



Decoding Religious Contents: A CDA of PTB and OUP at Primary Level in Punjab, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Ideologies are constructed and propagated through the subtle use of language. Textbooks are designed deftly to propagate the desired version of social realities to the target readership. The present research decodes critically the religious contents present in PTB and OUP primary Urdu textbooks taught at Punjab Pakistan during 2021-2022. The data for the current study has been collected purposively from the chapters containing religious contents in different shades from the selected primary Urdu textbooks. The present research employs an integrated approach by drawing upon Fairclough (2003, 2012) research models. The levels of analysis include representation, lexicalization, metaphor, rhyme scheme, in/ exclusion and normative critique of language. The findings of the research reveal that the representation of religion in the selected data is polarized. The role of economy and class difference contributes significantly to propagating religious ideology to the middle and elite classes. Besides, it contents that the frequency of occurrence of religious contents is higher in PTB, (a book which is 26%) compared to OUP book, where this frequency is 12%. In this way, the present study confirms that inclination of the middle class towards religion is higher than its counterpart.

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1. Introduction

Textbooks are one of the best sites for ideological investment. They play an important role in preparing young learners for practical life. Most often, it is observed that religious ideologies are propagated through the loaded discourses of primary level textbooks. These discourses are subtle and persuasive in shaping children's perception insidiously about their religious beliefs. Sapir (1921) stated that words and every act of social behavior involve communication. Along with imparting education, textbooks at Primary level are most often used as an insidious weapon to make certain ideologies including the religious ideology as common sense among different classes of society. The present research decodes discourses of Urdu textbooks at primary level published by Punjab Text book board (PTB) and Oxford University Press (OUP) (2020-2021) to lay bare up to what extent these textbooks vary from each other in the construction and propagation of religious ideologies to the target readership. The concept of polarization in religion (religion of morality for the poor and religion of science for the rich) has been observed in the present research.

Hussain (2018) conducted a research on decoding religious contents present in the primary English textbooks taught at Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) provinces. The religious contents in linguistic and semiotic forms were analysed by employing an integrated

research method. The levels of analysis included word, sentence, and discourse and word-picture conjunction. The findings of semiotic analysis were validated by focus groups discussions. It highlighted that primary English textbooks are an important site for ideological investment and play an important role in the dissemination of desired religious ideologies to young learners. Similarly, Khan's (2019) research on gendering semiotics and religion reveals that highly ideological semiotics are deliberately included in the primary English textbooks to win general consent and to make the target audience behave in a desired manner by associating gender with religion. It illustrates that the concept of gender and its association with religion varies from one province of Pakistan (Punjab) to another (Baluchistan). The present research addresses the following research questions:

- How are religious ideologies disseminated through discourses of Primary level Urdu textbooks published by Punjab Textbook Board (PTB) Lahore, Pakistan and Oxford University Press (OUP) during (2020 -2021)?
- How do these primary Urdu books vary from each other in the dissemination of religious ideology to the learners?

2. Methodology

The present research is descriptive and qualitative in nature as it deals with the ways of words in making certain things commonsense. To analyse the data, the researchers have devised an amended research model by drawing upon Fairclough's (2003) and (2013) models. The analytical categories of the mentioned models include lexicalization, metaphors, inclusion/exclusion, polarization, Implicature, Marxist and normative critique of language. However, the analytical device i.e. alliteration that has been observed frequently is included in the modified research model employed in the study. The levels of analysis include word, sentence, discourse and Implicature.

3. Data Analysis

Fairclough (2013) argues that language is one of the most persuasive and insidious weapons to propagate the desired ideology to the target leadership. Language shows solidarity with and distance from a particular group. Similarly, in the present research religious ideologies in various shades have been propagated through the text books selected for the present research (PTB and OUP) taught at primary level. The religious contents present in the selected books have been categorized according to the themes that are dominant.

3.1 Thematic Categories of Religious Content

3.1.1 Praise of Allah Almighty (Hamd)

The very first lesson in each book is about the praise of Allah Almighty titled as "Hamd". Allah Almighty has been praised in the very first chapter of the above mentioned text-books but the language style is quite different which has been used in both of the books i.e. OUP and PTB. For example the following lines picked from the very first chapter which is "Hamd" are as under:

" Khuda sari dunya py chay a hoa hai"
" Ye sb mery malik ki kari gari hai"
"Khuda sub ka kakhaliq ha kon-o- makan main"

Translation: God is everywhere in the universe. My master is the creator of all these things; God is the creator of all the worlds.

Fairclough (2012) argues that persuasive use of language makes the process of dissemination of certain ideologies more subtle. Certain brand of religion are propagated to the middle class to practice. Similarly, these lines represent the artisanship of Allah prevails everywhere in the universe. Each object which has been created by Allah is unique in its nature. Usually, it is assumed that the creation represent creator and all the creations here in the world are the embodiment of artistry the creator (Allah). The presence and omnipotence of God has been co-related with scenic beauty by focusing on hills, rivers, streams, plants etc. The analysis of the lines illustrates that the presence of God can be seen everywhere in the form of the highest maintains and blooming flowers. Another example in this regard is as under:

“Pahar aur darya, ye dilkh as nazary”
“Paharon say girty aur pani k dharay”

Translation: Mountains and Rivers, all the beautiful scenes, all the water showers fallen from mountains.

One thing more that has been focused in these lines is the bounties of Allah, which are countless.

One of the persuasive tools which has been used here is the use of rhyming words in the form of “Nazary” “ Dhary” “ Nikhary”. Fairclough (2013) contends that discourses are layered and polarized. Language use is made in accordance with the target audience. Similarly, the textbooks under analysis are taught at primary level and hence language has been coined and used persuasively. Therefore, the praise and bounties of Allah have been discussed here by focusing on different object of nature and highly loaded use of language is obvious.

As far as representation of “HAMD” in oxford book taught at primary level is concerned, it contains only one chapter in praise of God out of there many lessons and the very title of the chapter is “SB Tareefain ALLAH k lye hain”. (All praise be to Allah). The thing that has been discussed in this chapter is a comparison between two cats, one is toy/animated and other one is real cat. The text reads as under:

“Mitti ki ik piyari billi lay Abba jaan”
“Phir paros ki billi aai or konay main beth gai”

Translation: My Father brought a cat made up of mud.

Then cat of our neighbor’s came and sat in the corner

My father brought a beautiful cat made of mud and a pet cat of neighbor’s came and sat in the corner. The toy cat and the real cat have been compared here. On one hand, a beautiful mud cat is present and on the other hand, a real cat is there. The very description of a live cat is that God has created it and one of the good qualities of this cat is, it does everything for itself. The underlined message that is being imparted here is that instead of being inanimate like the toy cat, one should be moveable and self-depending. It has been clearly mentioned that God likes those who perform their responsibilities themselves like the living cat.

Though every creature that has been created by God or the human beings is worth appreciating, because whatever is made by the human crafts ship is also a reflection of God but it is clearly stated that “*Ye khud karti hai slo kaam*”. So here, the cat that is living being may be taken as a metaphorical representation of every human being and the message that is being imparted to every human being is that instead of depending on others, every individual that should be capable of performing his or her duties himself/herself and this is what is liked by God. It is clearly it is written that one who is active enough and is performing his/her duty without depending on others, is one of the favorites of God. The poem ends by praising Allah and the as under lines are:

“Sb tareef hai Allah ki sb say barter jis ka naam”

Translation: All the praises are only for God whose name is the greatest among all. Everything in the universe is praising God and here again; we find religious references as well that we have been created but everything also to praise Him because God is superior. As far as, the inclusion of “HAMAD” in two books is concerned it is obvious that the PTB Urdu book contains two lessons about the praise of God. The language used there is highly persuasive, could be because of one of the reason that children are being taught in Govt. Schools and mostly belong to middle class. In order to grab the attention of the middle class and develop the certain ideologies weapon and persuasive, poetic and rhythmic and language is used to

persuade the children. As far as the representation of "HAMAD" in the oxford book is concerned, here the language is not used as metaphorical device as present in counterpart.

3.1.2 Praise of the holy prophet Muhammad (PBUH) Naat

Another thing that is more important to know as far as the representation of religious ideology is PTB Urdu text book is concerned that here we find two lessons devoted for describing the good qualities of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his representation as a role model for the human beings. The use of language is highly persuasive and the Prophet (PBUH) has been represented as a great gift of ALLAH for the human beings to seek guidance from his life. The verses related to his personality are:

'ALLAH nay apni rehmat say ik chand arab main chamkaya
Us chand ka naam MUHAMMAD hai kitna mihta kitna piara.'

Translation: Allah brightens the moon of Arab with His blessings,

The name of that moon is Muhammad, how sweet, how beautiful is this name is!

Here the Prophet (PUBH) has been represented metaphorically as a shining moon and the repetition of the word 'moon' twice in the first two verses is obvious discusses the attributes of the Prophet (PUBH) have been mentioned.

"Muslim say pyara naam diya or deen hmy Islam diya.

Translation: We are given a beautiful name of 'Muslim' and religion Islam.

Another important thing that has been described through these verses is the dutiful nature of Prophet (PBUH) that he performed his duty of spreading message of ALLAH very honestly and very diligently. The implied message that is being propagated through these verses which have been written in grace of Prophet (PUBH) is that we should be thankful to ALLAH for making us ummah of Prophet (PBUH) who has been represented as the savior and benefactor of humanity. The message which has been propagated through these lines to the target readership is that every individual should devote his/her life to reduce the troubles of the people around his/her. Another lesson highlighting the attributes of the prophet (PUBH) that has been included in PTB textbook is titled as Rehmat-e-Alami.e Prophet as a mercy to the entire world. Some of the incidents from prophet's (PUBH) life have been quoted regarding his honesty and his kind nature. One of such examples is as under:

"AY Quraish walo janty ho k thumahry sath kya salook krnga"

Translation: O' people of Quraish, Do you know what am I going to do with you people?

He asked the question in rhetoric form and it is one of the questions that carries answer in it. The question asked by the Prophet (PUBH) is as under:

"O" people of Quraish how should you be treated today. And all were so familiar with the kind nature of (PBUH) that without wasting the time every individual answered that you have been so kind, loving and passionate benefactor and we can expect nothing else than mercy. The possible ideology which has been imparted among the audience behind this incident is that every individual should devote him/herself to help the others. Another quality of the prophet (PBUH) is prophet (PBUH) as a mercy to the entire world. The translation of Quranic verses we send you but mercy to all the worlds has been represented in prosaic form which is as under:

"Hum nay app ko tamam jahanon k liya rehmat bna kr bheja"
"Ap ka ikhlaq misali tha "
"Ap ki zindgy Quran ky ekhamat ka amli namoona the"

Translation: we send you in the form of a blessing for all the universes.

His behaviour was exemplary.
His life was practically the sample of Quran-e-Pak

The concept of middle class morality is that your own personality is nothing but a good Muslim is only one who takes care of the others irrespective of his/ her own well-being. As far as the representation of Prophet (PBUH) in oxford Urdu textbook at primary level is concerned, we see the representation of Prophet (PBUH) is as under.

“Bht hain narm khoo shirin zaban ap”
“kbhi gusay main bhi hum nay nadekha”
“hamesha ap such hi boltayhain”

Translation: He is really a soft-spoken person, we never saw him angry, and he always speaks the truth.

The overall impression of the cited text is that the prophet (PBUH) was soft spoken and showed wrath to none “kabhegusay main bhi hum nay nadekha” here the use of first person pronoun “ we could be taken as an inclusive because message is imparted to all the human beings. If we compare the languages of two book as we see only a few qualities of prophet (PBUH) have been discussed like gentle in speech and truth fullness but on the contrary we see that the representation of prophet (PBUH) in other text- book is that he has been represented as a savior to human beings, who devoted his life for the benefit of others. The use of language in PTB textbook is highly metaphorical as compared to the language used in its counterpart

3.1.3 Religious Personalities

Fairclough (2012) agrees that selection of the material that what should be included in the textbooks is highly ideological and it is a designed process that which type of ideology is to propagate and to whom? It is most often pre-decided that what to impart and to whom in terms of knowledge through textbooks. Usually it is perceived that morality of religion for the poor and morality of science for the rich. Similarly, the religious contents about the representation of one of the companion of prophet Muhammad (PBUH) i.e Hazrat Usman Ghani illustrates that he has been represented in the two books differently. As far as the representation of Usman Ghani in PTB is concerned, here he has been represented as generous person and a close companion of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) having the quality of devoting for the sake of others in abundance. The following lines illustrate it clearly e.g.

“Sara Ghalla Logon main muftbantdia”

Translation: All the wheat product was given to people free of cost.

One of the biggest issues of middle class is to earn bread and the most of the time they are unable to get rid of this problem. So, the implied message that has been imparted here is that without taking care of your present we should be more concerned about your future. A particular type of religious ideology is being propagated through these lines through the example of Hazrat Usman that every individual should do his/her best to elevate the problem of others and specially related to bread winning. The other qualities of Hazrat Usman-e-Ghani which have been mentioned in PTB text- book is that he was a kind hearted, generous and he devoted all his wealth for the well being of Muslims e.g.

“Kunwah kharid kr Muslmano k lye waqfkrdia”

Translation: He has purchased the well and given it to people free of cost.

Metaphors keep on changing; at that time providing wheat, (Ghallah) and dedicating wealth for the general well being of humanity were considered the highest deeds of generosity. Similarly, it is also written here that most of his income was dedicated for the well-being of general people. A particular type of morality is being propagated through the representation of Hazrat Usman Ghani in PTB text- book.

While on contrary, the representation of same companion of Prophet (PBUH) goes like this in other textbook:

“Apkashumar Arab k brybrytajron main hotatha”
“Wo likhna parhna janty thy”

Translation: He was included among the successful merchants of Arab and was a literate person.

The concept of being literate is propagated here because mostly it is seen that the target reader ship and the class which can afford education in elite class school system are mostly rich and business persons and are mostly educated. Therefore, instead of mentioning the qualities like devoting his wealth for the others, distributed wheat freely, the qualities that have been mentioned here include that he was a literate person and he was a well-established trader. So, the same person has been represented in two different shapes under the umbrella of religion. One of them is his generosity, devotion for the others and taking more care of hereafter as compared to this world and on the other hand, the same personality has been represented as a literate and well-established trader and a close companion of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). This is how we find the representation of same personality differently. This is how discourses are highly ideological and by using loaded language, the same event can be represented differently because the target readership of these selected books is different. They need different brands of religion. Being literate and rich is the demand of one class in terms of religion and devoting everything for the sake of others saving nothing for yourself and least importance of this world are the things that must be propagated to the other class. This is how we can say that the inclusion of the same person Hazrat Usman Ghani, close companion of Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) with different traits under the umbrella of religion illustrates that religion is highly sectioned and divided into different brands.

Concept of gender propagation is an important issue that is propagated through language. Language plays a significant role in assigning positive / negative attributes to male and female gender. In this way, language becomes an important tool for making things common sense and the ideas are propagated through language. Similarly, the inclusion of the title 'Hazrat Khadija' in Oxford primary Urdu book reveals the prominent traits of personality of Hazrat Khadija (RA). Her personality has been discussed under various themes such as 'a rich, contented, faithful wise, helpful and reliable lady. Usually we find these attributes associated with male gender but here we see the deconstruction of constructed gender stereotypes that men are meant to do this and women are meant to do that. Moreover, the inclusion of this particular chapter also highlights the concept of exploitation through religious discourses that man are created to do business and women are created to stay within the four walls of the house and to raise children. The very inclusion of this particular lesson highlights the attributes of Hazrat Khadija (RA) and deconstructs the gender ideology. Hazrat Khadija (RA) has been represented as a rich, wise merchant woman and on the other hand, she is an expert judge of human nature. As she very wisely judges the attributes present in the personality of Prophet (PBUH). Therefore, she employed him and handed over her valuable goods to be taken to another country.

Another important thing has been propagated through the inclusion of this lesson is that repeatedly she has been represented as an honorable and intelligent and was forty years old. Despite of focusing on her physical attributes her intellectual attributes have been highlighted. Another attribute of Hazrat Khadija's (RA) personality has also been discussed that all the children of Prophet (PBUH) were given birth by her. She was also a true, sincere and wise friend of the Prophet (PBUH).

This has been mentioned in the following lines:

“Jb Hazrat Jibrail Pehl imartaba Ap (SAW) k pas Whi lay kar ay to Ap (SAW) bht ghabray, ghr aa kar Bibi Khadija ko sara waqia sunaya to unho nay himat bandhai”

Translation: when Hazrat Jibraeel brought first revelation to Hazrat Muhammad (PUBH), He was very nervous, came home and told all the story to Hazrat Khadija and it was she who gave him courage.

Another positive attribute of her personality is mentioned that she remained the only wife of Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) even after her death in the following lines i.e.

“Khadija say behtr biwi mujhy nhi mili”

Translation: I could not find a better companion than Khadija.

The underlined ideology behind the inclusion of the particular lesson in the Oxford book of Primary level could be that purposefully it has been included to deconstruct the existing gender stereotypes that females are not capable of doing business and cannot be intelligent, wise and good companions. Mostly people are exploited in the name of religion that men are created to earn bread and women to stay within the four walls of house.

4. Conclusion

The analysis of the data reveals that representation of religious contents in the selected textbooks is highly polarized. In PTB, book religion has been associated with middle class morality. The overall percentage of chapters containing religious ideology in OUP is 12%. Whereas, this percentage in PTB is 26%. In OUP, book economy has been associated with religion. There is obvious difference in language use in both categories. In PTB, book persuasive and rhyming words have been used. Moreover, this is an attempt to impart awareness about various interpretations of religious contents and the way they are decoded by different readers differently. The research concludes that no use of language is ideology free and textbooks are one of the best sites for ideological investment.

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