

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF GRADE 7 ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS OF INDONESIA, PHILIPPINES, AND LAO PDR: TOWARD ASEAN INTEGRATION

JURECA N. FAILANGA-NACIONAL

PhD, Faculty, Education Program, ISAT U Miagao Campus, Miagao, Iloilo, Philippines.

Abstract

The ASEAN Socio-cultural community ensures a blueprint for concrete actions to be undertaken to promote the establishment of ASEAN socio-cultural community. Textbook as instructional material, have a vital and positive role on the campaign for mutual understanding and respect. Hence, all national commissions initiate a reciprocal comparative analysis of textbooks to revise biased and flawed texts which would help avoid misunderstandings of other countries in the future. This qualitative analysis was conducted to analyze the content of the three ASEAN countries' textbooks on the themes of One's Self in Relation to Others, Family as the Basic Structure of Society, and One's Culture in Relation to Others. To find out the dominant codes, discursive practices and their comparison of the discursive practices among the three countries, and the dominant word view among these texts books, the researcher made use of content analysis anchored on Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis. The corpora used in this study were the English language textbooks of Indonesia and the Philippines. The themes in the language textbooks were pre-determined through the initial reading of the text. A line-by- line analysis of the text was done to find the frequency count of each code. The codes were interpreted vis-a- vis the various factors that impinge on textbook production and its social practices. The findings revealed that the textbooks predominantly discussed the country's respective cultures but have minimal discussion of the culture of other ASEAN countries. Moreover, the citizens in these countries shared similar cyclical philosophy about life. Gender inequality, colonial mentality, and the extended kinship were the dominant themes. The difference between the three textbooks lies on the content words which were found prominent. These words are about religion, holiday, and social institutions. In line with the findings, a framework on textbook production and revision was recommended to contribute in the ASEAN educational integration through Intercultural Communicative Language Teaching strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

ASEAN in its Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in the Southeast Asia (TAC) aims Mutual Respect Effective cooperation among member-nations to promote perpetual peace, everlasting amity and cooperation among their peoples which would contribute to their strength, solidarity and closer relationship. As parts of the instructional materials, textbooks and manuals have vital and positive parts to play in the everyday job of teaching and the campaign for mutual understanding and respect. As one of the most important educational inputs, textbooks reflect ideas about national culture and often serve as flashpoints of national issues and controversy ("Mofa: Treaty of amity and cooperation in Southeast Asia," 2020). However, textbooks will continue to be written from the perspectives of each society. This need not impede accurate textbook treatment" (Pingel, 2010). Hence, the language used in textbooks may reflect a certain ideology that an author advocates and attempts to legitimize. For this reason, in 1925 the International Committee on Intellectual Co-Operation, the responsible body within the League

of Nations, utilized the preliminary work of national teachers' associations and certain private foundations, when it suggested that, "all national commissions initiate a reciprocal comparative analysis of textbooks in order to revise texts that are biased and flawed and which would thus help to avoid essential misunderstandings of other countries in the future" (Pingel, 2010). It is then deemed by the researcher to investigate and make a comparative analysis among the textbooks of selected ASEAN countries, specifically the English language teaching materials. This is important in order to find out if the existing textbooks of ASEAN member nations chosen to be a part of this study are indeed in consonance with the aims of ASEAN for education and they promote mutual understanding and understanding among our ASEAN counterparts.

Research Questions

This study aimed to analyze the content, discursive practices, and the worldviews used in English Language textbooks for Grade 7 in two ASEAN member countries and find their implications on integration through education.

1. What are the dominant codes in the two ASEAN member countries' textbooks along the following themes: One's Self in Relation to Others; Family as the Basic Structure of the Society; and One's culture in Relation to Others?
2. What are the discursive practices revealed in the English language textbooks of the two ASEAN member countries?
3. Are the discursive practices found in the textbooks similar or different from one country to another among the two countries' textbooks?
4. What worldviews are reflected by the textbook content and discursive practices?

SELECTED LITERATURE REVIEW

Language and Culture

People organize space and time in the language that they use. One's atmosphere and culture will have an effect on their decoding of the language. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis says that language does not only reflect our way of thinking but is also able to shape it (Boroditsy, 2009). This is the theory of linguistic relativity. It holds that one's language shapes one's view of reality. It is a mould theory that represents language as a mould where thought categories are cast. More basically it states that: "thought is a cast from - what you see is based on what you say" (Bardesha, 2002). In linguistics, the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis supposes that an individual may have certain thought in a language that cannot be understood by those who live in another culture with a different language.

The Sapir-Whorf theory of "linguistic relativity theory" further states that the structural differences between languages are paralleled by nonlinguistic cognitive differences. In order to speak any language, one has to pay attention to the meanings that are grammatically marked in that language.

Worldviews

Long before students come to school, they develop schemata (units of knowledge) about everything they experience. Schemata become theories about reality. These theories not only affect the way information is interpreted, thus affecting comprehension, but also continue to change as new information is received. Schemata can represent knowledge at all levels—from ideologies and cultural truths to knowledge about the meaning of a particular word, to knowledge about what patterns of excitations are associated with what letters of the alphabet. Schemata represent levels of experiences, at all levels of abstraction. Finally, schemata is the knowledge. All of the generic knowledge is embedded in schemata (Volkman, 2013).

Worldviews are related closely to the language used. Not just particular terms, but the entire structure of language. A core behavior is about how people communicate and the monological and dialogical dynamics of sense and meaning making (Volksman 2013).

Language, Discourse, and Social Practices

Discourse, according to Van Dijk (Salma, 2018) is something that cannot be only described at the level of structures like syntax, semantics, rhetoric, and stylistics; but rather, discourse may be studied in terms of actual mental (cognitive) processes of its production and comprehension by the language users. A cognitive study of discourse would therefore examine the knowledge, attitudes, and other mental representations that play a role in the production and understanding of speech, and how discourse would influence the opinion of the listener or the audience on the subject of the corpus.

Hegemony is often referred to as social power. Hegemonic power makes people act as if it were natural, normal, or simply a consensus—no commands, no requests, or even suggestions are necessary. In order to exercise hegemonic power and to establish a consensus, powerful groups control the actions of others through controlling the minds (knowledge, attitudes, ideologies) of groups. This is largely done through discourse (Mumby and Clair, 2007).

Framework of the Study

The analytical framework for this study is anchored of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). It stems from a critical theory of language which sees the use of language as a form of social practice. All social practices are tied to specific historical contexts and are the means by which existing social relations are reproduced or contested and different interests are served. In this light, the study used the adapted version of the CDA framework as presented in Figure 1.

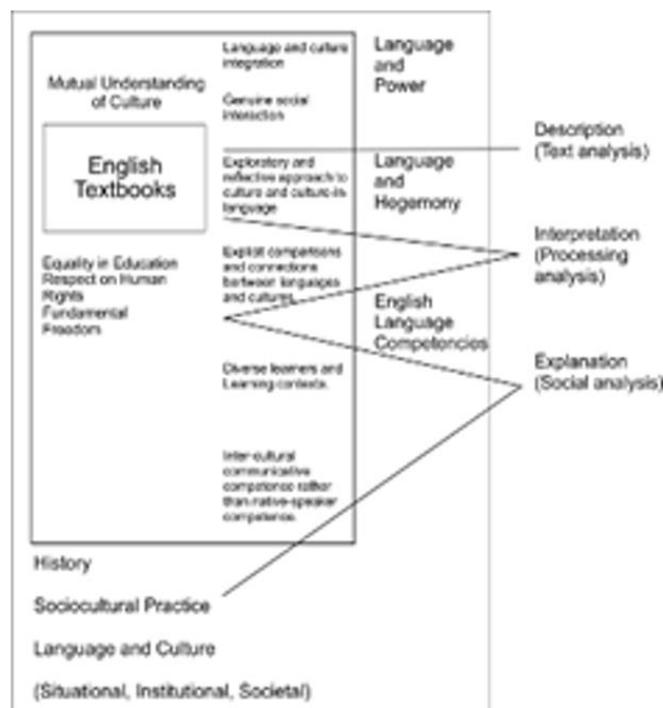


Figure 1: Framework of the Study as Adapted from CDA of Fairclough (1995)

CDA’s first step is text analysis or the description of the text. The inner box, labeled textbook is the corpus of the study. The verbal text found in the textbook is analyzed through content analysis to primarily unravel themes on ASEAN integration on education, such as mutual understanding of cultures. Then, the second level describes the Process of Production. These are the various factors interplaying in the production of the textbooks namely: the ASEAN, UNESCO guidelines in textbook analysis; the principles of Intercultural Language Teaching; and discursive practices.

Since the process of discourse production is seen as something that is circulated, produced, and consumed in society, this study takes into consideration the various factors that impinge on the textbook production, as well as the process of production and consumption of the text, and the power relations existing within the process.

On the third box are the Social Practices where the text for analysis is situated. It is important to look into the aspects language, power, hegemony, language, culture, English language competencies, and the history of the people.

At this level, the researcher goes beyond the level of textual analysis to interpret the discourses vis-à-vis the socio- cultural conditions at play. Although this model is described as levels, it is important not to think of these boxes as one on top of the other, but rather as one inside another like the Russian doll. Hence, that although each level is different they are integral parts of each other.

METHOD

Description of Data Source

The Corpora of the Study

This study made use of the text found in the textbooks of three ASEAN countries, namely: *English 7 for Laos Secondary School* (Lao PDR), *English in Focus for Grade VII* (Indonesia), and the *Journeying Through Literature and Languages with Philippine - Literary Texts Grade 7* (Philippines), which are used in teaching English grammar classes. Grade 7 textbooks were used in the study because the three countries all have Grade 7 English grammar textbooks.

English Language Textbook of Lao PDR. The English language textbook for Upper Secondary School Year 7 (2007) of Laos PDR is written by local writers, Ms. Manivone Phaxayavong, Ms. Bouakeo Vilaylath, Mr. Thongsouk Keomany, Mr. Thanongsack Douangdala, and Mr. Bounthapany Bounxouay. The book was compiled for a contemporary use to meet the new curriculum of upper secondary school and respond to the urgent requirements of the society today. Also, they were produced to comply with the strategic plan of education development which was laid out by the Ministry of Education in Lao PDR. The contents of the book intend to help students learn English language about culture, tradition, custom, and way of living in the society, environmental conservation and job application.

English in Focus for Grade VII written by Artuno Wordiman, Masduki B. Jahur, and Sukirma Djusta (2008) is a book for young Indonesian learners in junior high school (SMP/MTs). The writers intend to develop student's ability in English use through the book. The contents of the book are integrated in the four language skills, i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing. The book aims to build young learners language, discourse, socio-cultural and strategic competence. The book, which is recognized by Indonesia's Ministry of Education and Culture (Departemen Pendidikan Nasional) also presents theories as well as activities that are closely familiar to the students. The activities explore students' creativity and encourage them to use their language skills in English.

Lastly, *Journeying through Literature and Language with Philippine Literary Texts* (2013) by Louna Tagay and Luisa Brutas hopes to instill among the intended readers a genuine love for reading and a deep appreciation of Philippine literary texts. This book has been enriched to comply with the new K-12 Curriculum. It aims to develop the students' macro skills, comprehension skills and their judicious utilization of information acquired through the use of technology.

All these textbooks were written by the local authors of each country who are non-native speakers of English.

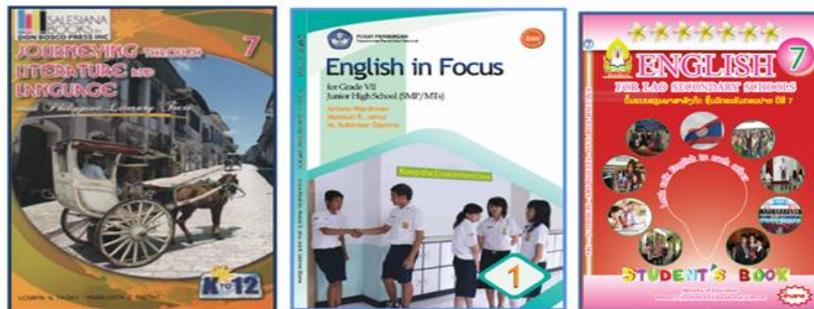


Figure 2: The Corpora of the Study

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-method approach with heavy emphasis on the content analysis of the themes of the three ASEAN textbooks. Frequency count was used to determine the number of occurrences of each word belonging to every theme. A thematic analysis was then used to reveal the discursive practices and worldview imbedded in the textbooks.

Data Analysis

This research paper followed the Six Steps Guide by O'Connor and Gibson as used by Lumauag (2016) to analyze the data. These steps include the following:

Step 1 is the Data organizing. In this step, the researcher did an initial reading of the text to identify the predetermined themes. Step 2 is Finding and Organizing Ideas and Concepts. In this step, words/phrases that were frequently used in relation to the themes were identified and labelled as “codes”. This was conducted using content analysis. Content analysis is carried out by coding data for certain words or content, identifying their patterns and interpreting their meanings. Step 3 is Building Over-Arching Themes in the Data. In this step, the data gathered in step 2 were grouped into meaningful patterns and/or themes.

This step was conducted using cross tab analysis. This was done to either verify the existence of the predetermined themes, discard it, or generate a new one. Furthermore, these thematic analysis allowed the researcher to see similarities and difference among the different corpora. Step 4 is Ensuring Reliability and Validity in the Data Analysis and in the Findings. To increase the credibility and trustworthiness of the study’s findings, the following methods were employed:

Triangulations: Triangulation is a means of confirming data using more than one method (Kulkarni, 2013). Since the researcher was not able to visit the locales of the study, the researcher observed the culture and the everyday lives of the people in respective countries through watching video clips on the culture of each country in Youtube. This was also done to verify the information culled from the data and somehow be informed about the people in each country and gain insights on how they view themselves in relation to other cultures.

Reflexibility: The researcher reflected on the assumptions, biases, conceptual baggage, assumptions and preconceptions, and how these affect research decisions.

Rich Description: The analysis provided rich and vivid description to contextualize the study. Researches were done through the internet and in the library to ensure that the data was analyzed richly.

Step 5 is Finding Possible and Plausible Explanation.

Meso-level analysis. First is the interpretation of text in the meso- level. The meso-level or "level of discursive practice" involves studying issues of production and consumption Macro-level analysis. Then the text was subjected to the macro-level of analysis. At the macro-level of analysis, the analyst was concerned with intertextual and interdiscursive elements and took into account the broad, societal currents that were affecting the text being studied (Lumauag, 2016). In this study the researcher looked into each country's history, socio-cultural practices, and language and culture to substantiate the analysis. Furthermore, the study was compared to available literature in order to find possible explanation and validation.

Relationship to Critical Discourse Analysis to the Steps Mentioned

In summary Steps 1, 2, and 3 coincide with box 1 in the CDA model. Step 5 deals with both boxes 2 and 3, which are focused in the analysis of production and the interpretation of text. Albeit, analyses and the process are not a linear diagram but rather a spiral or even layered one. Hence, there is a possibility that interpretations can be done in any of the steps mentioned and can go on until it the data and the explanation were exhausted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study attempted to use content analysis leaning heavily on qualitative approach to inquiry as reflected in the content of the textbooks being the objects of the research. The corpora of the study were analyzed using various stages. To identify the initial themes and codes, initial scrutiny of the text was used. The codes under every theme were then identified in the corpus through line by line analysis of the text. The results were then analyzed using the Critical Discourse Analysis.

Table 1: Dominant Codes Found in the Three Textbooks

	Indonesian Textbook	Lao PDR's Textbook	Philippine Textbook
One's Self in Relation to Others	Teacher	As Laotian	As Filipino
Family as the Basic Unit of Society	House	Parents, mother , father	Father
One's Country in Relation to Others	Food from other countries	Respective provinces	Other places

This content analysis study on the three ASEAN English language textbooks of Indonesia, Lao PDR, and the Philippines present the following findings:

One's Self in Relation to Others. For the theme, *one's self in Relation to Others*, the dominant code for the textbook of the Indonesian textbook is the code for the teacher. This is probably due to the fact that the writers themselves are teachers. Teaching in Indonesia, used to be referred as *Oemar Bakrie* (an underpaid profession) yet this is considered as a noble profession.

This profound respect for teachers is evident in most of the instructions for the exercises in the book, as exemplified by the lines below:

Read the following story, after your teacher.

If you find some difficulties while answering the questions, you can learn the subjects once more or you may consult your teacher.

However, it seems that the book shows that English teachers should be Westerners. Like in any other Asian countries, the notion that English can best be taught by a native speaker or any white skinned person is dominant in the textbook. This is demonstrated in the following lines in the text:

Our new English teacher, just came from Cambridge, his name is Jonathan.

Mr. Jackson is American.

Mr. Jackson is an American teacher, but he lives and works in Denpasar. He teaches English at SMP 8. He is a very good teacher.

The least mentioned code in this book other hand, is the code for other people's job and neighbor. Although neighborhood is an important social cluster in Indonesia, it was least dominant in the text.

For textbook of Lao-PDR, the code with most number of occurrence is, As Laotian and the code with the zero number of occurrence is neighbors. Lao people are very happy with what they have and who they are. As a self-sufficient people, however, each family functions independently. As Laotians, they are portrayed as diverse but friendly. Furthermore, Lao people take pride in learning and perpetuating their culture and traditions. They like learning their dances, music, and other forms of art.

There are about 49 ethnic tribes in Laos.

Luang Prabang people are very kind and friendly.

One thing that Lao people have with them is the knowledge of traditions that had been passed down from generations to generations.

They learn how to cook Lao food, how to celebrate Lao holidays, and how to behave at home, at Buddhist temples and at the publicity.

For the Philippine textbook, the code with the most number of occurrence is the code for, "as a Filipino." A Filipino is portrayed in the book as a product of colonization. Like the bamboo, the Filipino has withstood the test of time surviving and rising from foreign domination, enduring political turmoil. In the face of adversities the Filipino has always been strong, steel willed and resilient. It is this supple personality that makes him/her live up to any condition after a catastrophe, tyranny, and bearing the pangs of separation from the loved ones (Villalobos, 2017). Like in the textbook of Lao PDR, the code with least number of occurrence is also the code for neighbors. The textbooks of Lao PDR and that of the Philippines have the same codes that have the highest and lowest frequency (As Laotioan, As Filipino).

Family as the Basic Unit of Society. For the theme on Family as the Basic Unit of the Society, in the Indonesian textbook, the code for House ranks the highest. The house as where the family stays is significant as a political, domestic, and physical unit in Indonesia. Most of the houses are considered as a structure that encapsulates the life essence of the people (Carsten and Hugh-Jones, 1995). For the Lao PDR textbook, the code for parents, mother, and father have the most number of occurrence. Laotians have great respect for parents and elders. The family unit is usually a nuclear family but may include grandparents or siblings or other relatives, usually on the wife's side. The family is portrayed in the textbook as the group that perpetuates culture. For instance, most families in Laos organize Baci to send off bad things.

Family members come together and organize a baci.

For the Philippine Textbook, the content word for father has the highest frequency count. This indicates a patriarchal society. According to Rodriguez (1990), patriarchy in the Philippines is historically developed. It traces its roots from the Spanish colonial period. It is characterized by the father's legal and economic control over family affairs. As mentioned in the book, the children will consult the father first before they start their own family and their significant other is very important.

I am going to marry Tona, Do you have any objection, Itay?

Dodong started homeward thinking how he would break the news to his father.

Dodong thought to himself, he would tell his father about Teang when he got home.

The car that my father bought last month.

Father's farm had been destroyed in 1918 by one of our sudden Philippine storms.

Another picture that was portrayed of a father in the Philippine textbook is, it someone who is strong and bigger than life. They had a glorious past, that their children are proud of. To substantiate these are the lines which were lifted from the various parts of the book.

My father and one of the two former comrades in the Katipunan would quickly stand between the furious adversaries and talk them out of butchering each other.

...my father would rouse himself from bed and show himself in the eskinitas so the stoning would stop.

Oh how the young breast would swell with pride when the next morning the trouble makers would call out their morning greetings to the old man as he sunned himself in the porch, as if he was their own father.

Furthermore, the father's opinions does not only matter in marriage, but also on how their children would behave as exemplified by the following line:

"Dad," Alex said, "that man said, I should have not interfered? Was he correct? Did I do the right thing?"

In addition, fathers also pass their fears and destiny to their children. These lines from the textbooks, support this idea,

He has his father's dread of snake.

Dodong resented his father's question; his father himself had married early.

One's Culture in Relation to Others.

For the theme, One's Culture in Relation to others, in the textbook of Indonesia, among the codes identified, the code for food of other countries has the highest frequency count. Like in the case of many Asian countries, Western cultures have infiltrated the psyche of the people through mass media and technology and thus, create a global culture that is Western. Lao-PDR, the code with the highest frequency count is the traffic. Traffic is the major problem in the metropolis of Lao PDR. The concern about this issue is reflected in the number of times the code words appeared in the language textbook. According to the latest WHO data published in May 2014, road traffic accidents in Lao PDR reached 1, 288 or 3.07% of the total deaths. The age adjusted death rate is 21.84 per 100,000 of population, which is the reason why Lao PDR ranks no.55 in the world. These are mentioned by the statements in the book as follows:

Every day, there are a lot of accidents.

A road traffic crash is an event involving road vehicles that results in harm.

In the Philippine textbook, it is, other places mentioned that has a lot of occurrences. In the text, other places mentioned are, America, Japan, and Spain. The Filipino culture is a product of a long history of colonization. This is evident in the textbook. As shown in the following statements:

The Spaniards came and dominated him for more than three centuries, and when the Spaniards left, the Filipino still stood.

Then the Japanese came like a hurricane, like a plague of locust, like a pestilence—rude, relentless, cruel. The Filipino had only hate and contempt for the Japanese.

The codes with the least number of frequency are: Holiday/ Religion for Indonesian textbook; Native food for Lao -PDR, and social Institutions in the Philippines.

Table 2: Summary of themes in the Three Textbooks

Themes	Indonesia	Laos	Philippines
One's Self in Relation to Others	As a member of a specific ethnic tribe	Villagers/ stewards	As a Filipino
Family as the Basic Structure of Society	Extended	Extended	Nuclear
One's Culture in Relation to Others	Perpetuating their respective cultures (Prominent)	Perpetuating their respective culture (Prominent)	Perpetuating their respective culture (Not Prominent)

A cross analysis of the themes among the textbooks as shown in table 2 revealed that the discursive practices promote the agenda of: a) Perpetuation of each country's respective culture over the other Asian counterpart; b) Stereotyping of women; c) Intense discussion on the center and not on the peripheries; and d) Affinity towards a certain western nation. Family is also portrayed as composed of mother, father, and children. Anything that deviates from this is not considered as a family.

The discourse practices are the same in some points but also different from each other in some aspects. The concept of self is varied from one textbook to another. For the Lao textbook, self refers to being a steward and a villager. For Indonesian it is centered to the origin of the people (provinces, cities, etc.). In the Philippine textbook, a manifesto of national identity was made by saying, "*I am a Filipino*," a lot of times. The discourse practice for family is the same in the case of Indonesia and Laos. This is the extended family. It includes aunts, uncles, and grandparents. It is just a nuclear unit for the Philippine textbook. The family as a social unit is restricted to mother, father, and children. It does not give room for the other definitions of family, therefore, it excludes the families with special situations such as families with single parents; families with only grandparents as guardians; etc.

Worldview is a product of one's interaction with various materials. Through this ideological lenses one gains insights of the things around him/her. The following are the worldviews derived from the study:

The following discussion is about the worldview as seen through the analysis of the corpus.

General View of Life. Life as seen in the textbooks is cyclical in manner. Just like other phenomena found in nature, it has no specific beginning and end. Thus, no one can stay in one position for too long, since the flow of life must continue. Furthermore, it is shown in the textbook that as part of the philosophy of the three countries, the natural order of things should be followed and going against it is unacceptable. This worldview is somehow true for the Indonesian and the Lao, but not that evident in the Philippines.

On the Existence of God. Formation of a world thus manifests in most of the textbooks that acknowledge the presence God. This might take in any form (Prabang, Spirits, Allah, Jesus Christ). For this reason, the Asian people, in general are hopeful and resilient. In life, things can go wrong, but they are expecting the *Deus ex machina*, or the divine intervention to make everything right again. Most Asian philosophy and religious beliefs teach that there is something beautiful in sacrifice. They are processed to be the best version of themselves. Hence, trials are taken as part of the process. Undergoing these trials can make one a better person like a coal which is processed to become a beautiful diamond.

On how they View Themselves. The orientalism and the occidentalism is also evident as a part of the three countries' worldview. The Eastern representations of the Orient are created in the context of Western political dominance over the former. They also have close affinity and attraction towards a specific first world country. This might be a product of their history or by a certain economic or social policy.

Ethnocentrism. However, how these Asian countries view them selves in relation to their other Asian counterparts is different. As what was mentioned earlier each nation view themselves as greater than their other Asian counterpart.

Hierarchy. Hierarchy in the Asian society is evident. It should also be observed and this dominates the various relationships- men and women, husband and wife, older and younger siblings, etc.

On the Role of School. The authors portray the textbooks portray the roles of the schools to be centers for information, and orientation. The concepts these authors want to advocate then become a discursive practice embedded in institutions like the school.

CONCLUSIONS

In any particular society and across the world, textbooks have an impact far beyond the immediate confines of school and learning. The extent of their influence must be taken into account because a textbook is a basic learning tool for pupils and teachers. Often textbooks serve as a tool of negotiation between the various actors involved in its production and use an element of communication within families, and a seedbed for value formation. Textbooks also serve as vehicles for passing one's identity and ideologies. For these reasons, there should be guidelines that consider the textbook's overall environment and explore the possibilities of the textbook as a vehicle for gender equality in meeting EFA goals, ASEAN integration, ICTL strategies, and UNESCO goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, these recommendations might be helpful to certain people or entities concerned with textbook production and curriculum.

The following recommendations are directed to three ASEAN member countries; the Department of Education; the Publishers; the Teachers and Pre-Service Teachers; and other researchers.

The Three ASEAN member countries. Results revealed that the texts in the corpora contain biased statements and information. Hence it is recommended that they look into their curriculum and engage in an international book review endeavor.

References

- 1) Mofa: *Treaty of amity and cooperation in Southeast Asia*. (2020). Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. Retrieved from <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/asean/treaty.html>
- 2) Pingel, F. (2010). *UNESCO guidebook on textbook research and textbook revision* (2nd ed.). United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- 3) The 17 goals. (n.d.). *Sustainable development*. Retrieved from <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>