

# Linguistic Imperialism and Standard Language Ideology in an English Textbook Used in China

Yu Zhang<sup>1</sup> & Hanxiao Song<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Foreign Languages, Yunnan University, Kunming, Republic of China

Correspondence: Yu Zhang, School of Foreign Languages, Yunnan University, Chenggong Campus, Kunming, 650504, China. E-mail: yuzhang\_ynu@163.com

Received: March 1, 2022 Accepted: March 28, 2022 Online Published: April 17, 2022

doi:10.5539/hes.v12n2p112

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/hes.v12n2p112>

## Abstract

An increasing number of studies have demonstrated how language textbooks serve as an arena for ideological reproduction. Following the theory of language ideology, this paper aims to examine the ideological representation of English in a textbook targeting Chinese university students in China. Data were subjected to content analysis and critical discourse analysis regarding their reference to the embodied identity options, images, case studies, cultural notes, exercises, dialogues, and reading passages in the textbook. Findings reveals that by highlighting the dominant position of English and simplifying the multilingual landscape, the textbook tends to place English at the center of prominence. The dominance of English is further entrenched by expressions of the values of speaking Standard English. It is argued that the representation of speaking Standard English ideology can be understood as the global penetration of linguistic imperialism. Furthermore, the textbook also reproduces biased gender and class representation of social characters, which might exacerbate learners' prejudice towards certain groups on the basis of their understandings of real-life power relations. It is hoped that the study can shed some lights on providing English language learners with a more diversified textbooks for cultivating their language awareness and intercultural competence.

**Keywords:** language textbooks, English, language ideology, power relations

## 1. Introduction

With the deepening economic globalization propelling English as a lingua franca (ELF), English has become a central linkage for our engagement in contemporary social life (Chen, 2016). Although ELF paradigm blurs boundaries of different cultures and languages, the expansion and permeation of ELF generate some ideological agendas through playing its textually mediated (Fairclough, 1999) and semiotized functions (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010). For example, the dominant position occupied by countries speaking English attaches an upper rank to English, and conduces to making English a prevailing language among others (Kazemi, Aidinlou & Asl, 2017) and a "language of international capitalism" (Pennycook, 1995, P. 43). The spread of English has generated something biased but not beneficial, and caused much discrimination but not equality (Pennycook, 1994). Consequently, a bulk of studies related to ELF (e.g., Jenkins, 2015; Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994) have criticized the global spread of English as linguistic imperialism — a way of threatening the existence and growth of other languages or varieties. Such kind of ideology also appeals us to critically think the hegemonic status of native-speaker English.

At present, ideological analysis of English textbooks is widely applied in the field of sociolinguistics (Blommaert, 1999; Yamashita, 2001; Zhang, Ni, Dong & Li, 2021). The assumption of these analyses is that English users may intentionally or unintentionally convey their ideologies via the language (Lee, 2017). Texts included in English textbooks are an essential medium for generating ideologies (Shah, Tariq & Bilal, 2013). Being ideologically selected, justified, and rationalized, English textbooks continuously shape learners' identity projection and perception towards the outside world and naturalize language hegemony and standard ideology by creating a world in English or discourse imperialism (Pennycook, 1995). When learners are constantly exposed in these language discourses, they are possible to become collaborators of the power which puts them at an inferior position (Canale, 2016).

Considering the importance of language textbooks in language education, plenty of studies have investigated contents of English textbooks from perspectives of identity construction and language ideology (Baik, 1994;

Heinrich, 2005; Siegal & Okamoto, 1996; Shardakova & Pavlenko, 2004; Tajeddin & Pakzadian, 2020). These studies disclose the fact that though different Englishes are emerged and used by a majority of people, the assumption towards English is overwhelmingly biased towards the conception that English is their English (Phillipson, 1992). In Siegal and Okamoto's (1996) study, they find that based on ideologies of class, gender identity, and language, Japanese textbooks targeting for American students reproduce stereotypical linguistic hegemony. Baik (1994) also demonstrates that English language textbooks used in Korea favor native-like proficiency, which "inevitably results in unequal power relations between native speakers of English and the learners of English as a second or foreign language" (P. 67).

Following Siegal and Okamoto's (1996) and Baik's (1994) investigations and informed by concepts of linguistic imperialism and standard language ideology, this study turns the research object into one national planning English intercultural communication textbook targeting Chinese university students in China to look at what language ideologies are discursively represented with the following two questions.

(1) What identity options does the English intercultural communication textbook represent?

(2) Whose language perspectives does the English intercultural communication textbook represent?

This case study is hoping to complement previous research conducted by Zhang, Ni, Dong & Li (2021) which scrutinized the same textbook but just focused on cultural representations, and to provide some suggestions for better English language textbook planning with more efficient results in moral education and global citizenship cultivation (Crystal, 2003).

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 Conceptualizing Language Textbooks*

It is generally acknowledged that language textbooks endorse the identify-shaping function and are by the nature ideological (Shardakova & Pavlenko, 2004; Apple, 1999). Through the vehicle of ideology, Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) have exemplified that language textbooks are never a neutral entity transforming unidirectional knowledge, but are "entry points to new cultural realities" (P. 84). Then, after conducting a holistic examination of language textbooks, Curdt-Christiansen and Weninger (2015) conceptualize foreign-language textbooks as sociocultural materials, replete with social, cultural and political perspectives. Institutionally sanctioned, the discourses embedded in language textbooks are unquestionably connected with the politics of identity (Curdt-Christiansen & Weninger, 2015). Apple (1999) also argues that language textbooks contain an identity-shaping discourse in that the authoritative cultural knowledge disseminated in them always represents the dominant group, describes and constructs the social world, and affects learners' perception towards the world and towards themselves.

Moreover, no speech community can get free of ideological constraints from its language (Heinrich, 2005). Subject to language regimentation involving world projection, national planning and legal provision, etc., language textbooks constitute essentially language ideologies. As Heinrich (2005) argues, "when studying changing language regimes, foreign language textbooks represent a promising object of research for the study of language ideology since ideological notions surface rather overtly in foreign language textbooks" (P. 214). The texts intentionally selected not only transmit language knowledge, but also serve the interest of the dominant groups by optimistically describing the value of their language and culture (Luke, 1988). Unequal power relations manifested by linguistic or cultural representations may reinforce traditional stereotypes and hinder the effects of cultivation of interculturality (Byram, 1998). Therefore, it is important to investigate language textbooks closely so as to make the "ideological systems and representations transparent" (Pennycook, 2001, P. 81).

### *2.2 Identity Options in Language Textbooks*

The close relationship between language and ideology invites many studies to counter the logic between language textbooks, with a focus on social power representation and language ideology (Siegal & Okamoto, 1996; Safran, 1999; Tajeddin & Pakzadian, 2020). On the tenet of social power representation, the investigation through identity options depicted in language textbooks has been of paramount importance (Siegal & Okamoto, 1996; Safran, 1999). Many studies have confirmed that language textbooks provide a mechanism for reproducing hierarchy through the unequal presentation and description of characters in terms of gender, ethnicity, and nationality, etc (Alshammri 2017; Porreca, 1984; Shardakova & Pavlenko, 2004). On the sphere of gender identity, Porreca (1984) scrutinized images, texts, occupations, and "firstness" represented in 15 English textbooks used in the United States and disclosed the fact that English textbooks tended to present male-dominated ideology. In the United States, "although females comprise slightly over half the population,

they are represented only half as often as males in both text and illustration” (Porreca, 1984, P. 718). Recently, using critical discourse analysis, Alshammri (2017) found that English textbooks used in Saudi Arabia also reproduced gender hierarchy. Women were overwhelmingly invisible in occupational life. More strikingly, women had no right to speak on some important occasions because it was against Saudi “culture”. Considering the unequal and stereotyped identity construction might affect learners’ engagement with the real life, Shardakova and Pavlenko (2004) provided a comprehensive analysis of two Russian textbooks. Grounding in post-structuralist theory and critical discourse analysis, they examined two sets of identity options according to nationality, social class, profession occupation, age, gender, sexuality, marital status, ethnicity, and religious affiliation. One of their findings showed that white middle-class-educated-men occupied a huge discourse. The biased discourse suggested that language textbooks did not teach unbiased knowledge, but legitimized unequal power relations (Auerbach, 1995). Similarly, Duan (2020) analyzed identity options in eight Chinese textbooks targeted for international students learning Chinese and pinpointed that Han-dominated and white Anglophone-centered ideologies were discursively represented, which reflected the power relations on a global basis. In Safran’s (1999) study, he argued that in modern society, language textbooks tended to impose people a shared identity to promote linguistic homogeneity.

However, just as Shardakova and Pavlenko (2004) argued, “the biases and oversimplifications identified in the texts represent lost opportunities for cross-cultural reflection” (P. 25). Hence, in order to better compile language textbooks suitable for cultivation learners’ global vision, it is still necessary to conduct more research to disclose what ideologies are generated through the construction of identity options in language textbooks (Shardakova & Pavlenko, 2004; Li, Duan, Dong & Sharif, 2019).

### 2.3 Language Ideology in Textbooks

On the aspect of ideology, Heinrich (2005) analyzed what ideologies were surfaced from Japanese teaching materials and how Japanese were portrayed. His findings showed that the existing language discourses legitimized norms set up by privileged native speakers. Foreign language learners aspired to pursuit native-sound accent. However, “foreign language education which aims at native-like proficiency inevitably results in unequal power relations between native speakers of Japanese and learners of Japanese as a foreign language” (Heinrich, 2005, P. 213). In Duan’s (2020) study, she revealed that English supremacy and the hegemonic status of Westerners were even disseminated in Chinese textbooks. The hegemony of English and White-Anglophones was entrenched by highlighting the value of speaking Standard English. Then, turning the research object into four English textbooks used in Bangladesh and in virtue of concepts of nationalism and essentialism, Li, Duan, Dong and Sharif (2019) proposed that speaking Bangla and conducting Bangla practices indicated Bangla national identity. The huge discourse about a shared national identity purported in textbooks might other other communities. Besides that, these textbooks also showed a native speakerism. Anglophones were constructed as ideal English speakers. Analogously, with the concept of Concentric Circles, Tajeddin and Pakzadian (2020) examined the representation of world Englishes and cultures in three English textbooks and pinpointed that native speakers’ linguistic norms in inner circle countries were preferred without exception.

From the studies mentioned above, it is clear that the tendency in language education focuses on practices in native communities and English is spread as a dominant discourse in both English textbooks or non-English textbooks. Consequently, Phillipson (1992) raises the concept of linguistic imperialism to criticize the hegemonic status of English in the multilingual world and to call for more empirical support contributing to analyzing the expansion of English and its structural consequences.

All in all, literature on identity options and language ideologies in language textbooks helps to frame our inquiry into language ideologies in English textbooks used in China. Assisted by theories of linguistic imperialism and standard language ideology, we aims to disclose what characters and whose language perspectives are represented in *English Intercultural Communication Course in College*.

### 3. Language Ideology as Theoretical Framework

Generally speaking, language ideology refers to people’ evaluative perception towards certain language. Silverstein (1979) claims that language ideology refers to “any set of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (P. 193). For example, the reason why English is marked as a global lingua franca among others largely relies on its economic power and social value (McArthur, 1998; McKay, 2002). From an ELF perspective, language ideologies most relevant to our study are linguistic imperialism and standard language ideology.

According to Phillipson (1992), “linguistic imperialism refers to a particular theory for analyzing relations between dominant and dominated cultures, specifically the way English language learning has been promoted”

(P. 15). As a powerful source of maintaining power and hegemonic status, the promotion of English “serve[s] to strengthen the hold of the center over the periphery” (Phillipson, 1992, P. 192). In particular, the white-Anglophone countries endorse English with an upper rank, making English a prominent among other languages. The preeminence of English will continuously reproduces structural agendas between English and other languages and between “Standard” English and other English varieties. Correspondingly, starting from the concept of hegemony, Apple (1982) asserts that schools constitute an important arena for making sense of the world, reproducing linguistic and cultural inequalities, maintaining the established hegemonic status of certain communities, and creating discourse imperialism (Pennycook, 1995) by English to protect the supremacy of some countries over others. Among the various approaches utilized by schools to socialize students, English textbooks are key field to legitimize English hegemony through selective tradition which naturalizes the dominant group’s norms and makes the dominated accept them without question (Williams, 1989).

Along the same vein, education is also a key site where standard language ideology comes into play (Lippi-Green, 2012). Lippi-Green (2012) pinpoints that standard language ideology is “a bias toward an abstracted, idealized, homogeneous spoken language which is imposed from above, and which takes as its model the written language” (P. 166). The representation of English in current English textbooks favoring either American English or British English is de facto the manifestation of standard language ideology (Gray, 2002) or specifically, Standard English (SE) ideology. The expansion of SE ideology invites the reflection on language ecology and language equality because standard language ideology as a “suppression of variation” (Lippi-Green, 2012, P. 166) might hinder the legitimacy of other English varieties and put them into a inferior position.

In short, the inextricable connection between language textbooks and ideology leads English textbooks to the analysis of hidden curriculum (Byram, 1989). In other words, it is worthwhile to explore how language discourses embedded in English textbooks may create, maintain, and reinforce the hegemonic status of certain groups and language varieties.

#### **4. Methodology**

##### *4.1 Material Selection*

In this study, we select *English Intercultural Communication Course in College* as research object for three main reasons. Firstly, the textbook is an authoritative teaching material. It was published by Tsinghua University Press and had been successively selected into the 11<sup>th</sup> Five-Year and the 12<sup>th</sup> Five-Year National Planning Textbook for General Higher Education (Yan, 2015). The officially recognized authority can ensure its wide application and make the study representative. Secondly, since it is mainly talking about intercultural communication, the textbook contains lots of characters, social discourses, linguistic and cultural phenomena (Yan, 2015), which makes the analysis of identity options and linguistic ideologies plausible. Thirdly, the textbook does not cater to any specific learning group as indicated by its preface (Yan, 2015), making it possible to present a general overview of power relations that appear in English textbooks used in China.

##### *4.2 Data Collection and Analysis*

In the current research, data were thoroughly investigated and collected from images, case studies, cultural notes, exercises, dialogues, and reading passages. Following previous studies on language textbooks (Alshammri, 2017; Duan, 2020; Shardakova & Palvenko, 2004; Zhang, Ni, Dong & Li, 2021), this study adopted content analysis to count identity options, to categorize different aspects of topics into categories, and to make “replicable and valid inferences from data to their contexts” (Krippendorff, 1980, P. 21). In reference to the characters, contents, social relations provided in the textbook, we calculated the total number of the identity options. If the same character appeared into different texts, we counted it only once. After that, the identity options were categorized in terms of their gender, occupation, and nationality so as to deconstruct the social power tensions. It should be noted that in order to facilitate statistics and to make a clear and general image of the textbook, the distribution of the total characters, the distribution of gender and the distribution of occupation were divided into two categories, Chinese characters and foreign characters. Then, we gave a detailed interpretation of the characters according to their nationality.

After counting the distribution of identity options, we applied a close examination of the textbook to investigate whose language perspectives were represented with critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA is a reliable method which aims to “systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events, and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power, and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society itself is a factor securing power and hegemony” (Fairclough, 1995, P. 132).

Combining with these two methods, we have identified three recurring patterns which are relevant to language ideologies. These emerging categories in the study are “English as global dominance”, “White Anglophones as a center of excellence”, and “Male-biased identity options as representation of gendered tradition”. The three categories are derived from some sub-themes in part 5.1 and part 5.2.

#### 4.3 Limitations of the Study

This study is subjected to several limitation. First, in order to offer an in-depth discussion, we limit our research object into only one textbook. Second, this study is only based on static texts in terms of identity options and language perspectives, without inquiring perceptions of users of this textbook. Future studies are encouraged to expand the research sample and to combine interviews of textbook users, so as to examine holistically how they are engaged in linguistic and cultural knowledge through using English language textbooks.

### 5. Findings

#### 5.1 Identity Options in the Textbook

The investigation of language ideology in *English Intercultural Communication Course in College* will start by examining the characters who are represented in the textbook.

##### 5.1.1 Characters

Table 1. Character distribution in *English Intercultural Communication Course in College*

Types of Characters	Chinese characters	Foreign characters
Number	24	119
Percentage (N=143)	16.78%	83.22%

In the textbook, 143 characters are represented with an asymmetrical feature as shown in Table 1. Such unequal representation intentionally or unintentionally indicates a power relation struggle. Among them, 24 are Chinese characters and 119 are foreign characters. By comparing the number of Chinese and foreign characters, it is evident that the representation of Chinese and foreign characters in the textbook is prominently unequal. Foreign characters (83.22%) are nearly five times as many as Chinese characters (16.78%).

##### 5.1.2 Gender

Table 2. Gender distribution in *English Intercultural Communication Course in College*

Gender and nationality	Chinese male	Chinese female	Undefined	Foreign male	Foreign female	Undefined
Number	11	12	1	71	41	7
Percentage (N=143)	7.64%	8.33%	0.69%	50%	28.47%	4.86%

On the aspect of gender distribution, table 2 illustrates that Chinese males and females are represented almost equally in the textbook, with 11 Chinese male characters and 12 Chinese female characters. While we are applauding the equal representation of Chinese males and females, we find that there exists a slightly imbalanced gender distribution featured with the under-representation of foreign female characters. The moderate number gap between foreign male and female characters (71 male and 41 female) leads us to argue that the textbook still produces hierarchical ideology between male and female.

## 5.1.3 Occupation

Table 3. Occupations of characters in *English Intercultural Communication Course in College*

Chinese characters				Foreign characters			
Occupations	Male	Female	Undefined	Occupations	Male	Female	Undefined
	11	12	1		71	41	7
Student	3	5	1	Host	1	-	-
Doctor	-	1	-	Maid	-	2	-
Waitress	-	1	-	Student	17	12	-
Office worker	4	1	-	Doctor	3	-	-
Visiting professor	1	1	-	Office worker	7	1	-
Undefined	3	3	-	Farmer	-	-	1
				Engineer	-	-	1
				Poet	-	-	1
				Detective	2	-	-
				Consultant	1	-	-
				Police	1	-	-
				Craftsman	-	1	-
				Actress	-	1	-
				Manager	4	2	1
				Monk	1	-	-
				Librarian	1	-	-
				Businessman	1	-	-
				Teacher	7	1	-
				Housewife		1	-
				Undefined	25	20	3

Our investigation on occupation further verifies the argument mentioned above that the textbook maintains unequal power relations between male and female. In the textbook, men are given more occupational options than women. There are 16 occupations assigned to men while 13 to women. The inequality is further strengthened by the stereotyped gender roles. In the textbook, females are predominantly situated in the family domain. When female characters engage in social and occupational life, they serve as waiters, servants, craftsmen, housekeepers without exception. By contrast, male characters usually occupy decent jobs. More strikingly and ironically, the gender identity of working-class female is even been challenged by educated males. For example, in Case 19 (P. 102) *Who is the Most Beautiful Woman* (P. 102), the maid's gender identity was denied by a male lecture in a university. In the case study, females were gazed and judged by males. When two male university teachers were talking about who is the most beautiful woman, one of them pointed to a maid, but the other said "Why? She's just a maid; I'm asking you about women!" (P. 102). In the latter's eyes, maids could not be counted as women. Such discourse discursively reproduces the hierarchy between working class people and the elite group, between male and female.

In addition, table 3 presents that in all social discourses provided in the textbook, characters are dominated by middle and upper classes. Characters with similar backgrounds and educational backgrounds usually appear in the same occasion. None of discourses show that the middle class people see the working-class characters as plausible friends. Again, *Who is the Most Beautiful Woman* (P. 102) is a case in point. Based on the biased occupation representation, it is argued that, the single and unequal occupation distribution lacks the exchange cases with personages of different stratum from different social backgrounds, which might exacerbate learners' prejudice towards certain groups on the basis of their understandings of real-life power relations represented in the portrayed characters and mislead learners to think that intercultural communication only occurs among the middle and upper classes.

## 5.1.4 Nationality

Table 4. Nationality distribution in the *English Intercultural Communication Course in College*

	Nationality	Male	Female	Undefined
	Ukraine	-	1	-
	France	-	-	1
Europe	Scotland	-	-	1
	British	4	-	-
	Denmark	-	2	-
	German	2	1	-
Americas	Canada	1	-	-
	America (US)	44	20	1
	Chile	1	-	-
Asia	China	11	12	1
	Japan	3	3	-
	Korea	4	-	-
	India	1	1	-
	Thailand	1	1	-
	The Philippines	2	2	-
	Laos	1	-	-
	Malaysia	1	-	-
	Indonesia	1	3	-
	Saudi Arabia	3	-	-
	Turkey	-	1	-
Africa	Africa	3	2	-
Oceania	Australia	1	-	-
	Tonga	-	2	-

On the sphere of nationality distribution, different from Brown (1995) argues that textbooks is liable to maintain the supremacy of the source culture over the target culture, *English Intercultural Communication Course in College* centers on Western perspectives. In the whole book, only 24 Chinese figures are represented. Among the 119 foreign characters, characters from Anglophone countries headed by the United States and Britain occupy more than half. This biased representation of foreign figures simplifies the diversity of English speakers and current intercultural communication. Chinese intercultural communication learners are restricted to Anglophone-centered countries where English is spoken as a native language. People from American and British countries become ideal interlocutors for Chinese students through discursive presentation of these charterers. This extremely imbalanced representation of foreign characters might sustain, recreate, and even strengthen the fallacy of Standard English and Western-dominated cultural hierarchy.

## 5.2 Language Perspectives

Just as shown that a great deal of prominence is being attached to America and its social practices in Zhang, Ni, Dong and Li's (2021) latest study, this study also suggests that *Coursebook of Intercultural Communication* gives an overwhelming discourse to highlight the significance of English. English is reinforced as global dominance; Anglophone practices are reconstructed as a center of reference; the hegemonic center position of English and the West is again entrenched by the simplified and essentialized multilingual landscape.

## 5.2.1 English as a Global Language

The mindset that English has become a global language is adopted by the non-English speaking world, which reflects a social stereotype (Piller, 2003). In the textbook, many discourses make positive judgments about or express attitudes toward English. English is moulded as a superordinate language among others, associating it with its global application and cultural interaction function.

For example, in one text "Language Diversity", the author explains several terms such as "*Dialects and Sociolects*", "*Pidgin and Lingua Franca*", and then writes:

*"Compared with a pidgin that has a relatively low status, a Lingua Franca is highly valued. A Lingua Franca is also used for communication purposes between different groups of people, each speaking a different language. It is viewed as an international means of communication and, therefore, holds prestige*

*among different groups of people... Today English is considered a Lingua Franca because it has become the most widely used language spoken by non-native speakers. English is used as a second language and a foreign language widely. It is often called a global language that sustains communication in this global village—the World.” P.153*

Here, English is explicitly touted as a lingua franca, holding much prestige in the world. The binary opposition between the low status of pidgin and the high prestige of English produces or reproduces some unequal power relations. English preempts an international using group. Understandings about its extreme importance for sustaining global communication are mapped onto people.

Similarly, the conclusion of unit 10 reaffirms English as an international language by foregrounding its mission to help learners become effective and tolerant in interacting across culture. English is also enacted as a cultural broker to promote the exchange of diverse cultures.

*“With the wide spread of English as an international language in the multicultural world today; it is undoubtedly necessary to understand and develop intercultural communication. Learning English as a foreign language requires learners to become proficient intercultural communicators by learning to understand and accept cultural differences as well as develop cultural tolerance.” P. 351*

Data like the mentioned above can be interpreted as a form of what Phillipson (1992) has called linguistic imperialism. The semiotic appeal towards English is in accordance with the social stereotype which has given superiority to English, indicting the dominance of English and resulting in power and cultural inequalities.

Except the mentioned above, another discourse strand showing linguistic imperialism is the fallacy that everyone can speak English, not just in America, but around the world. “In the United States, for example, people expect that newcomers will speak English” (P. 283); schools in India are assumed to teach English (Case study 1, P. 6); even the ancient Chinese greet each other in English instead of Chinese as shown the following picture.



Figure 1. P. 153

The foregrounding of English as a global language and the fallacy that everyone can speak English do not treat multiple discourses equally but construct and impose English hegemonic discourses in reality.

### 5.2.2 Western Norms as Reference

Like any other teaching material *English Intercultural Communication Course in College* is founded on choices. These choices reinforce and naturalize socially accepted and legitimized views of the western world headed by the Americanized social order. In the textbook, “discussion of communication often reflects a Western orientation” (P. 46). The ten often used intercultural communication theories are all from western scholars. These particular western norms are emphasized at the expense of others.

In addition to textual messages preempt western norms as reference, pictures involved in the textbook also convey such hidden curriculum. In Figure 2, it involves two main visual elements with the big size of American flag in the center. The first component is four people from different countries. The second component is national flags indicating these four people’s nationality. These four different nationalities eventually became part of the Stars and Stripes flag of the United States. The presentation of the figure can be interpreted as a form of cultural and linguistic imperialism, which gives superiority to American discourse and English. American culture and



American English are taken for granted as reference for learners. All others will finally be essentialized by the dominant American world. All in all, the selective construction in *English Intercultural Communication in College* gives superiority to Western standards and American normality.

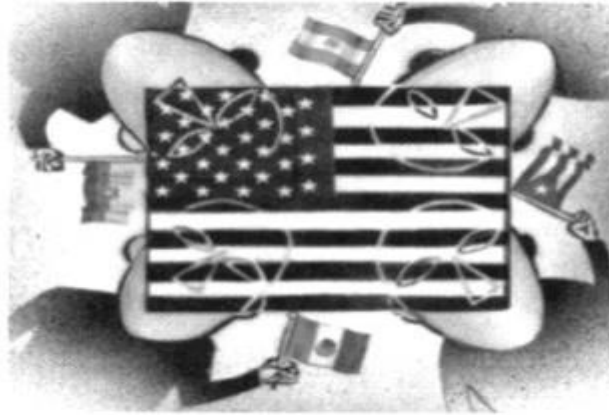


Figure 2. P. 282

### 5.2.3 Speaking Standard English Indexing Superiority

Similar to other studies indicating that English language textbooks are like to maintain a native speakerism bias toward Anglophone countries (Li, Duan, Dong & Sharif, 2019; Tajeddin & Pakzadian, 2020; Yamanaka, 2006), *English Intercultural Communication in College* once again reproduces Standard English ideology. Even though the rise of world Englishes has challenged the emphasis on native-speaker accents in English language teaching (Jenkins, 2015), in the textbook, the norm of speaking English is narrowly confined to the so-called “Standard” English by describing it as a valuable asset which can empower individuals to achieve social prestige and career success as indicated in the excerpt from page 151.

*One’s social background does influence one’s choice of linguistic forms and one’s language reveals one’s identity. In this aspect, accent is an important marker of sociolect. For example, the so-called “Received Pronunciation” in British English has become characteristics of upper-class speech in Britain in the 19th century. It served as a high-status marker and a qualification for high-prestige employment (P. 151).*

However, the essential purpose of an international language is to help learners put forward their own opinions instead of following standards of that native language (McKay, 2002). Representing Standard English in textbooks like *English Intercultural Communication Course in College* is yet another manifestation of power relations which lead to the supremacy native speakerism.

### 5.2.4 Standard English as a Valuable Instrument

In addition to depicting Standard English as a means to link with the world, Standard English is also conceptualized as commodity for educational success and social inclusion. The textbook purports that the incompetency of English will limit English learners’ access to interactional opportunities in the target language in that they lack linguistic repertoire necessary to negotiate all kinds of difficult encounters.

In Case 52 *Doubts* (P. 279), Chinese student Wu Liang is depicted as a confident English language knowledge master but not an excellent English speaker whose English linguistic skills set limits to her academic achievements and social interaction. After studying in America, Wu Liang found that she had difficulty in accommodating the accents and teaching styles of the local professors who came from other countries. These professors’ non-standard English accents made her do not know how to manage her research. What is worse, she even could not understand conversations of her native classmates due to the latter’s native language repertoire was different from her learning. She was also not socially accepted as a legitimized member of the target language community. Some treated her like an incapable child; others expected her feel and do as they do, but the fact was that the way these native speakers talking about “party” even made her frightened. At last, she excluded herself voluntarily from these native students’ social activities.

In the case, the differentiation of English is projected onto the contrast between native English speakers and

foreign English speakers who are labeled as “isolated community”. Wu Liang’s insufficient linguistic proficiency makes her vulnerable and powerless, reaffirming the utilitarian discourse that if you do not speak English, and speak it properly, you show your inability to reason and the right to prevail the corresponding citizenship (Duchêne & Heller, 2012, P. 6).

### 5.2.5 Native English Speakers as Perfect Interlocutors

Baik (1994) once mentioned that, language norms “are provided by native speakers, and only by native speakers; further, non-native speakers of English should not stop learning English until they reach the level of proficiency that is comparable to the norms provided by the native speakers” (P. 69). Therefore, in order to practice English, native speakers are taken for granted as perfect interlocutors.

In Case 53 *Practising English* (P. 288), the Chinese girl is constructed as a fervent but helpless English learner. In order to practice her oral English, she even sat on steps of the foreign students’ residence in evening to talk with one American student and one German student at the cost of being misunderstood as an easy girl. Even if these two young male foreign students did not have the intention to communicate with her, she tried to keep the conversation going. Her action made the two foreign thought she was a frivolous female student and gazed her meaningfully. The Chinese female students realized their malice but she said nothing. It seemed that all she could do was to leave silently. Not saying goodbye was the only way she could stand up for her rights.

Nonetheless, portrayals of foreign English learners as fervent but helpless are not coincidental. They have some consequences with regard to language ideologies. As an effect, a hierarchical order is reproduced in which Standard English occupies the prestigious status and foreign language learners are subjected to the authority and norms of native speakers.

### 5.2.6 Simplification and reduction of the multilingual landscape

Through a thorough examination, *English Intercultural Communication Course in College* “appears to favor only two dominant languages, Chinese as the national commonly-used language and English as the world language” (Zhou & Ross, 2004, P. 16).

Among all of the foreign languages represented in the textbook, English is endorsed with dominant status and attached high values, as disclosed in previous sections. Against the predominant picture of homogenizing English, there are lamentably few cases in which other language varieties are represented.

More strikingly, on the rare representation of foreign languages, some languages are directly translated into English without giving the original language version or even represented with Roman letters instead of the de facto language. For example, “There is even a Japanese proverb that states *A boy living near a Buddhist temple can learn an untaught lesson*” (P. 46 ). Furthermore, some Roman letters “Neiko” (P. 46) are used to referenced the Japanese word “ネコ”; “Kosta” (P.46) are used to referenced the Russian word “кошка”. However, since these Roman letters look like English, students might misunderstand English can be used as reference of any other languages. Linguistic references such as these do not reflect the actual multilingual landscape, reinforce the dominant status of English to some extent, and even worse, might misguide students with a wrong way to learn foreign languages. What further covers up linguistic diversity and entrench English dominance is the reduction of foreign languages as a bunch of meaningless symbols as shown in figure 3.



Figure 3 P. 145

The iconic representation of Arabic as some meaningless suggests that the speakers of this language are in some way represented as low-voiced and degraded because what they say is unimportant. No one cares what opinions they want to express, so even some messy symbols can represent their views.

Similarly, the Chinese linguistic diversity is also been simplified. Except the overwhelming discourses representing English, Chinese occupies the highest visibility. Nonetheless, “the term “Chinese” is taken unproblematically as the “natural” reference for language in China” (Chen, 2016, P. 523). In the whole textbook, only one Chinese local dialect Cantonese is mentioned. Such linguistic representation of China simplifies the complex linguistic landscape, rendering Chinese Chinese dialects and ethnic languages invisible.

Based on the findings, we may argue that multilingualism in both China and the World is mirrored in *English Intercultural Communication Course in College* to a limited degree. The textbook fails to problematize the erosion of linguistic diversity. Although it may be unreasonable to expect all languages are covered in one textbook, there is no rationale for representing foreign languages only with English and including scant Chinese dialects and minority languages. We can only assume that the linguistic representation once again reproduced the hegemonic status of English and the strong influence of Chinese mandarin.

## 6. Discussion

### 6.1 English as Global Dominance

One of the main findings of this study shows that linguistic imperialism is reproduced in the almost exclusive presentation of English, which resonates with previous findings which indicate the hegemonic status of English in the world (Tajeddin & Pakzadian, 2020). In *English Intercultural Communication Course in College*, the pervasive accounts of America and English as an international language (English discourse imperialism) simultaneously function to invoke the notion of English as global dominance (linguistic imperialism). The dominance of English is manifested by the assumption that English is a global language, the fallacy that everyone can speak English, the hypothesis that Western norms are legitimized reference for English learners, and the simplified multilingual landscape. Moreover, the asymmetrical representation of characters, as discussed in 5.1.4 also indicates the dominant position of English. Such linguistic hierarchy in textbooks is de facto the manifestation of English hegemony (Phillipson, 1992), which marginalizes other language varieties.

### 6.2 White Anglophones as a Center of Excellence

With the rise World Englishes, it is widely acknowledged that the concept of English as a lingua franca might give the plausibility of abandoning native paradigm of pedagogy in ELT (Jenkins, 2015; McKay & Brown, 2016). However, *English Intercultural Communication Course in College* reshapes white Anglophones as a center of excellence by touting the prestige of Standard English. In the textbook, ideas such as speaking Standard English indexing superiority, Standard English as a valuable instrument, native English speakers as perfect interlocutors are discursively expressed. However, the indisputable fact is that the majority of English speakers are not native speakers. Native-speakerism is no longer suitable for the present world (Widdowson, 1994). By reducing the English community to a single group of highly educated native speakers, *English Intercultural Communication Course in College* treat English learners as homogeneous and target language as invariable. In doing so, it jeopardizes the teaching goals of cultivating intercultural competence and critical language awareness. Therefore, it is argued that we need to break the faith that native speakerism is the norm in language learning (Holliday, 2005).

### 6.3 Male-biased Identity Options as Representation of Gendered Tradition

Except constructing English as global dominance and white Anglophones as a center of excellence, like other textbooks examined by scholars (Parreca, 1984; Alshammri, 2017, Shardakova & Pavlenko, 2004), *English Intercultural Communication Course in College* also simplifies the authentic representation of social characters by maintaining the gendered tradition through the representation of male-biased identity options. In the textbook, males occupies more visibility and more job options. Images of males are lofty and well-educated, while females are unsurprisingly limited in family domain. Furthermore, the identity of working-class females as women is even denied by educated males. Gender representation like that can be irritating for individuals and generate some unfavorable impacts on learners, consequently, maintaining misinterpreted typical stereotypes (Lee, 2017).

## 7. Conclusion

To sum up, the study evaluates *English Intercultural Communication Course in College*, an English textbook used in China through the lens of language ideology. Our findings demonstrate that identity options covered in the textbook are biased and simplified. The range of non-westerners’ interlocutors is quite limited—they are predominantly middle-class native English speaker with males holding decent jobs or high social status.

Moreover, by highlighting the influence of English and Standard Englishes, findings also show that language perspectives in the textbook are dominated by linguistic imperialism and English native-speakerism.

Based on the results of the study, we suggest that English language textbooks should try to incorporate a more diversified encounters to help English language learners negotiate different contexts. Moreover, “our zeal for spreading English needs to be accompanied by concurrent efforts to value home languages and cultures” (Brown, 2007, P. 7). Therefore, language textbook writers should also include different language perspectives and cultural practices to lessen the occurrence of social hierarchies that are created and negotiated through language. At the same time, “If we wish to empower English language learners and help them overcome the native-speakers bias, we need to ensure that teachers who work directly with them are respectful and accepting of the linguistic and functional diversity that exists in English today” (Ates, Eslami, & Wright, 2015, P. 486).

### Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank Dr. Li Jia for her insightful suggestions in the writing of the article.

### References

- Alshammri, A. (2017). *Evaluating the representations of identity options and cultural elements on English language textbooks used in Saudi Arabia*. Master. Dissertation, Macquarie University, Australia.
- Apple, M. W. (1982). *Education and power*. Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Apple, M. W. (1999). *Power, meaning, and identity: Essay in critical education studies*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Ates, B., Eslami, Z. R., & Wright, K. L. (2015). Incorporating world Englishes into undergraduate ESL education courses. *World Englishes*, 34(3), 485-501. <https://doi.org/10.1111/weng.12149>
- Auerbach, E. (1995). The politics of ESL classrooms. In J. Tollefson (Ed.), *Power and inequality in language education* (pp. 195-113). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Baik, M. J. (1994). *Language, ideology and power: English textbooks in the two Koreas*. PhD Dissertation, University of Illinois, America.
- Blommaert, J. (Ed.) (1999). *Language Ideological Debates*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110808049>
- Brown, K. (1995). World Englishes: To teach or not to teach? *World Englishes*, 14(2), 233-245. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-971X.1995.tb00353.x>
- Brown, H. D. (2007). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (5th ed.). White Plains, NY: Pearson Education.
- Byram, M. (1989). *Cultural Studies in Foreign Language Education*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Byram, M. (1998). Cultural identities in multilingual classrooms. In J. Cenoz & F. Genesee (Eds.), *Beyond bilingualism* (96-116). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Canale, G. (2016). (Re) Searching culture in foreign language textbooks, or the politics of hide and seek. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 29(2), 225-243. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07908318.2016.1144764>
- Chen, X. X. (2016). Linguascaping the Other: travelogues' representations of Chinese languages. *Multilingua*, 35(5), 513-534. <https://doi.org/10.1515/multi-2014-1026>
- Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a global language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511486999>
- Curdt-Christiansen, X. L., & Weninger, C. (Eds.). (2015). *Language, ideology and education: The politics of textbooks in language education*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315814223>
- Duan, W. (2020). *Evaluating the Representations of identities, linguistic and cultural elements in Chinese as a second language textbooks used in China*. Master. Dissertation, Yunnan University, Yunnan, China.
- Duchêne, A., & Heller, M. (2012). Pride and profit: Changing discourses of language, capital and nation-state. In A. Duchêne, & M. Heller (Eds.), *Language in late capitalism: Pride and profit* (pp. 1-21). New York, NY: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203155868>
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. London/New York: Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (1999). Global capitalism and critical awareness of language. *Language Awareness*, 8, 71-83. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09658419908667119>

- Gray, J. (2002). The global course book in English language teaching. In D. Block & D. Cameron (Eds.), *Globalization and language teaching* (pp. 151-167). London: Routledge.
- Heinrich, P. (2005). Language Ideology in JFL textbooks. *De Gruyter, 2005*(175-176), 213-232. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl.2005.2005.175-176.213>
- Holliday, A. (2005). *The struggle to teach English as an international language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jaworski, A., & Thurlow, C. (2010). Language and the globalizing habitus of tourism: Toward a sociolinguistics of fleeting relationships. In N. Coupland (Ed.), *The handbook of language and globalization* (pp. 255-286). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444324068.ch11>
- Jenkins, J. (2015). *Global Englishes: A resource book for students* (3rd ed.). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Kazemi, S. A., Aidinlou, N. A., & Asl, H. D. (2017). Manifestations of globalization and linguistic imperialism in English language teaching and materials preparation: ideology in the International ELT textbooks. *Relp, 5*(2), 223-246.
- Krippendorff, K. (1980). *Content analysis. An introduction to its methodology*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Lee, D. (2017). *Competing discourses: Perspective and ideology in language*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Liddicoat, A. J., & Scarino, A. (2013). *Intercultural language teaching and learning*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118482070>
- Li, J., Duan, W., Dong, J., & Sharif, S. al M. (2019). Identity Construction and Ideological Reproduction of the Secondary English Language Textbooks in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Language and Linguistics, 7*(6), 302-314. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ijll.20190706.18>
- Lippi-Green, R. (2012). *English with an accent: Language, ideology, and discrimination in the United States* (2nd ed.). London, UK: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203348802>
- Luke, A. (1988). *Literacy, Textbooks and Ideology: postwar literacy instruction and the mythology of Dick and Jane*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- McArthur, T. (1998). *The English languages*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- McKay, S. L., & Brown, J. D. (2016). *Teaching and assessing EIL in local contexts around the world*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- McKay, S. L. (2002). *Teaching English as an international language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pennycook, A. (1994). *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language*. Essex: Longman
- Pennycook, A. (1995). English in the world and the world in English. In J. W. Tollefson (Ed.), *Power and inequality in language education* (pp. 34-58). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pennycook, A. (2001). *Critical applied linguistics: A critical introduction*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410600790>
- Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Piller, I. (2003). Advertising as a site of language contact. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 23*, 170-183. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190503000254>
- Porreca, K. L. (1984). Sexism in current ESL textbooks. *TESOL Quarterly, 18*(4), 705-724. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3586584>
- Safran, W. (1999). Nationalism. In J. A. Fishman (Ed.), *Handbook of Language and Ethnic Identity* (pp. 77-93). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Shah, S. K., Tariq, W., & Bilal, M. (2013). Ideology in English textbooks: A case study of matric level books in Punjab. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences, 3*(11), 113-120.
- Shardakova, M., & Pavlenko, A. (2004). Identity options in Russian textbooks. *Journal of Language, Identity and Education, 3*(1), 25-46. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327701jlie0301\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327701jlie0301_2)
- Siegal, M., & Okamoto, S. (1996). Imagined worlds: Language, gender, and socio-cultural “norms” in Japanese language textbooks. In N. Warner, J. Ahlers, L. Bilmes, M. Oliver, S. Wertheim, & M. Chen (Eds.), *Gender and belief systems. Proceedings of the Fourth Berkeley Women and Language Conference* (pp. 667-678). Berkeley: University of California, BWLG.

- Silverstein, M. (1979). Language structure and linguistic ideology. In P. Clyne, R. W. F. Hanks, & C. Hofbauer (Eds.), *The elements: A parasection on linguistic units and levels* (pp. 193-247). Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Tajeddin, Z., & Pakzadian, M. (2020). Representation of inner, outer and expanding circle varieties and cultures in global ELT textbooks. *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education*, 5(10), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-020-00089-9>
- Widdowson, H. G. (1994). The ownership of English. *TESOL Quarterly*, 28(2), 377-389. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3587438>
- Williams, R. (1989). Hegemony and the selective tradition. In S. C. De Castell, A. Luke & C. Luke (Eds.), *Language, authority and criticism: readings on the school textbooks* (pp. 56-60). London: Falmer Press.
- Yamashita, H. (2001). Keigo kenkyūno ideogii hihan [A critique of the ideology underlying honorific speech research]. In H. Yamashita & K. Noro (Eds.), *'Tadashisa' e no toi* [Toward a questioning 'correctness'] (pp. 51-83). Tokyo: Sangensha.
- Yamanaka, N. (2006). An evaluation of English textbooks in Japan from the viewpoint of nations in the inner, outer, and expanding circles. *JALT Journal*, 28(1), 57-76. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTJJ28.1-4>
- Yan, M. (2015). *English Intercultural Communication Course in College*. Beijing: Tsinghua University Press.
- Zhang, Y., Ni, Z. J., Dong, J., & Li, J. (2021). Constructing the Global Diversity or Reproducing the Orientalist Gaze: Evaluating identity options and cultural elements in an English intercultural communication textbook. *English Language Teaching*, 15(1), 130-143. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v15n1p130>
- Zhou, M. L. & Ross, H. A. (2004). Introduction: The context of the theory and practice of China's language policy. In M. Zhou (Ed.), *Language policy in the People's Republic of China: Theory and practice since 1949* (pp. 1-18). New York: Kluwer Academic Publishers. [https://doi.org/10.1007/1-4020-8039-5\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/1-4020-8039-5_1)

### Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).