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Corpus-based Analysis of EFL Textbooks

ELT textbooks, with language items as their major components, have become a special genre for corpus analysis. This work in progress is to explore how the language content selected and exercises/tasks designed in the current EFL textbooks in China have revealed the modern ideology of ELT education, especially the ideas of making 'real-life' language input and providing guidance for inquiry and explorative learning.

Enlightened by the theory of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough: 1995) and the approach of studying ideology in specific corpora (Hunston, 2002: 118-119), this study is focused on the relationship between language and ideology. Based on a million-word corpus of ELT textbooks in China (He Anping, 2004) for 3 levels of learners in primary school, junior and senior middle school respectively, different aspects of EFL textbooks are analysed, particularly in :

- 1) selections and sequences of target language items in textbooks;
- 2) cognitive demand and guidance of instructions in textbook exercise/task designing.

By means of retrieving vocabulary lists of textbooks, key words list in modules/units, lexical bundles in task/exercise instructions and concordances of some particular words and patterns, the researcher has made comparisons between textbooks published before and after the new national curriculum standards so as to find what and how changes have been taken place. Comparisons are also made among textbooks across levels so as to extract sequence of development in terms of cognitive demanding (Krathwohl: 2002). In this poster, some research methods and findings are reported. Its potential value to textbook compiling and evaluation, and its application to teacher education are also discussed.

References

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