Critical Discourse Analysis of Arabic Reading Texts in an Advanced College-Level Arabic Course

Shaimaa Moustafa, Ph.D. Candidate
Language, Literacy and Culture, College of Education, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Purpose
- Developing culturally-inclusive teaching practices in the Arabic language classroom under the current terror-driven and neoliberal contexts
- Dismantling the cultural perspectives that emerge in Arabic readings, and the macro-contextual factors that inform them

Review of Literature on Foreign and Arabic Language Teaching
- 1990s-21st century:
  - Capitalist & neoliberal impacts: Views of culture and language from economic perspectives
  - Terrorism-related discourses: Unfavorable discourses around Arab culture
- Prevalence of teaching methods and research on proficiency-based approaches
- Scarcity of critical cultural research on teaching materials/texts

Research Questions
- What cultural representations emerge in Arabic reading texts that are used for instruction in an advanced college Arabic course?
- How are the emergent cultural representations informed by the macro contextual factors of neoliberalism and the terror rhetoric?

Theoretical Framework

Data Analysis
Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 2003, 2008)
Deconstruction of cultural meanings and their ideological underpinnings at the macro and micro levels

Focal Texts from the Focal Course’s Syllabus
- Arab College Education (By Shady Farouk Al Shourfy)
- Relations between the Two Generators (By Ayatollah Hossein Ansarian)
- Third-year Arabic college-level course syllabus taught at a public university in New England

Findings
The Development of Disadvantageous Cultural Views in an Unnegotiable Way

Backwardness of Arab College Education

Arab families vary in holding on to some traditions which make the emergence of the male/female relationship difficult.

The texts mainly entail nouns/noun phrases indicative of detrimental Arab cultural representations. Sentences are mostly declarative and lack modality leading to the construction of cultural perspectives as facts.

Pedagogical Implications
- The practitioners’ “framing” of available texts to read against the grain ” (Kramsch & Vinall, 2015)
- Adoption of critical reading practices (Abdenia, 2015)
- Posing critical cultural questions (Curhd-Christiansen & Weninger, 2015)

References

Conclusions
- Texts as “ideological artifacts” (Kramsch & Vinall, 2015) leading to the construction of cultural stereotypes
- Perceptions of Arab cultural representations as static under the umbrella of neoliberalism (Bernstein, 2015)
- The current terror-related discourses & detrimental perceptions of Arab cultures (Morey & Yaqin, 2011)
- Aligning with Kramsch and Vinall’s (2015) concept of cultural “Tourist gaze” in Spanish textbooks... Cultures as touristic artifacts