadi, and Yarmohammadi (2006) scrutinized how language was used in the EFL high school textbooks in Iran. The results of their study showed that females were ignored in these EFL textbooks. Moreover, it was found that the occurrence and the kind of activities, which males and females were involved in, were significantly different in the sense that females were mostly associated with the traditional roles of doing household chores and care giving. Recently, Sahragard and Davatgarzadeh (2010) examined the linguistic representation of male and female social actors and construction of gender identities in the texts of *New Interchange* (Richards, Hull, & Proctor, 2005) from the CDA viewpoint. The results revealed that women were depicted as more important, energetic, autonomous, eloquent, and confident in *New Interchange*.

In another study, Rashidi and Zare Asl (2011) conducted a research to evaluate the former and present preuniversity English textbooks based on Littlejohn's (1998) evaluation framework in order to compare their pedagogic values, objectives as well as their strengths and weaknesses concerning the tasks and designs. To this end, six ELT experts were asked to rate the two books through the evaluative checklist and 11 teachers at preuniversity level were interviewed. Results showed that tasks and design of the current textbook were superior to the previous textbook. The current textbook was consistent with the objectives of ELT in preuniversity schools. Finally, Kohandani, Farzaneh, and Kazemi (2013) investigated the conversation section of *Top Notch 1* (Saslow & Ascher, 2005) based on the pragmatic viewpoint of language functions and speech acts. They stated that the conversations in this ELT textbook were not functionally appropriate from the pragmatic viewpoint.

As the review of the related literature indicates, there has always been an ongoing tendency and desire among the researches to evaluate different areas in ELT textbooks. However, compared with other domains in textbook evaluation, a few studies have studied ELT textbooks from the perspective of CDA. ELT textbooks are the main medium of instruction and students' access to teaching materials. They can construct, naturalize, and legitimize ideologies and formulate language learners' worldviews (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2001). Therefore, it is important to provide a critique of ELT textbooks used. Given the above literature, none of the L2 researchers, to the best knowledge of the present researchers, have analyzed ELT textbooks used in Iran from the CDA perspective using Fairclough's (1989, 2001) practical model of text analysis. The current study sought to provide a critique of 2 ELT textbooks, currently used in some of the Iranian language institutes.

3. Methodology

Using Fairclough's (1989) model of CDA, the current study aimed to present an analysis of *Passages 1* (Richards & Sandy, 2008) and *First Certificate* (Haines & Stewart, 2008) to see how the dimensions of meaning were reflected in

the linguistic features of texts in these textbooks. These instructional textbooks, each consisting of 12 units, are written for advanced-level learners. More specifically, *Passages 1* and *First Certificate* represent all four language skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and have student's book, workbook, teacher's guide, audio program, dictionary CD-ROM, and test booklet. They have been published by Cambridge University Press and Oxford University Press, respectively. In both, the multistrand syllabus is the basis for presenting the materials. In so doing, the four language skills are dealt with and language components such as grammar and vocabulary are treated in different sections in each unit of the textbooks.

Statistical survey of two randomly-selected units, which consist of four lessons, was done to classify the dimensions of meaning. It is worth mentioning that the number of pages in each unit of the above textbooks is not different. It was assumed that by analyzing the content in two units, i.e. four lessons, the aspects of meaning (i.e., content, relation, and subject position) could be depicted to a certain degree. The number of occurrences of each aspect of meaning was counted through the randomly-selected units (i.e. units 1 and 2) by two raters. The raters (one with an M.A. and the other with a Ph.D. in TEFL) had good knowledge of the framework. Second, to increase dependability of the main data, a training session was held to do content analysis on one lesson from the *Passages 1* (Richards & Sandy, 2008), using the aforementioned framework.

4. Data Analysis

The frequency and percentage of the data were tabulated to get a clear picture of the pattern of the occurrence of the three dimensions of meaning, and a series of chi-square tests of significance, when possible, were run to explore the significant differences between the observed frequencies of the selected categories depicted in the Fairclough's (1989) model. The following are the results of tests of significance, together with the percentages of data on the major elements of meaning categories.

4.1 Relations

Krauss and Chiu (2010) state that there is a relationship between language and social life; the way that interlocutors define the social situation; view what others know, think, and believe; and claim about their own and others' identities will affect the form and content of their speaking. In order to classify social relations in the present study, the relations were counted any time two interlocutors in the dialogs communicated verbally. Social relations were presented in one of the following ways: (a) two words divided by a hyphen such as interviewer-interviewee, (b) one plural form such as classmates, and (c) a singular noun indicating an unseen audience such as TV news audience. The results are presented in Table 1:

Table 1. *Frequency of Social Relations in Passages 1 and First Certificate*

Textbooks	Social Relations	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Passages 1</i>	Friends	9	52
	Interviewer-Interviewee	2	12
	Reporter	6	36
	Expert	0	0
	Total	17	100
<i>First Certificate</i>	Friends	0	0
	Expert	4	26
	Interviewer-Interviewee	5	34
	Reporter	6	40
	Total	15	100

As demonstrated in Table 1, the total number of social roles for *Passages 1* was 17 and for *First Certificate* was 15. The common social relations in the above ELT textbooks were *interview-interviewee*, *friends*, and *reporter*. *Friends* was significantly represented in *Passages 1*, whereas *expert* was more elaborative in the *First Certificate* textbook. That is, *Passages 1* used *friends* more frequently (52%), whereas *First Certificate* used *reporter* more frequently (40%). The frequency of both *friends* social role in *First Certificate* and *expert* in *Passages 1* was zero. As demonstrated in Table 1, the social relations shared in both textbooks were interviewer-interviewee and reporter. When the test of significance was run for these

social roles, the results of the chi-square tests revealed no statistically significant difference between *Passages 1* and *First Certificate* with regard to the interview-interviewee ($\chi^2 = 1.28, p = .257$) and reporter ($\chi^2 = 1.00, p = .317$).

4.2 Subject Position

The occurrence of a subject position was counted every time it appeared in the conversations of the selected textbooks. It is worth mentioning each time a person appeared in the listening counted as one subject position. The results of subject are illustrated in Table 2:

Table 2. Frequency of Subject Position in Passages 1 and First Certificate

Textbooks	Social Relations	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Passages 1</i>	Friends	6	30
	Interviewee	8	40
	Interviewer	1	5
	Radio Program Host	2	10
	TV Host	1	5
	TV Reporter	2	10
	Expert	0	0
	Total	20	100
<i>First Certificate</i>	Friends	0	0
	Interviewee	3	15
	Interviewer	2	10
	Radio Program Host	6	30
	Expert	3	15
	Reporter	6	30
	Total	20	100

According to Table 2, *friends* ($n = 6$) and *interviewee* ($n = 8$) received a higher frequency in *Passages 1* than *First Certificate*. Also, *radio program host* and *TV reporter* received a higher frequency in *First Certificate* than *Passages 1*. When the test of significance was conducted for the shared social positions, the differences between *Passages 1* and *First Certificate* in relation to *interviewer* ($\chi^2 = .333, p = .564$), *interviewee* ($\chi^2 = 2.27, p = .132$), *radio program host* ($\chi^2 = 2.77, p = .096$) and *TV reporter* ($\chi^2 = 2.77, p = .096$) were not statistically significant. Qualitative

analyses also backed up the above finding. The common social relations in both textbooks were *interviewee-interviewer* and *reporter*. However, *Passages 1* used *friends* social position and *TV* and *radio host*, whereas *First Certificate* employed *expert* as another social relation.

4.3 Content

The contents of discourses vary considerably as the speakers experience society and the social institutions in which they act differently (Fairclough, 2001). In order to determine the types of contents in each of the above textbooks, the individual topics covered in each textbook were enumerated. The results are reported in Table 3:

Table 3. *Topics in Passages 1 and First Certificate*

Textbooks	Social Relations	Page Number
<i>Passages 1</i>	Talking about how they have changed over years regarding their families	Page 4
	Talking about their families	Page 6
	Talking about family reunion	Page 8
	Talking about bad decisions	Page 10
	Talking about dealing with problems	Page 12
	An unusual story about UFOs reported by radio reporters	Page 16
	A TV show in which two reporters describe two cities	Page 18
	Two foreign students discuss their feelings about San Francisco	Page 20
<i>First Certificate</i>	Two American and British students their feelings about Sydney	Page 24
	Talking about bringing children	Page 15
	Talking about differences between men and woman	Page 15
	Talking about personal life	Page 19
	Talking about teenagers and digital technologies	Page 19
	Talking about bringing children	Page 24

The first unit in *Passages 1* was about family and friends, which would be a safe topic. But the first unit of *First certificate* presented a controversial and challenging topic—

sex differences. Moreover, *Passages 1* included more cultural points. Generally, this textbook depicted the common American life-style, culture, social events, and the way family and friends would behave in the United States. Also, it dealt with mistakes and mystery stories which would be the topics again familiar to most L2 learners. *First certificate* presented topics about the teenagers and their personal life, which might provide more concrete situations for those young L2 learners reading the textbook.

4.4 Vocabulary

Vocabulary should be analyzed in the context because its meaning can be different in various situations. As said above, the tasks in *Passages 1* were built around the theme of friends, family issues, problems, mistakes and mysteries. The tasks in *First Certificate*, however, were built around the theme of the differences between sexes, the jobs for each sex, the roles of parents, as well as problems and types of addictions teenagers could have. According to these themes, all the adjectives attributable to men and women were presented. Also, the names of some academic majors suitable for both genders were embedded. Besides, phrasal verbs were introduced in order to make the EFL learners able to talk about their addictions, activities, and hobbies. Table 4 demonstrates the experiential value of vocabularies in the first two units of *Passages 1* and *First Certificate*:

Table 4. *Vocabularies in Passages 1 and First Certificate*

Textbooks	Unit Number	Examples
<i>Passages 1</i>	Unit 1	Friendly and outgoing; Strong and dependence; Kind and generous; Shy and reserved; Two-income family; Honest and sincere; Wild and crazy; Extended family; Laid-back and relax; Calm and cool; Neat and tidy; Nuclear family
	Unit 2	Aggravate; Deal with; Run into; Be positive; Avoid; Identify; Solve; Bet; Suppose; Cause; Ignore; Assume; Figure; Be certain
<i>First Certificate</i>	Unit 1	Adventurous; Emotional; Materialistic; Sensitive; Art and Design; Competitive; Generous; Cooperative; Stubborn ;Sociable; Possessive; Self-center; Confident; Lazy; Politics;
	Unit 2	Disgust; Reduce; Gain Stop; Shine; Give in; Survive; Give up

Detailed analysis of new vocabularies in *First Certificate* uncovers the strong correspondence between the different senses of the words introduced in the vocabulary section and the meanings which were used in the reading and listening tasks. The other noticeable point was attributable to the contextualization of the new vocabulary in the subsequent tasks. The conceptualization accompanied the corresponding pictures which would make the meaning of words more understandable.

The first conversation in *Passages 1* (on p. 6) illustrated two friends (male-female) who were talking about their families in which they grew up and the changes that had happened to their families. One partner agreed with what the other one suggested. In the next conversation (p. 8), there were two friends, one male who was telling his friend (a female) about his family reunion. In this conversation, the female partner agreed with her friend while describing a different family situation. What is apparent from examining these two conversations is that the relations between the partners (male and female) were normal and friendly ones. For the relationship to continue, they worked out to have an agreement. But friends and partners were frank and open about their interlocutor's opinions. There was only one conversation in Unit 2, which was about UFOs and alien abductions. The two radio program hosts—one male and one female—talked about a strange event which was reported by a family in Canada. The two participants had some sort of agreement to maintain the conversation. Furthermore, they tried to challenge the listeners by ending the conversation with an unanswered question.

In *First Certificate*, the third listening part (p. 19) included a conversation between one interviewer and two interviewees talking about their personal lives, hobbies, activities, and the way they lived. The analysis indicated that the relation between the partners (male and female) was formal. In fact, there were some simple questions and answers exchanged between the interviewer and interviewees in a formal setting. Also, there was a conversation (p. 24) among an interviewer, an interviewee and three experts in the field of psychology, teaching, and counseling. Although the relation among the interviewer and the interviewee was somehow

friendly, the relation between each expert and the interviewee was mostly formal. As the experts were positioned in a more powerful status, they advised the interviewee more formally. Again, there was an agreement between the two sides. Meanwhile, the analysis of the corpus showed that the participants in the conversations of *Passages 1* and *First Certificate* were not marked with the expressive value, that is, with the shift of subject position or social identity. In other words, no conspicuous changes of identities and subject positions, indicating the inculcation of new discourses, happened in the conversations of *Passages 1* and *First Certificate*.

4.5 Grammar

In Fairclough's (1989, 2001) framework, grammar is analyzed based on the experiential value, which explains the types of process that predominates (i.e., actions, events, and attributes), expressive value of grammatical features, which conveys the authenticity claims to knowledge, and relational value, which expresses the modes of sentences. The results of the analysis of processes in the conversations of the two textbooks are provided in Table 5:

Table 5. *Analysis of Process Type for Passages 1 and First Certificate*

Textbooks	Process	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Passages 1</i>	Action	39	42
	Event	27	29
	Attribute	27	29
	Total	93	100
<i>First Certificate</i>	Action	18	46
	Event	19	48
	Attribute	2	6
	Total	39	100

As Table 5 shows, the frequencies of 'events' and 'attributes' are the same in *Passages 1*, and the process type of *action* received the highest frequencies. In *First Certificate*, *action* and *event* processes received high percentages of occurrence (46% and 48%, respectively), but *attribute* received a low frequency (with 6% percentage of occurrence). In addition, according to Table 5, *action* in *Passages 1* ($n = 39$) received a higher frequency than *First Certificate* ($n = 18$). Running the chi-

square test of significance, the difference between the two ELT textbooks in terms of 'action' process was statically significant ($\chi^2 = 7.73, p \leq .05$). Also, in attribute, *Passages 1* ($n = 27$) outnumbered *First Certificate* ($n = 2$) and when the chi-square test of significance was conducted, the difference between these two textbooks was great enough to be statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 21.55, p \leq .05$). However, the difference between *Passages 1* ($n = 27$) and *First Certificate* ($n = 19$) was not statically significant in terms of the *event* process ($\chi^2 = 1.39, p = .238$).

In addition to the type of processes, other grammatical features (i.e., nominalization, active/passive sentences, and positive/negative constructions) were identified and their frequencies were obtained. The results are exhibited in Table

Table 6. *Grammatical Features of Passages 1 and First Certificate*

Textbooks	Grammatical Feature	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Passages 1</i>	Nominalization	0	0
	Active Sentence	22	45
	Passive Sentence	0	0
	Negative Sentence	5	10
<i>First Certificate</i>	Nominalization	1	2.2
	Active Sentence	22	48.8
	Passive Sentence	0	0
	Negative Sentence	3	6.6

According to Table 6, none of the sentences in the conversations in each textbook were passive. Also, *Passages 1* did not make use of nominalization feature (i.e., forming a noun phrases from a verb phrase). Also, the positive sentences received a higher percentage than the negative ones in both textbooks. The negative structures had experiential value in that they indicated what the case was or should be. Also, the high frequency of positive sentences indicates that participants had confidence in depicting the world or the way they wanted it to be. In addition, the difference between *Passages 1* and *First Certificate* regarding negative ($\chi^2 = .500, p = .480$) and positive sentences ($\chi^2 = .220, p = .639$) was not statistically noticeable.

The mode of a sentence can be ideologically significant because different sentence modes positioned subjects differently. Generally, systematic asymmetries in the distribution of sentence mode could demonstrate the power relations between participants. These frequencies can be meaningful when they are examined with reference to interactions between interlocutors, who happened to be mostly male and female interactants in the conversations. In determining the mode of sentences, a fourth category i.e. *response* is also added in the table to see whether the declaration made by the participant was a response to a question or the participant himself or herself took the initiative. In other words, it is important to know whether the interlocutor waited for a question in order to respond or he or she initiated the conversation and took the move. Table 7 shows the frequency of different modes of sentences in each textbook:

Table 7. *The Results of Sentence Modes for Passages 1 and First Certificate*

Conversation		Question		Declarative		Imperative		Response	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
<i>Passages 1</i>	Conversation 1 (p. 6)	4	7	11	13	0	0	3	4
	Conversation 2 (p. 8)	0	5	18	6	0	0	5	0
	Conversation 3 (p. 16)	6	1	5	6	0	0	31	0
<i>First Certificate</i>	Conversation 1 (p. 19)	2	16	0	4	0	0	7	10
	Conversation 2 (p. 24)	3	11	6	16	0	2	12	0

M = Male; F = Female

According to the data set in Table 7, the differences between males and females were not very striking in most cases in both textbooks. For instance, none of the textbooks made use of imperative mode and the pattern did not vary across both genders. Just in *responses* ($n = 43$), males outnumbered females in *Passages 1*.

When the test of significance was conducted on the frequencies of *responses*, the difference between males and females in *Passages 1* was great enough to be statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 28.48, p \leq .05$). Considering the results of sentence modes in *First Certificate*, *questions* and *declaratives* received a higher frequency in females ($n = 27$) than males ($n = 5$). Also, in *declaratives*, females outnumbered males. When the chi-square test of significance was run, the difference between males and females was statistically significant for *questions* and *declaratives* in *First Certificate* ($\chi^2 = 15.12, p \leq .05$ and $\chi^2 = 7.53, p \leq .05$, respectively). In addition, qualitative analyses supported the above findings. The data analysis of the conversations indicated the participants in most conversations did not seem to be willing to challenge each other. In other words, they mostly tended to enjoy equal power relations. Of course, in some conversations (e.g., p. 16) in *Passages 1*, which was about an unusual UFO, recurrent preponderance of one mode of sentence due to the topic of the conversation could be observed.

Another grammatical feature with relational value is modality, which is often expressed by modal verbs like *may*, *can*, *should*, or *must*. According to Fairclough (1989, 2001), modality has to do with the authority of the speaker or writer; this authority may apply to the relation between interactants or probability of the representation of reality. In *Passages 1*, modality was often used in reference to someone outside the context of the conversation. For instance, *they* in *they don't have to go anywhere* (in the conversation on p. 6) referred to parents-in-law, meaning that the function of the modality which was indicating power and authority did not influence the relationship between the interactants in the conversation. Put simply, the participants were supposed to be socially equals. Unlike the conversations in *Passages 1*, the conversations in *First Certificate* did not have such modal verbs.

Moreover, modals may also have expressive values. What is ideologically significant about the expressive values of modals is the authenticity claims to knowledge. Conversations in *Passages 1* (e.g., conversations on pp. 6 and 8) included the modals such as *have to*, *has to*, and *must*, demonstrating the

interlocutors' confidence about the topic of speaking. When the subject was not the speaker himself or herself, the participants used a strong modal like *must*. When the topic of conversation forced the speakers to be more cautious, it was observed that a weaker modal like *could* was utilized more frequently.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

There are not many who deny the important role of EFL textbooks in the success of L2 learners. Sheldon (1988) argues "textbooks represent the visible heart of any ELT program" (p. 237). They specify the aims of language learning; they function as a lesson plan and a valuable chart for teachers and learners. As Roohani and Heidari argue (2012), if ELT textbooks do not picture society properly or portray inappropriate language for specific situations, the EFL learners may face an unsuitable language and experience a sociopragmatic failure. Evaluation of textbooks, consequently, is of utmost importance so that suitability of instructional textbooks can be defined in a given context such as the Iranian EFL context. The findings of the current study show that the *Passages 1* textbook greatly emphasizes *friends*. This means that the recurrent social relation in *Passages 1* is that of friends. This is in line with the claim that in most cases, the focus is on cooperative interactions between social equals. But *First Certificate* focuses on *reporter* and *interview-interviewee* as the prevalent social relation. Similarly, as in many conversations, the relation emulates the man-on-the-street interview common in television and radio news. As Fairclough (1989) argues, this issue may indicate that the medium is being colonized by the discourse of the mass media advertising. Motter (2008) argues that the mass media is a political, social, economic, and cultural institution with influences educational institutions. As Gamson (1992, pp. xi-xii) claims, "the mass media are a system in which active agents with specific purposes are constantly engaged in a process of supplying meaning."

Furthermore, the findings of the present study showed that in both textbooks passivization and nominalization were not frequently observed. As Leeuwen (1996) argues, the obfuscation of agency can be achieved through nominalization and passive sentences. In other words, the agency in a sentence can

be backgrounded through these two grammatical features. The findings that active sentences were observed more in *Passages 1* and *First Certificate* indicate that the social actors, i.e. agents, in the conversations were more represented as active individuals in connection to the activities in conversations. It can be assumed that there was no attempt on the part of the textbook writers to exclude agents, such as reporters, interviewers, and interviewees, as active and dynamic forces in the interactions. This way, EFL learners might find themselves in a better position to role play characters in the assigned tasks and activities in the aforementioned textbooks.

In addition, the results obtained in the current study show that both textbooks tend to represent idealized and equal interactions. Moreover, the participants in the conversations in these instructional textbooks agree with each other to maintain the moves. However, in real-life situations, interactions often happen between characters with unequal power and status, so the conversations might look less authentic from this aspect of social relation. Another point is that in *Passages 1*, the topics are mostly trivial and unimportant issues. As the content analysis in the present study has shown, the topics such as family and friends are so frequent in *Passages 1* and they are treated in a way that proves to be ideologically neutral. As Akbari (2008) points out:

The majority of course books used for English instruction have been anesthetized to make them politically and socially harmless for an international audience. Most publishers advise course book writers to follow a set of guidelines to make sure that controversial topics are kept out of their books As a result, most course books deal with neutral, apparently harmless topics such as food, shopping, or travel. (p. 267)

Nevertheless, the content analysis of *First Certificate* did not show neutrality. It seems that the topics in this instructional ELT textbook are updated and more congruent with the taste of the new generation.

As to the similarities between the selected textbooks, the findings also indicate that inequality is rarely addressed in the conversations of the two textbooks. This issue reiterates the point regarding the trend in concealing inequality in discourse. In addition, in both textbooks, relations are portrayed in the dialogs that are short and less decontextualized. That is, unknown characters appear and vanish quickly in contexts lacking a plot or narrative. Also, the findings of the present study demonstrate that in both *Passages 1* and *First Certificate*, the emphasis is on occupational subject position. For instance, the emphasis is on college students' summer jobs and teenagers who have part-time jobs. It seems that the purpose is to entertain with a portrayal of this segment of society because it is more appealing than others. Another finding of interest obtained from the analysis of vocabulary and grammar is the absence of the use of ugly language, which can be couched in today's conversations. The language in both textbooks is neat and error-free, lacking natural discourse markers in authentic every-day life oral discourse.

In summary, the findings of this study, which analyzed the conversations in a small corpus of two internationally-produced ELT textbooks (i.e., *Passages 1* and *First Certificate*), indicate that both textbooks tend to show the interactions mostly between people, including both males and females, with equal social power, and try to depict more harmless and neutral topics. However, *Passages 1* focuses on uncontroversial issues more than *First Certificate*. Moreover, both males and females were included in the conversations in both textbooks. This issue suggests that the textbook writers were not biased with regard to the representation of male and female social actors, which may reduce the likelihood of a negative impact on the part of male and females L2 learners. Regarding the content of the conversations, the above ELT textbooks likewise reflect the western culture and discourse, which can exert specific ideologies on L2 learners. As Shatanawi (2005) states, the presence of the elements about the western historical, economical, geographical, literary, political, religious, social, man-woman relationship, habits, and customs in ELT textbooks indicates the dominance of a specific (i.e., English) culture at the expense of another (i.e. native) culture, which may raise negative attitudes on the part of EFL learners. The above interpretations are limited because

the results from a small corpus might not entirely reflect the aspects of meaning in the abovementioned textbooks. The fact that the wide generalizations arise from the analysis of the results and a small corpus may suggest that the study was biased. Caution about generalizing the findings is sufficient to suggest further research.

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