

Chapter 3

Designing Values in English as a Foreign Language Textbooks: A Social Semiotic Approach



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Abstract The inculcation of social, cultural, and moral values in English language teaching (ELT) has received growing scholarly attention (Hall, 2010; Johnston, 2003; Lee, 2014; Rascón-Moreno, 2014; Widodo et al., 2018) since ELT is becoming increasingly global. Combining theoretical insights into value and morality in ELT (Johnston, 2003), evaluation in language (Thompson & Hunston, 2001), and multimodal critical discourse analysis (Ledin & Machin, 2018; Van Leeuwen, 2008), this study uses the social value of benevolence in an English as a foreign language textbook series published in China as an example to illustrate how an integrated approach can throw light on the construction of values in ELT textbooks. Our analysis reveals that (1) the Problem-Solution discourse pattern, realized in different forms along the story-event continuum, is an important mediator of values; (2) values in the textbook tend to be conveyed implicitly rather than explicitly and are invoked by lexical signals such as “help” with semantic prosodies such as comparison and goal achievement; and (3) visual resources, especially positive facial expressions, play an important role in the multimodal construction of values. Further examination of the related pedagogical activities suggests that most of the visual elements are used for the purpose of enhancing the texts and activities and that only a few are designed to engage the learners in reflective thinking and action on concerned values. This chapter ends with theoretical and practical implications on material development and pedagogy.

Keywords Critical discourse analysis · Culture knowledge · ELT textbooks · Multimodality · Social semiotics · Values

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1 Introduction

The inseparable relationship between language and culture makes cultural teaching, especially the inculcation of cultural values, an integral part of the language curriculum (Feng & Byram, 2002; Hall, 2010; Johnston, 2003; Kramsch, 1998; Risager & Chapelle, 2013; Risager, 2018). This is particularly the case for English language teaching (ELT), which has seen sustained academic debate on its cultural, political, and ideological implications among applied linguistics researchers and practitioners. Studies have addressed the consequences of, and resistance to, ELT and its global cultural hegemony from critical perspectives of post-colonialism and cultural politics (e.g., Canagarajah, 1999; Phillipson, 1992). These studies have endeavored to promote an awareness of multiculturalism and cultural identity among teachers and learners of English. Although issues on cultural reproduction and ideological legitimation in school textbooks have been a key concern in educational research (Apple, 1979), because of the growing global scale and cultural consequence of ELT, there is an increasing recognition of the cultural representations and values explicitly or implicitly present in ELT textbooks. With the deepening of (counter-) globalization and growing linguistic and cultural diversity, issues of cultural knowledge and values in language textbooks have been in the spotlight (Canale, 2021; Curdt-Christiansen & Weninger, 2015; Jalalian Daghigh & Abdul Rahim, 2021; Risager, 2021; Sun & Kwon, 2020; Weninger & Kiss, 2013), and recent years have seen a growing number of articles, edited volumes, and special issues on this subject (e.g., Bori, 2018; Canale, 2021; Chapelle, 2016; Chun, 2013; Curdt-Christiansen & Weninger, 2015; Gray, 2010a, 2010b; Widodo et al., 2018). In the meantime, EFL textbooks also shoulder the responsibility of cultivating the young generation for a country's social and economic development. This is evidenced in the national curriculum standard for English (Ministry of Education, 2017), which states that the English curriculum has both utilitarian and humanistic goals and is committed to facilitating the lifelong development of students by fostering desirable character and correct life-views and values.

In this chapter we approach the meaning-making of textbooks from a social semiotic perspective which implies that we treat texts, images, and other modes of communication as potential semiotic resources (Bezemer & Kress, 2010; Van Leeuwen, 2005). According to this perspective, the signifying process of different semiotic modes is a form of recontextualization which is socially and institutionally motivated (Bezemer & Kress, 2010). While the inclusion of cultural values in EFL textbooks has increasingly become an orchestrated process between different semiotic resources, which are principally linguistic and visual (Chen, 2010; Feng, 2019; Weninger & Kiss, 2013; Xiong & Peng, 2021; Yu et al., 2020), there is a recognition that we need a metalanguage or framework to account for this semiotic process of infusing values in EFL textbooks (Feng, 2019; Weninger & Kiss, 2013). So far, attempts to research values in school textbooks have been made from theoretical and methodological perspectives informed by systemic functional linguistics (Halliday, 2000) such as appraisal theory (Martin & White, 2005) and visual grammar (Kress &

van Leeuwen, 2006). Along this line of inquiry, and combining perspectives on evaluation (Hunston, 2011; Thompson & Hunston, 2001) and multimodal critical discourse analysis (Ledin & Machin, 2018), this chapter proposes a social semiotic framework for unpacking the designing of cultural and moral values in ELT textbooks and demonstrates how the proposed framework works. This study will take values concerned with helping others, or benevolence, in Chinese secondary school English textbooks as an example and investigate how values and practices can be legitimized by means of verbal and visual semiotic resources.

2 Research on Values in Language Textbooks

Research on values in language textbooks falls into the broad strand of scholarship on culture in language textbooks. This strand focuses on cultural relations, gender relations, racial discrimination, environment and ecology, as well as other socio-cultural issues. In the context of immigrant countries and regions such as North America, researchers are particularly interested in issues of cultural relations and racism. In her study of Chinese heritage textbooks in Canada, Curdt-Christiansen (2008) called for cultivating students' multicultural consciousness. This is echoed by Sun and Kwon's (2020) study which compared Chinese and Korean heritage language textbooks in the USA and found problems of mono-culturalism. Drawing on the theoretical insights of critical pedagogy, Chun's (2016) critical ethnography of an English for academic purposes (EAP) classroom in the USA demonstrated how critical pedagogy-informed ways of teaching proved effective in countering racism in EAP textbooks.

In EFL contexts such as Asia, researchers mostly are interested in the relationship between local culture and other cultures, especially British and American culture. For example, Setyono and Widodo's (2019) study of Indonesian English textbooks found such characteristics as respect for different cultures, indigenous peoples, peace with various ways of life and nature, and appreciation of creative cultural products; in the meantime, it revealed an absence of cultural elements of countries in Africa and other parts of Asia. Lee and Li (2020) compared primary English textbooks adopted in Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland and arrived at the conclusion that textbooks in both places featured local culture and foreign culture to varying degrees: The mainland textbooks tended to present Anglo-American culture, whereas cultural presentation in Hong Kong textbooks was relatively more extensive.

Besides cultural relations, textbooks' treatment of global issues such as shallow environmentalism, gender bias and stereotypes, and neoliberalism has also attracted many researchers' attention. For example, Stibbe's (2004) study on environmental education in Japanese EFL textbooks showed that textbooks failed to criticize problematic values leading to environmental crises and were only interested in offering technical solutions to environmental problems. Likewise, Xiong's (2014) analysis of environmentalism discourse in Chinese EFL textbooks identified problems, such

as obscuring human agency, and revealed that the main purpose of the environmental content in the textbooks was to raise readers' awareness of environmental problems rather than to encourage real, proactive participation and change practices. Gray's (2010a) study of global ELT textbooks uncovered the strategic portrayal of neoliberal ideals by magnifying their positive aspects and ignoring problematic aspects. Xiong and Yuan (2018) similarly spotlighted neoliberal discourses on English language learning in current EFL textbooks in China. On the issue of gender equity, Lee's (2018) study of EFL textbooks in Japan revealed positive linguistic signs of gender equality such as the use of gender-neutral vocabulary, though the "male first" phenomenon is still common in the examined textbooks.

More recently, the (multimodal) infusion of moral and cultural values in textbooks for language and other subjects has become a topic of considerable interest (Feng, 2019; Guo & Feng, 2015; Xiong, 2012; Xiong & Peng, 2021). Feng (2019), adopting a social semiotic research framework of values, studied EFL textbooks for primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong and showed that the textbooks focused more on indoctrinating children in good citizenship than cultivating their critical thinking. In a similar vein, Yu et al.'s (2020) investigation of the ecological values communicated in Hong Kong's science education animation videos on YouTube found a predominance of biospheric values. Their study also showed that the science education characters' emotions and expressions were widely used to communicate their dissatisfaction with pollution, their love of nature, and their passion for environmental protection.

Methodologically, two analytical approaches are discernible: content analysis, which is mainly descriptive in nature, and discourse/semiotic analysis, which is more interpretive and critical in nature. The descriptive approach is informed by the positivist epistemology and committed to answering questions such as "What types of cultural knowledge and values are found in the textbook?" and "How are they distributed?" This approach, however, falls short of a fine-grained analysis of how discursive and semiotic resources such as language and visual elements contribute to the effective inculcation of values. The interpretive approach takes a constructivist philosophical and epistemological stance to address research questions such as "How are cultural knowledge and values discursively constructed in the textbook?" and "How do these representations potentially act on the readers?" Often aligned with critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995), this approach generally draws on the intellectual tradition of systemic functional linguistics (Halliday, 2000) and critical perspectives on ideology, discourse, and culture, and it highlights ideological effects and the interactive relationship between textbook discourse and readers. Currently, there is a trend for researchers to integrate the two approaches so that they complement each other (Weninger, 2021). The challenge is that language and semiotic analysis generally relies on explicit lexical and grammatical features, but values are not always readily identifiable language units (Van Leeuwen, 2008).

To sum up, representation has been a main theme in studies of cultural values in textbooks. Taking multidisciplinary perspectives and approaches, these studies have viewed the representation of values as semiotic practice (Canale, 2021) and characterized language textbooks as a mirror of reality that is often exaggerated or even distorted for the purpose of ideological and cultural reproduction (Risager,

2018). The relevant research literature has also shown that, although current language textbooks have seen continuous improvements in regard to the presentation of cultural values, they still fall short of effective design for cultivating critical cultural awareness and global citizenship. This leads to potential and real problems such as imbalanced presentation of cultural groups, lack of cultural and ethnic diversity, overuse of visual resources for decorative purposes, as well as failure to make images more relevant to learners, among others. Therefore, ELT educators, practitioners, course developers, and textbook designers are in need of a systematic and adaptive framework or tool for analyzing, and ultimately designing, values.

3 Research Framework

To answer the questions of how values are realized in textbooks through different patterns of linguistic and semiotic resources, and what ideological and pedagogical effects are brought about, this section proposes an integrated social semiotic approach. We conceptualize values as social, cultural, and moral evaluations, judgment, and attitudes which guide individuals to think, feel, and behave in social and cultural contexts (Johnston, 2003; Widodo et al., 2018). Apart from the conventional means of teaching values separately as school subjects, values can be embodied and communicated implicitly as “hidden curriculum” (Apple, 1979) across academic disciplines. In other words, values can be integrated in pedagogies and curriculum materials with lasting influences on learners’ beliefs and actions. Key to values in the Chinese social and cultural context is the maintenance and cultivation of harmonious relations (Gebregeorgis, 2017; You et al., 2018) which fall into three types: (1) relations between the individual and the self, (2) relations between the individual and the society/community, and (3) relations between the individual and nature. This paper will focus on the second type, which involves values such as altruism, dedication, etiquette, justice, equality, among others. It is arguably the most essential type of relation because it is centrally concerned with how the individual and the society function.

From a critical sociological perspective, we consider textbooks as social and cultural artifacts (Beyer & Apple, 1988; Gray, 2010a, 2010b) whose production and consumption are shaped by multiple social actors, forces, and intentions. The linguistic, semiotic, and pedagogical choices are not arbitrary but ideologically motivated, which enables discourse analysts to scrutinize traces of value-laden meanings in tandem with social, cultural, and institutional contexts (Gray, 2010b; Van Leeuwen, 2005).

We examine values in text in light of Thompson and Hunston’s (2001) approach to evaluation in language. According to them, evaluation is an important feature of language which indexes individual or social value systems underpinned by ideologies. Specifically, we understand evaluation as “the expression of the speaker or writer’s attitude or stance towards, viewpoint on or feelings about the entities or propositions that he or she is talking about” (Thompson & Hunston, 2001, p. 5).

Operating on all levels of lexis, grammar, and discourse, evaluation is a complex and slippery phenomenon which can be both conceptual and linguistic and realized by different semiotic modes. According to Thompson and Hunston (2001), evaluation in language is prosodic, cumulative, contextual, subjective, and value-laden in nature, and it can be recognized by lexical and semantic signals or parameters such as good-bad, comparison, achievement of goals, certainty, expectedness, importance, among others.

In the following, in line with the critical discourse analytical principles for EFL textbooks presented in Xiong (2012), we offer a methodological framework which is composed of three dimensions, namely discourse patterns, lexical and semantic analysis, and multimodal analysis.

The analysis of discourse patterns mainly draws on Hoey's (1983, 2001) theoretical insights on the Problem–Solution pattern (henceforth “the PS pattern”). The PS pattern is a widely used discourse pattern across a variety of text genres. The story genre, which is a typical realization of the PS pattern, is an important genre in educational settings (Martin & Rose, 2008). It comprises four components, namely Situation, Problem (or aspect of Situation which requires a Response), Response, and Result (or positive evaluation). Evaluation, which is regarded as the “point” of the story by Labov and Waletzky (1967), is an indispensable part of the story. For a PS pattern to be natural and complete, a positive evaluation is almost always involved. Given that EFL textbooks, particularly those for beginning and intermediate users, tend to simplify the reading texts for pedagogical reasons, in this study, these (simplified) stories as well as longer stories are all put on the “story-event” continuum. Simplified stories in such textbooks sometimes are as short as a single phrase denoting an event or act, without necessarily involving a course of events. These story-events are examined in light of the PS pattern to find out how evaluations work on the discourse level.

For the lexical and semantic analysis, the focus is mainly on the linguistic resources which give rise to evaluative meanings. Although the language of evaluation can be very complex and sophisticated, for the purpose of this study, we mainly focus on conceptual and linguistic signals and parameters concerned with meanings of comparison, good-bad, desirability, achievement of goals, certainty, expectedness, and importance. In addition, a basic distinction is made between inscribed meaning and invoked (or evoked) meaning (Martin & White, 2005). Inscribed evaluation is relatively explicit and can be identified by lexical markers such as affective and attitudinal adjectives, or adverbs associated with relational processes or mental processes; invoked evaluation is implicit and assumed (Fairclough, 2003) and could be activated by certain lexical items and semantic prosodies. Semantic prosody refers to the general phenomenon that “many uses of words and phrases show a tendency to occur in a certain semantic environment” (Sinclair, 1991, p. 112, as cited in Hoey, 2005, p. 22). Semantic prosodies can be broadly divided into positive and negative meanings. The implicit nature of evaluation is also confirmed by Van Leeuwen (2008), who suggests that moral evaluation tends to be linked to discourses of moralization which are not made explicit.

The multimodal analysis is informed by an affordance-driven approach which investigates the orchestrated role of textual and visual elements. Guided by the overarching question of “What semiotic resources are drawn upon in communication, or discourse, in order to carry out ideological work?” (Ledin & Machin, 2018, p. 60), the analysis concerns but is not limited to evaluative meanings and functions afforded by semiotic parameters such as social actors (e.g., their facial expressions and role design), processes, situations, interactions, gaze, modality, and inter-semiotic relations (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Ledin & Machin, 2018). Drawing on Van Leeuwen’s (2005) and Chapelle’s (2016) classifications, we classify three types of image-text relations: task-essential, enhancing, and orienting.

Evaluative meanings do not take place in a vacuum but occur in specific social and cultural contexts. As they are constructed or implied as a result of multimodal orchestration, their analysis cannot be expected to be straightforward. Moreover, it should be noted that the construction of meaning in an educational context is often recontextualized (Bernstein, 1996).

4 Analysis

The data to be analyzed are from *Oxford English* (Shanghai edition) (2014), one of the three most widely used authoritative EFL textbook series across China. Compiled under the framework of the national English curriculum standard (Ministry of Education, 2011), it is jointly published by Shanghai Education Press and Oxford University Press and features learner-centered and task-based principles (Zhu, 2009). This series covers a variety of topics such as communication, environmental protection, scientific exploration, literature, history, family life, career, cultural exchanges, leisure activities, travel, and health. Our analysis focuses on Unit 1 of Book 2 for grade eight. The title of this unit is “Helping those in need,” indicating that the unit is designed around the overarching theme of benevolence and philanthropy. It is common for contemporary language textbooks to employ a topical syllabus and design the units around a particular thematic topic (Curdts-Christiansen, 2021; Richards, 2001). The topic of benevolence is significant here because it concerns the relations between the individual and the community, which, as noted above, constitute a crucial type of human relation. The prominence of the value of helping others in ELT materials for young learners has been confirmed by Sulistiyo et al.’s (2020) study of EFL textbooks in Indonesian elementary schools, which found that the three values most emphasized are helping others, behavioral courtesy, and care. The basic structure of the 16-page-long unit and the distribution of values have been summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 Distribution of topics concerning values of benevolence

Unit section	Titles	Language input/activity	Textual affordance	Visual affordance
Getting ready	Setting learning objectives	A humorous cartoon in which the two protagonists ask for and offer help	Dialogue bubbles	Cartoon
Reading	Vocabulary work	Matching	Phrases	Pictures
		Blank-filling	Sentences	N/A
		Reading texts	Students' recounts of voluntary work	Pictures
		Vocabulary work (cloze)	Sentences	N/A
		Strategy: using prefixes to guess the meanings of words	Sentences	N/A
		Blank-filling based on the reading texts	Sentences	Pictures
Listening	Money-raising activities	Blank-filling based on audio texts	Phrases and sentences	Pictures
Grammar	Infinitives	Example sentences illustrating grammar	Sentences	N/A
		Blank-filling	Recount	N/A
		Blank-filling	Conversation	Picture
		Blank-filling based on the reading texts	Question and answer	Typography (notebook and pencil)
Speaking	Talking about plans	Example dialogues	Dialogues	Picture
		Making dialogues	Dialogues	Picture
Writing	Writing to the head teacher for help with money-raising	Mind-map for money-raising	Phrases and sentences	Mind-map
		Writing task	Short answers	N/A
		Guided writing	Letter layout (typography)	
More practice	Story of the Spring-Buds plan	Reading text and comprehension questions	Reading text	Picture
Study skills	Charts and graphs	Reading text and blank-filling	Reading text	Picture
Culture corner	UNICEF	Reading text	Reading text	UNICEF logo

4.1 *Discourse Patterns*

It has been suggested earlier in the chapter that stories vary in complexity and can be as short as a single expression depicting a meaningful event or action. Extract 1 illustrates such a simplified story-event. This example appears in a matching activity which is intended to build students' vocabulary before they start to read the main text. Four kinds of volunteer work have been listed, and students are required to match them with the four cartoon pictures provided. From the story-event continuum perspective, it is an event which corresponds with Response, the core element in the PS pattern, whereas all the other components of the story have been omitted for pedagogical purposes. For example, "helping disabled people" is a Response to an unstated but assumed Problem: "There are disabled people who need our help." Although Result (positive evaluation) is not explicitly included, we are still able to sense a positive evaluation invoked by the word "helping" in the component of Response. This will be discussed in more detail in Sect. 4.2.

Extract 2 is located closer to the end of "story" along the story-event continuum. Its two paragraphs embody a relatively more complex and complete PS pattern. Specifically, the PS pattern includes Situation, Problem, Response and Result/Evaluation. The Problem and the Situation are realized by statements such as, "There are many children without parents," "My friends don't understand my pain," "She is unhappy and very lonely," and "She needs friendship." The Response is realized by expressions such as, "We taught them to tell stories," "We spent time with..." and "My mother and I will continue to visit Vivien." The Result, which implies a positive evaluation, is communicated by statements such as, "This helps them express their feelings."

Extract 3 represents the prototypical PS pattern and is located further toward to the "story" end of the story-event continuum, because it has a more developed story structure with more detailed information. This story, recounted in the first person, tells how the Spring Buds Project has helped change the life of the protagonist and how she decided to work as a teacher for the same project. The Situation/Problem component is, "In 1989, 4.8 million children in the country, aged from seven to fourteen, were unable to attend school. Eighty-three per cent of them were girls," and "I stayed at home and helped my mother with the housework." It is a problem with some negative evaluation in the context of poverty in rural China decades ago. The Response component is signaled by statements such as, "The Spring Bud Project paid for me to attend that class," and "It also rented a room close to the school for me." The Result/Evaluation is signaled by "Going to school changed my life," "I learnt to read and write and do many other things," "Now I work as a teacher at a Spring Bud school here in Guangxi," and "I wish to help other girls the way the Spring Bud Project helped me."

The PS patterns in Extracts 1–3 can be briefly summarized in Table 2. It can be observed that Response is an essential component of the PS pattern no matter how simple or complex the story-event is. This suggests that evaluation does not only happen in the Evaluation component of the PS pattern; other components such as Response can also be value-laden and invoke evaluation.

Table 2 PS patterns in Extracts 1–4

		Extract 1	Extract 2	Extract 3	Extract 4
Components of PS pattern	Situation			✓	✓
	Problem			✓	✓
	Response	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Positive result or evaluation			✓	✓

4.2 Lexical and Semantic Features

In Extract 1, although four expressions (e.g., “helping disabled people”) reflect material processes with representational functions, it can well be argued that they invoke positive attitudes that are signaled by the verb “help,” which has a positive evaluative meaning typically associated with achievement of goals. According to Thompson and Hunston (2001), verbs such as “help” and “assist” evaluate involvement positively from the point of view of those involved in the activity. In addition, expressions such as “visiting an old people’s home” and “visiting sick children in a hospital” can also be considered value-laden because they easily invoke moral evaluation (Van Leeuwen, 2008). Thus, Extract 1 shows how verbs such as “help” and “visit” potentially bring about positive moral evaluations. In Extract 2, the same signal verb “help” in “This helps them express their feelings” brings about a similarly positive evaluation of the narrator’s act. Likewise, the verb “continue” in “My mother and I will continue to visit Vivien” has a positive sense of expectedness and thus implies a positive evaluation of the narrator’s determination and commitment to the benevolent act. In the meantime, it should be noted that these value-laden expressions in Extract 1 are subordinate to the primary purpose of vocabulary-building in the textbook; that is, they are not designed chiefly to make students think about the implied values or take potential or real actions to help those in need. In addition, Extract 2 contains some adjectives and adverbs of overtly evaluative and attitudinal meanings such as “unhappy” and “lonely,” and these items amount to a generally negative semantic prosody related to Situation/Problem.

In Extract 3, the most significant lexical signal of moral evaluation is once again the verb “help,” which occurs four times. The narrator starts her account by stating the purpose of the text, which is to tell the reader how a particular association named CCTF has changed her life. Another pregnant signal of positive evaluation is the lexis of comparison and achievement (Thompson & Hunston, 2001). For example, in the fourth paragraph, the narrator makes a comparison between the situations before and after she was helped to go to school. The signifying lexical items include “before” in “Before the project started,” “changed” in “Going to school changed my life,” and “now” in “Now I work as a teacher at...” Viewed from the perspective of discursive legitimation, it can be argued that the narrator has become a role model who serves an ideological function of authorizing and legitimizing the value of benevolence (Van Leeuwen, 2008). An interesting note to make is that the verb

“help” in “I stayed at home and helped my mother with the housework” should not be read as invoking positive evaluation in the specific context concerned. According to Thompson and Hunston (2001), compared with adjectives and adverbs, the evaluative meaning of verbs and nouns is more debatable and context dependent. Contrary to the conventionally positive sense of “help,” the evaluative meaning in this case is negative in light of the broader social and cultural discourse about poverty and under-education in rural China some thirty years ago. A school-age rural child is not supposed to stay at home helping her mother with the housework.

Pedagogically, in Extract 3, there are four reading comprehension questions following the passage to develop language skills. The third question—“What job does Feng Guixiang do now? What does she wish to do?”—is noteworthy because it is the only one in this extract that encourages students to engage in reflection on the values conveyed.

4.3 *Visual Semiotic Features*

The multimodal construction of meaning by linguistic and visual resources has been a salient feature of communication in current language textbooks (Bezemer & Kress, 2010; Chen, 2010; Weninger & Kiss, 2013). The EFL textbook examined in the present study is no exception. Because of the influence of communicative language teaching, it has become very common for current EFL textbooks to include everyday topics, situations, and roles that are essential to learners’ school and family life. In the case of our textbook, the cartoon characters, who are mostly students, teachers, and community members, form an indispensable part of the textbook’s visual elements. A glimpse of the textbook shows that almost all the characters are wearing a smile in a more or less uniform way, suggesting generally positive attitudes and values (Chen, 2010).

More specifically, facial expression seems to be the predominant means to inscribe evaluative meanings and plays a complementary role in the co-construction of values to the linguistic resources utilized. In the unit of the textbook we focus on, there are 48 characters with clearly recognizable faces. The vast majority of them are smiling and appear contented or joyful. In only one instance, the protagonist does not seem to exhibit a cheerful expression. In this picture, the protagonist is a sick child in a hospital who is painting in a devoted and tenacious way. The slightly different attitude communicated by this facial expression both connotes a positive evaluation and adds a dash of diversity to the overwhelmingly positive facial expressions.

The significant role of facial expressions in inscribing positive attitudinal meanings and values has been addressed in Chen’s (2010) study of Chinese primary and secondary school EFL textbooks. She found that facial expressions of characters in Chinese EFL textbooks at the secondary level convey affects such as capacity and tenacity and are more diverse than those in primary school textbooks. This is because children’s ability to make and identify evaluative meanings develops from inborn expressions to more complicated facial expressions, which is supported by

moral-stage theory (Feng, 2019). This theory argues that children's moral development goes through the pre-conventional stage, the conventional stage, and the post-conventional stage.

As far as the design of the textbook characters' social roles is concerned, it can be argued that they are neither Manichean nor graduated (Yu et al., 2020); they reflect a homogeneous structure in which all the characters in the textbook world are equally good. With regard to modality, which is concerned with modes of reality or proximity to truth, the fact that all the illustrations in our sample are cartoon characters projects a detachment from the real-life world. Moreover, a close examination of the characters' gazes reveals very few instances of direct engagement of gaze with the viewer, suggesting missed opportunities to engage the reader more interactively.

In terms of the three types of image-text meaning relations discussed earlier in this chapter, there are 10 instances of joint meaning construction by pictures and text, and the themes of these image-text combinations all reflect benevolent values embodied by helping others. Among these instances, most ($n = 7$) fall into the category of enhancement, where the visual enhances the meaning referenced in the text without introducing new information. Extracts 2 and 3 are two examples of such an enhancement relationship. In such cases, the images merely decorate or elaborate the verbal propositions and give no additional information or meaning.

In task-essential relations, the visual element is an indispensable part of the language activity in question. The activity (e.g., an exercise in matching words with pictures) cannot be undertaken without the pictures. Extract 1 is an example of a task-essential relationship. Another example (Extract 5) is a comic strip with dialogue bubbles. Obviously, the message of the text cannot stand alone because the punch line of the humorous conversation depends on viewing the text.

An instance of an orienting relationship is found in Extract 4, which requires students to engage in mind-mapping by filling out the blank in the bubbles of the mind map and figuring out possible ways of raising charity money. In this activity, a few sample solutions have already been given. The image-text relationship here is an orienting one because the mind map visually orients the reader to the logical structure of the activity. The task is directed and facilitated by the structuring of the mind map. Regardless of the image-text relationships found, they invariably serve the purpose of supporting language teaching activities.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

The ultimate goal of value education in foreign language education should be to cultivate socially responsible citizens. For this to happen, we need to maximize the potential of textbooks to engage students actively with social and cultural values through language learning. To this end, the present study has developed an integrated framework and demonstrated how this framework might be operationalized. Taking a

Chinese EFL textbook unit as an example, we have shown how the value of “helping others” is designed in the textbook and demonstrated that the construction of values in the textbook is a complex phenomenon that needs to be considered in a holistic and coherent way.

Our research shows that the PS pattern, which necessarily involves a “point” or evaluation, is an important mediator of values in the EFL textbook. Specifically, depending on the pedagogical purposes, the PS pattern is realized in different forms along the story-event continuum. This resonates with the view that evaluative meaning is scattered throughout a clause or a text and can be difficult to pin down (Hunston, 2011). Although evaluation may scatter across different parts of the story-event continuum, it might be more concentrated in particular parts such as Response. Our analysis has revealed that Response plays an indispensable part in moral evaluation. On the one hand, in very simple story-events, phrases such as “visiting orphans” can invoke positive evaluations of a benevolent act as a Response to the implied Situation/Problem that “there are many orphans who live in loneliness and need care.” On the other hand, in more complicated story-events, the evaluation can be present in all the components of the PS pattern. In the case of Situation/Problem, not surprisingly, evaluations can be on the negative side. For example, in Extract 4, the Situation/Problem of the girl staying at home instead of going to school leads to the Response (invoking positive evaluation) that she was later helped by the Spring Bud project.

This study also lends support to the important view that the language of evaluation is cumulative and contextual and runs through various levels and modes of the textbook discourse (Hoey, 2001; Hunston, 2011; Martin & White, 2005; Thompson & Hunston, 2001). Our analysis has highlighted the important role of lexical signals such as “help” and other words with semantic prosodies of comparison and goal achievement. Evaluation in the textbook is inclined to exist more implicitly than explicitly, and it is rare to find verbally inscribed evaluation realized by adjectives associated with affects and attitudes. This tendency to construct values implicitly has to do with the target learners’ developmental age. Students in this age group are typically at the post-conventional moral development stage, where they become more aware of the larger society and begin to reason more abstractly about right and wrong (Feng, 2019). In addition, as is shown in Extracts 2 and 3, in more complicated story-events, the text genre tends to be an account narrated in the first person, which has a stronger legitimation effect of authorization by role models (Van Leeuwen, 2008), compared with stories narrated in the third person.

This study shows that in researching values in EFL textbooks, multimodality deserves serious attention because it can throw important light on how semiotic modes of all kinds contribute to the construction of values. Specifically, visual elements, especially positive facial expressions, can enhance the evaluative significance of verbally communicated values. In this regard, our study has also identified an issue with contemporary ELT materials, that is, the excessive and sometimes arbitrary use

of visual materials without fully tapping into their teaching potential (Hill, 2013). For example, the subordinate position of the value-laden texts to the linguistic activities seems to suggest that readers are placed in the passive position of onlookers who are rarely portrayed as agents of benevolent acts. This conclusion resonates with Xiong's (2014) finding about the ecological discourse in one EFL textbook: the textbook participates in environmental protection indirectly through its reading and constructs its readers as bystanders and observers. Additionally, among the three types of text-image relationship (i.e., task-essential, enhancing, and orienting), our analysis shows that enhancing dominates. This predominantly referential or denotational relationship amounts to a kind of guided semiosis (Weninger & Kiss, 2013) that diverts attention from deeper thinking about values and cultural knowledge.

In terms of textbook design and pedagogy, we believe that it is important to transform the conventional model of "pictures for exercises" to "pictures for values." First, since the Response component is emphasized over the other components of the PS pattern in the textbooks, more visual elements about the latter should be added to create a more engaging and coherent storyline, which in turn can better motivate students' learning of socially, culturally, and morally related values. Second, it is potentially beneficial to strengthen the interaction between readers and textbook characters by rendering the latter more authentic and relevant to the former's life-world. Third, it also helps to increase the diversity of social roles, facial expressions, and modality found in a textbook. Last but not least, textbook design should move from designing values on the representational level to higher levels of interaction and action (Weninger, 2021).

Inextricably related to society, ideology, and culture, the EFL textbook genre is a social semiotic (Bateman, 2008) choreographing subtle linguistic and non-linguistic choices which can generate a wide spectrum of affordances and functions. The construction of values in textbooks is ultimately an undertaking of recontextualization (Van Leeuwen, 2008) which gives clues about how social, cultural, political, and ideological discourses outside the textbooks contribute to their discourse patterns, lexical and semantic features, and multimodal characteristics. To conclude, it needs to be noted that this study is mainly intended to offer a framework and demonstrate how it works. Therefore, the findings are not to be extrapolated beyond the scale supported by the data. Given that generic features of EFL textbooks vary according to social and technical factors such as target audience and region, learner age, and syllabus type, much work is needed to determine the applicability of the framework proposed in this study.

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Appendix

Extract 1 (Book 2 of *English* for Grade 8, p. 2)

Reading

A What do you know about ...?

There are many kinds of voluntary work. Can you match the activities with the pictures below?
Write the correct letters in the boxes.

- a helping disabled people
- b helping raise money
- c visiting an old people's home
- d visiting sick children in a hospital

1



2



3



4



Extract 2 (Book 2 of *English* for Grade 8, p. 3)

Three teenagers offered to do some voluntary work during the school holidays. They wrote the following reports.

...

There are many children without parents. I met some of these children with my mother. We taught them to tell stories. This helps them express their feelings. One child said, "my friends don't understand my pain."

We spent time with a girl called Vivien. Her parents died in a car accident, and she is unhappy and very lonely. She needs friendship. My mother and I will continue to visit Vivien.



Mark

...

Extract 3 (Book 2 of *English* for Grade 8, p. 13)

A Read a girl's story about the Spring Bud Project and answer the questions below.

Success for Spring Buds

My name is Feng Guixiang. I want to tell you about the China Children and Teenagers' Fund (CCTF) and how it helped me.

One of the CCTF's special activities is the Spring Bud Project. In 1989, 4.8 million children in the country, aged from seven to fourteen, were unable to attend school. Eighty-three percent of them were girls. Because of this, the CCTF launched the Spring Bud Project to help them. Since then, the project has helped millions of girls return to school. It has also built a lot of schools.

The very first Spring Bud class was here in Guangxi in 1989. The Spring Bud Project paid for me to attend that class. It also rented a room close to the school for me.

Before the project started, I stayed at home and helped my mother with the housework. Going to school changed my life. I learnt to read and write and do many other things.



Now I work as a teacher at a Spring Bud school here in Guangxi. I wish to help other girls the way the Spring Bud Project helped me.

- 1 What is the purpose of the Spring Bud Project?
- 2 What kind of help did Feng Guixiang get from the Spring Bud Project?
- 3 How did the Spring Bud Project change Feng Guixiang's life?
- 4 What job does Feng Guixiang do now? What does she wish to do?

B What can you do for the Spring Bud Project? Discuss this with your classmates.

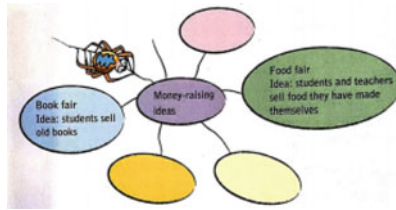
Extract 4 (Book 2 of *English* for Grade 8, p. 11)

Writing

A letter to the head teacher

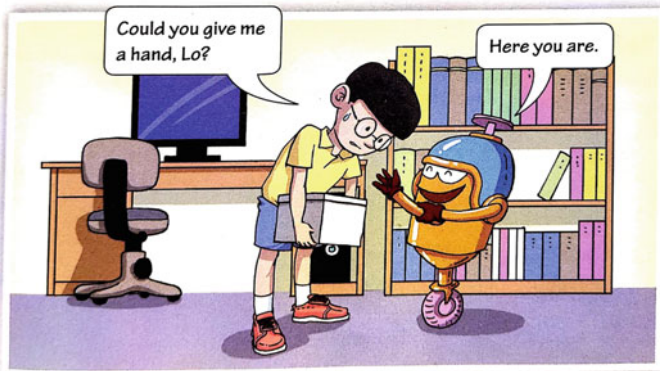
You and your classmates are planning a money-raising activity to help children in need. You need to write a letter to your head teacher to ask permission.

A In groups, brainstorm some money-raising ideas. Follow the example.



B Discuss how you will write your letter. Write down some notes below.

Extract 5 (Book 2 of *English* for Grade 8, p. 1)



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