The Role of English Language Textbooks in the Reproduction of Racism

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ABSTRACT
This article reports on a qualitative study which sought to explore how people and cultures are represented in English Language textbooks used in Libyan secondary schools. The study involved the analysis of passages and images used in these textbooks. In this article, the discussion is limited to the analysis of a passage and an image in one of the textbooks – the Social Sciences Year Two textbook. The analysis reflects and draws upon the discourse of racism. The language used in the textbooks was analysed using an adapted framework of Fairclough’s (1989) approach to Critical Discourse Analysis. The study established, among other things, that the role of the textbooks is not just to support educational processes, but to convey, implicitly and explicitly, the dominant culture in a systematic way. The article revealed that the language structures indicate a positive picture of white people, ‘Us’1, and those non-whites, ‘Them’, are presented in a negative way. Overall, the article argues that altering existing misrepresentations, whether linguistically or visually, has a key role to reducing and eliminating misconceptions, categorisations and essentialisations of non-white subjects, ‘the Other’.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Fairclough’s Approach, Libyan Textbooks, Post-colonialism, Racism

Suggested Citation:

1 I am aware of such terms, but for the simplicity, the article will be limited to ‘non-whites’ and ‘whites’. For a reference see Said (1978).