Dissemination of Human Values: Discourse Analysis of Global Educational Media Texts

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Abstract

The failure of the last century is not in teaching language skills but in disseminating human values necessary for people to live in harmony in the world. Media is an important means through which human values can be disseminated. With a didactic intent, maxims are common sense logical statements that explicitly or implicitly disseminate human values in discourse. Yemen Times, which provides the data for analysis in this study, is an independent English-language newspaper that can be accessed online and available in hardcopy form. It plays the role of disseminating information about politics, sports, tourism, economics and education. This study aims to identify human values in the discourse of maxims as a global educational media text. Human values are viewed as neutral discourse shared among humanity. This view is theoretically guided by the objectivist perspective on discourse. 152 maxims were collected between the years 2003 to 2010. Discourse analysis was conducted to identify values beyond the sentence level where ‘whole-text organization’ was the unit of analysis. Three linguistic features were used: ‘word meanings’, ‘wording’ and ‘metaphors’. The findings revealed that 33 human values were disseminated in the texts such as wisdom, work, knowledge, perseverance, time, and friendship. The implications of this study highlight the role of media as a fundamental learning resource for English as International Language (EIL) students. Further research on the discursive legitimation of the identified values is recommended.

Keywords: human values; discourse analysis; maxims; global educational media; EIL

1. Introduction

In the 21st century, the challenge of humanity is to instill human values most necessary for one to be a ‘complete person’ (UNESCO, 2002, p.ii) and to live in harmony with other people in the world. UNESCO also
declares a list of core human values needed for the full development of the human person (p.28). Besides, one of the most urgent tasks for educators and researchers is cultivating global literacy for a peaceful world (Nakamura, 2002,p.64). The Sana'a International Symposium on Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations (2005) further calls for a set of values that rejects violence and prevent conflicts (p.2). It recommends that the media should play its role in enhancing dialogue among nations.

Global educational media has a great role of disseminating human values in world-wide contexts. English-language newspapers can disseminate human values through the tools of English as International Language (EIL) (Nakamura, 2002,p.64). Yemen Times, the first and the most widely-circulated newspaper in Yemen (Saleh, 2008), is an independent newspaper. It plays the role of disseminating information about politics, sports, tourism, economics and education. Its mission is to support press freedom, show respect for human rights, political pluralism and democracy. As global educational media text, the discourse of maxims was published by Dr. Ramankata Sahu in Yemen Times during the years from 2003 to 2010.

What is known about values is their identification, largely based on content analysis that develops and validates schema of values, or based on linguistic discourse analysis for revealing values. Some recent studies have been published on the discourse analysis of freedom (Sowińska, 2013), on the discourse of peace in media texts (Senthan, 2005); on the content analysis of values in media texts (Airil Haimi, 2010; AlQulaini, 2002; Annamer, 2004; Miller, 2007); on the linguistic discourse analysis of values in textbooks (Keisala, 2010); and on the content analysis of values in textbooks (Abu Shariah, 2001). So far, there is a need to identify values in global educational media texts as discourse beyond the sentence level. This need is in agreement with the view of maxims as logical statements that disseminate values in discourse (Lewis, 1972). Therefore, this study aims to identify evident human values in the discourse of maxims of Yemen Times as a global educational media text distributed in world-wide contexts.

2.Literature review

Previous research has shown that values are identified through thematic analysis of discourse in media and other texts. Airil Haimi (2010), Keisala (2010), Yongbing (2005) and Senth (2005) used the thematic analysis to identify values in media and textbooks. Airil Haimi (2001) used a linguistic discourse analysis of script excerpts from a religious program 'Reflections' in Malaysia to identify universal values. Yongbing (2005) examined the discourses of cultural values and beliefs constructed in Chinese EFL textbooks using Fairclough’s version of CDA. Keisala (2010) employed Fairclough’s version of CDA to examine the relationship of values and attitudes in EFL textbook series for Finnish schools. In identifying discourses of values, Keisala’s study focused on the thematic analysis. Values are also identified by what they are not; Senthan (2005) identifies values of peace based on counter discourse analysis.

Values are also identified through content analysis by Annamer (2004), AlQulaini (2002) and Abu Shariah (2001). For instance, Annamer (2004) investigated the effect of the Television channels on the value system of secondary school students in Egypt. Content analysis was used to analyze the content of thirteen episodes of some programmes on mbc, LBC and Egypt TV. Content analysis uses classification of values or develops schema categories for classification of values. On the contrary, thematic analysis of discourse uses vocabulary and grammar for identification of values. While content analysis uses inter-raters to validate the analysis, the thematic analysis of discourse is considered interpretative in nature which acknowledges the instability of meaning. This study employs discourse analysis of the texts to identify values beyond the sentence level.

Sowińska (2013) further distinguished between two major positions in the approaches to values in discourse studies: research oriented towards values ‘located’ in language and values at discourse pragmatic levels (p.5). The present study has developed the term ‘glocal nodal Discourse’ (GND) to neutrally deal with the discourse of human values in world-wide contexts. This term is adapted and coined based on the objectivist position on discourse (Fairclough, 2006), ‘nodal’ discourse (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001) and ‘glocalism’ (Brodeur, 2004). This
term treats human values as neutral discourse shared among humanity. In light of the challenges of identifying values, discourse analysts believe that the existence of values can be seen “as potentially tied to particular discourses, and as variable between discourses” (Fairclough, 2003, p.132). Van Dijk (1998) adds that values can be found both explicitly and implicitly in discourses. Although this study associates ‘glocalism’ with the objectivist position on Discourse, this view is limited to the ontological principle; it is not extended to the debate on the identity of thought (epistemology) where every culture shapes values with people’s epistemological knowledge.

3. Methods

The data were collected from Yemen Times newspaper. Maxims were published in the form of extended paragraphs during 2003 and 2010. 152 maxims were collected and labeled. The sequence number, the issue number and the journalistic genre were stated in each label e.g. (036-694-214). Two techniques of analysis were used for the identification of values: the manual close readings of the texts and, by using the Nvivo 9.2 software. This study identifies values at the discourse level beyond the sentence level where "whole-text organization" is the unit of analysis (Fairclough, 2001, p.243). Values are identified through word meanings, wording, and metaphors (Fairclough, 1992). Although, ‘friendship’, for example, can be expressed in the word meaning of the word friendship, it can be worded in other forms such as ‘company’ in A man is known by the company he keeps (029-680-207) where the word company can be substituted by the word ‘friend’. In Success has many parents, but failure is an orphan (120-1115-311), ‘friendship’ is not expressed in the word meaning or wording but through the metaphor of parents and orphan. This metaphor is not realized at the word level or the sentence level, but at the whole text-organization level. That is to say, after reading the maxim within the context of its extended paragraph, it becomes clear that ‘friendship’ is the disseminated value in this maxim. In the same vein, on reading the maxim Laugh and the world laughs with you, weep and you weep alone (067-764-249), the implied value can be understood as 'hope'. However, reading the maxim with its extended paragraph reveals that the contextualized and implied value is 'friendship'. A maxim may contain more than one value; however, the dominant contextualized value is the identified value. For instance, in Beauty is truth and truth beauty (099-941-290), 'beauty' and 'truth' are manifested. Nevertheless, this maxim is roughly identified as 'beauty' as the contextualized value in this maxim.

4. Findings and Discussion

The overall data analysis revealed that 33 human values were evident in the texts. The emphasis was on the dissemination of the human values of ‘wisdom’, ‘work’, ‘knowledge’, ‘perseverance’, ‘time’, ‘friendship’, ‘freedom’, and ‘beauty’. They constituted the most frequent values in the maxims. On the contrary, several values were rarely distributed in the texts such as ‘sacrifice’, ‘nurturing’ and ‘adjustment’. ‘Wisdom’ was the most frequent value disseminated in the texts; it was found in 18 maxims. Each of values on ‘knowledge’ and ‘work’ were identified in twelve maxims. While ‘perseverance’ was evident in 9 maxims, each value of ‘time’ and ‘friendship’ were discovered in eight maxims. For instance, the data analysis reveals that ‘beauty’ was found in six maxims as the following excerpts show.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Maxim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>036-694-214</td>
<td>Beauty is not skin deep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>040-702-218</td>
<td>Beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>048-718-226</td>
<td>Distance lends enchantment to view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>059-740-237</td>
<td>Handsome is that handsome does</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>099-941-290</td>
<td>Beauty is truth, and truth beauty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In these maxims, ‘beauty’ is expressed in the meaning of the underlined words. ‘Beauty’ is also repeated 34 times in the extended paragraphs. That is to say, the value of ‘beauty’ is identified in the word meaning of ‘beauty’. ‘Beauty’ is also found to be implied in two maxims: Distance lends enchantment to view and Handsome is that handsome does. For example, ‘beauty’ was worded and implicitly disseminated in the metaphors of the moon and the mountain as it is found in the following maxim.

**Distance lends enchantment to view (048-718-226)**

*When an object or a person is seen from a distance, it looks more charming than it really is. On coming closer and examining it in greater depth and detail, it is found that the appearance was rather deceptive. In reality, the apparently sweet and beautiful object has many defects or shortcomings which didn’t meet our eyes when we first saw it from a distance. Seen from a distance, the moon looks so enchantingly beautiful; but when man set his foot on the moon, he found on it many craters which were hidden to our view. A person in the first meeting may seem sweet and attractive, but a closer contact with him may reveal many follies and foibles behind the sweet aroma of his magnetic personality which escaped our attention the first time. A mountain at a distance seems to radiate an inexplicable charm which is irresistible. But when we go near it we discover how horrific it is. These examples show that the distant view of something has a strange magic that can camouflage its innate ugliness which becomes clearer on closer scrutiny.*

In the discourse of this maxim, the disseminated value is ‘beauty’. It is worded in words like *enchantment, charming and magnetic*. ‘Beauty’ is also recognized by what it is not; it is not *ugliness* or *appearance*. ‘Beauty’ is also distributed through the metaphors of *moon* and *mountain*. The data analysis also reveals that ‘freedom’ was found in seven maxims as the following excerpts show.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Maxim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>002-2003-00</td>
<td>Stone walls do not a prison make nor iron bars a cage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>011-638-186</td>
<td>Man is born free, but is everything in chains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>035-692-213</td>
<td>Better to regain in hell than to serve in heaven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>057-736-235</td>
<td>He who pays the piper controls the tune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>071-772 -253</td>
<td>Liberty cannot exist without discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>122-1135-313</td>
<td>My right to swing my arm ends where the other fellow’s nose begins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125-1162-316</td>
<td>There are no tyrants where there are no slaves</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In these maxims, ‘freedom’ is found to be implied in these maxims. It is explicitly expressed only in the underlined two words. In the extended paragraphs, ‘freedom’ is also repeated 21 times; it is also worded in ‘liberty’ 21 times.

Figure (1) shows the identified human values and their frequency in the texts where a single maxim constitutes a single unit of analysis. These identified human values, to some extent, are in agreement with three categories of the core human values listed by UNESCO (2002, p.28). First, truth and wisdom are the ultimate goals of intellectual development. Second, love and compassion are the basic foundations of ethics and morality. Third, creativity and appreciation of beauty develop the aesthetic powers of the human person. However, the texts did not pay remarkable attention on five core categories listed by UNESCO: health and harmony with nature, peace and justice, sustainable human development, national unity and global solidarity, and global spirituality.
From an ideological perspective, values might be invested for political interest as well. In a very recent work, Sowińska (2013) investigated ‘freedom’ in President Bush’s state of the united speeches. The analysis revealed that ‘freedom’ veered from absoluteness in the earlier speeches to a conception of liberty and democracy lined to the idea of US democracy promotion in President Bush later speeches. ‘Freedom’ was represented in metaphorical terms “as a story whose author is no longer God but America”(p.12). Such ideological employment of values needs further investigation.

5. Conclusion

Media plays an important role in disseminating human values. This is a type of reality that needs to be taken into consideration by individuals and institutions dealing with human values. This study aimed to identify the human values disseminated in the discourse of maxims of Yemen Times newspaper. This paper first established the rationale of this study and its aim. Contextualizing the need for human values in world-wide contexts, discourse was employed to reveal human values beyond the sentence level. Human values are treated as a neutral discourse shared among humanity. This view is theoretically guided by the objectivist perspective on discourse.

The qualitative method of the study was based on the discursive approach to language, and tools of discourse analysis were applied in order to discover the human values in the texts. The examination of the texts indicated that human values of ‘wisdom’, ‘work’, ‘knowledge’, ‘perseverance’, ‘friendship’ and ‘time’ are dominant in the texts. The findings of this study show the importance of media as a learning resource for EIL students and learning autonomy.

The focus of this study was limited to the objectivist perspective on discourse and media. It is not extended to the debate on the identity of thought (epistemology) where every culture shapes values with people’s epistemological knowledge. Nevertheless, further research could be conducted on these media texts from an ideological perspective on discourse and media (Fairclough, 1995, 2006). For instance, it would be interesting to investigate the discursive legitimation of these identified human values in these texts as a global media communicative event.
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