

## Investigating Hortatory Force in The EFL Reading Passages

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### Abstract

This study investigates some the reading passages in terms of hortatory messages. To this end a methodology based on Critical Discourse Analysis was adopted. The reading texts from ELT textbooks were examined through a model which drew on Fairclough's approach to CDA, specifically (Fairclough, 2003) in which three characteristic features of hortatory texts are introduced. The analysis reveals that 15 reading passages of the corpus involve in hortatory messages which are characterized by the above mentioned features i.e. Evaluation, Prediction, and Legitimation strategies. These texts features were considered as markers of contemporary 'genres of governance' which are significant semiotic means to exert power in the process of globalization. These categories were also connected to the social issue of Habermatian model of modernity in which the 'lifeworld' can be 'colonized' by the 'system's instrumental rationality' (Edgar, A. 2006). They were further linked to the concept of 'promotional culture' (Wernick, 1991) in the contemporary world. In the concluding section of the study, it was suggested that pedagogical approach to literacy in the textbooks be 'critically' revised to engage macro and micro social issues in reading comprehension activities. To this end a critical reading model, proposed by Wallace (2003) is proposed.

**Key terms:** Hortatory text, Critical Discourse Analysis, Genres of Governance, Textbook, Evaluation, Legitimation.

### I. INTRODUCTION

English is the language of business, education and access to information among a substantial portion of the world's population and it is taught in almost every country's educational system as the main foreign language. It is also the native language of around four hundred millions and the official language of over a billion people around the world and the dominant language of the Internet (Cook 2003). The speed and quantity of English language worldwide growth has increased by expansion of international communication. The use of English has also multiplied by business, movies, music TV programs, ads in many countries where it is not the main language of communication (Cook 2003, p. 25-26). This status of English language suggests that for a sizeable world's population, learning and using English is not only a life experience, but this language is also an essential requirement of their life. This along with globalization and the US economic and military power has promoted personal, political and academic interests in learning and teaching English throughout the world (Cook 2003).

Closely related to this phenomenon is the practice of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) in the field of applied linguistics

Generally teaching materials are major parts in most language curricula. Much of the input that learners receive along with the activities taking place in the classroom is based on the materials used in the course. Textbooks in particular along with the supplements like workbooks, cassettes, teacher guides, etc are perhaps the commonest form of materials in the language teaching. They serve the language teaching-learning process in different ways. They provide reading texts and practices for reading courses, model compositions for writing or they may provide reference, examples and exercises to develop grammatical knowledge. For speaking, they might provide passages to read and discuss or even a listening text might serve as the primary listening input in a listening course (Richards, 2001). In planning a new textbook, the publishers normally consider a profile of the target teachers, students and teaching context to ensure that the presented material is congruent with the needs and interests of the target audience (Richards, 2005). Therefore the textbooks are often socio-culturally situated for the purpose of the language learning activities.

Some effects and contributions of the use of textbooks in teaching are enumerated by (Richards, 2001) as building structure and a syllabus for a program, providing a variety of learning resources, supplying effective language models and input and giving quality, efficiency and appeal to the learning experience. Some demerits of using textbooks as teaching materials in the process of language learning are also stated. Richards maintains that:

”... textbooks often present an idealized view of the world or fail to represent real issues. In order to make textbooks *acceptable* in many different contexts, *controversial* topics are avoided and instead an idealized white middle class view of the world is portrayed as the norm.” (Richards, 2001 p. 255)

With this respect also van Dijk (2004b) points out that,

...different forms of educational discourse such as lessons and textbooks play an outstanding part in the reproduction of society. Moreover, not only do their overt contents aim at the acquisition of standard knowledge in society and culture, but also textbooks and their hidden curricula play an important role in the reproduction of dominant ideologies, such as those of race, gender and class.

Taking the above accounts into consideration, this study aimed at investigating the functional effects of textbooks used in ILI project from the view point of the social effects of the material presented in them on the students. To this end, it was thought that a critical methodology in the domain of the applied linguistics is needed. Therefore it bequeathed the researcher to refer to literature of critical applied linguistic.

Within the domain of critical (applied) linguistics lies the trend of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which pertains to the analysis of texts from the perspective of the relationship between language and ideology. Critical discourse analysts see language as a mode of social practice and take the context of language use into consideration. They also pay particular attention to the relation between language and power (Wodak, 2001).

Fairclough (2003) maintains that texts, as elements of social events, are regarded as having causal effects of various sorts. They can cause immediate changes in our knowledge, beliefs, ideology and so forth. They can also bring about gradual changes in people's identities, shaping in a particular way by having them exposed to prolong experiences of a certain text representing a certain discourse. Even they can contribute to change in the material world such as changes in architecture. With this respect, Fairclough argues that ideology as contributing to *establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power domination and exploitations* (direct citation, italic added) plays a crucial role within the texts.

CDA is also an emancipatory sociolinguistic study (Wodak, 2001). One domain of the potential contribution of CDA to social emancipation is language education in the schools through language consciousness-raising. With respect to this, Fairclough (1992) is particularly devoted to development of critical conception of language education and schooling. He argues that critical language study is not a branch of language study; rather it is an orientation toward language or even a new theory of language at its early stages which aims to call attention to how language practices and conventions are influenced by ideological processes and power relations of which people are often not aware of.

The ILI textbooks under study include a plethora of texts compiled for reading comprehension activities. A careful skim through the textbooks shows that they are mostly adopted from English magazines, newspapers, etc written by non-Iranian authors, in a non-Iranian socio-cultural environment and having most probably non-Iranian readers in the mind. Therefore, as a general hypothesis, one can think of what sociocultural effects these texts could have on the students who are exposed to them from a different part of the world. Thus it seemed imperative that we critically analyze the texts employed in one of the most popular and pervasive Iranian EFL contexts, from the view point of Critical Discourse Analysis to investigate whether there are any instances of use of language in the reading passages that, inadvertently or otherwise, have ideological influence over learners.

In the literature of the CDA it is posited that genres and particularly genres of governance are important in sustaining the institutional structure of contemporary society i.e. structural relations between government, business, education, the media, etc. These institutions are regarded as "interlocking elements in the governance of society" (Fairclough 2003, p.32). The term *governance* is used in the sense for any activity within an institution or organization that is directed at *regulating* or *managing* some other social practices. Genres in this sense are linked to the notion of *Hortatory Report* which is an apparently *descriptive* text but with a hidden *prescriptive* intent, having people *act* in particular ways. In other words it gives a persuasive report to provide readers with ideological motives for transforming their own practices (Fairclough, 2003). The purpose of this study is to examine the reading passages of the ILI textbooks in terms of characteristic features of these messages which are spelled out in research questions bellow.

The model of this study was devised adopting Fairclough (2003), which centers around the instances of evaluation, prediction and legitimizing strategies which characterize "Hortatory Text". These strategies are pathological in terms of persuasive influences on readers in terms of prescribing particular course of action. These features of the hortatory texts are defined in terms of the relationship between Types of Exchange and Speech Acts, Prediction and Legitimation Strategies which provide basis for textual investigation of the aforementioned teaching materials.

## II. METHOD

The method adopted in this study was based on Fairclough's "textual analysis manual for social research, 2003" in which text is regarded as a concrete element of social events which is, in turn, a product of discourse as an element of social practice. From among the three major types of the text meaning (or functions), this method is particularly interested in actional aspect of the texts analyzed. This function however is a hidden agenda in hortatory texts which were investigated in the corpus introduced as follows.

### A. Corpus (Materials)

Iranian population is by no means an exception. In addition to state's educational system providing almost entirely English-focused language learning programs, the growing number of nationwide language institutions shows that Iranian people are concerned with the English as an invaluable means of success. Among these institutions, The Iran Language Institute (henceforward ILI) is a renowned language learning institution contributing to the development of language learning and teaching throughout the nation. The institute, founded in 1925, is a state-owned, non-profit organization with departments in Tehran and 200 teaching schools in 73 cities across the country with around 240,000 language learners ([www.ILI.ir](http://www.ILI.ir)). The ILI language students are presented instructional materials at all levels which are constructed by the Research and Planning Department of the Institute. The ILI English Textbook Series, among others are published to satisfy the need for the textbooks as organized instructional materials for reading, writing, listening and speaking classroom and homework activities; therefore in ILI which is an Iranian project for Iranian foreign language learners the textbooks are developed by Iranian material developers.

The corpus chosen for this analysis were reading passages of Iran Language Institute textbooks, The ILI English Series. These textbooks are multi-level course-book series which are exclusively designed for adult students who are taking English language lessons in Iran Language Institute. The reading passages under study were chosen particularly from Intermediate 1, 2, 3, High Intermediate 1, 2, 3 and Advanced 1, 2, 3, 4 Student's books designed for classroom activities. In these textbooks it is pointed out that "the Reading part is meant to increase students' general knowledge of English, boost their comprehension and expand their vocabulary, to this end a variety of informative passages has been selected with the students'

taste and interests in mind". These reading parts are divided into *Before You Read*, *Passage* and *Comprehension Check* subparts. The reading passages have been selected and prepared by Zhaleh Gharagouzlu and Roshan Omrani under Ghassem Haghighat-talab's supervision (Intermediate Student's books, Introduction).

The reason why these textbooks were selected as the corpus of this study is that, on one hand, they are part of a project particularly developed for English language learning in Iran by Iranian material developers, and on the other hand the materials for reading comprehension activities are adopted from original English texts mostly constructed in a non-Iranian social context: therefore, regarding the popularity and widespread acceptance of this project by Iranian English learners in recent years, it seems that they need to go through a critical analysis of discourse.

### III. DESIGN

This study was designed within the framework of the qualitative research methodology to examine the textbook passages in terms of hortatory texts which are characterized by *Evaluation, Prediction and Legitimation Strategies*. In order to pinpoint the above mentioned linguistic issues, which are related to the social issue of persuasive actional effects of the texts in language education domain, all the reading passages of the corpus were scrutinized. As this study was particularly designed to investigate the texts at the level of clause, the evaluative Knowledge Exchanges of any type, the Predictions and/or any of the Legitimation strategies embedded in sentences of the texts were all marked off and elaborated one by one in accordance with the model of the study. The result showed that from among total 86 reading passages, 15 passages were recognized as hortatory texts. In the next section each characteristic feature is separately defined and exemplified through sample analysis of each category.

### IV. PROCEDURE

In this section, the above mentioned structures characterizing hortatory texts are elaborated and a sample analysis of each linguistic feature is presented.

#### *Evaluation*

With regard to values and evaluations in a general sense, Fairclough (2003), not only includes types of evaluative statements about desirability and undesirability, what is good or bad, but he also includes more explicit or implicit ways in which authors commit themselves to values. Thus following categories of evaluation are distinguished: (pp. 171).

- a. Evaluative Statements
- b. Statements with modalities like should, 'd better, etc (deontic modalities)
- c. Statements with affective mental processes, verbs such as like, love, hate etc
- d. Value Assumptions

The main point of this model is that if statements involve evaluation and prediction, they no longer function merely as information transmitters, rather they include ideologies which can motivate the readers or hearers to do something that has been evoked by the value laden statements. The following examples may help clear the point.

Ex.1: *Computers Make the World Smaller and Smarter* (Intermediate 3, Unite 6).

In this apparently statement, the adjective *smart* is obviously a positive quality and needs no further elaboration. But ascribing the quality *small* to the *World* is an instance of discourse-relative evaluation. As it will be clearer later in the discussion, this passage is a contemporary text advocating globalization by depicting a picture in which information technology (IT) occupies every angle of the life and people all around the world have access to the *information* and multimedia systems and are connected closely to each other through IT. Therefore the 'smaller' the world is, the better the people are benefiting from its advantages. Thus we can see that in this apparently Knowledge Exchange a Statement that is supposed to be a knowledge-transmitter is actually a value-laden statement implicitly *demanding* an action or at least 'offering' a motive for an action to the readers.

Ex.2: *The ability of tiny computing devices to control complex operations has transformed the way many tasks are performed ...* (Intermediate 3, Unite 6).

In this statement, the phrase "ability ... to control complex operations" carries a self-evidently desirable quality, i.e. to control perplex tasks is *per se* a positive trait which evokes a value likely to stimulate action.

Ex.3: *Computers can help people work more creatively* (Intermediate 3, Unite 6).

This statement involves an assumed value through the verb *help*. The verb *help* implies an amenable state which follows it. Here *people work more creatively* is a value-laden condition brought about by computers.

Ex.4: *Wow! That is a big problem* (High Intermediate 2, Unit 5).

This Statement is an exclamation on the part of the interviewer which is an obvious evaluation of what the director states about repercussions of sleep disorder.

Ex.5: *there are, however, many rewarding pursuits out there* (High Intermediate 2, Unit 8)

Ex.6: *with the all the extra leisure time that we supposedly have, it behooves us to know how to spend interestingly* (High Intermediate 2, Unit 8)

These examples *offer* some activities to change, though through the knowledge exchanges. The evaluations that make the Statements tend to Offer are the adjective *rewarding* in example 5 along with the modal *it behooves us* and the affective adjunct *interestingly* in example 6.

Ex.7: *As a substitute you need an approach that is comprehensive, simple, appealing and above all effective* (Advanced 1, Unit 6).

This Statement attaches four desirable qualities to the procedure that is going to be elaborated later in the text. Comprehensive, simple, appealing and effective, each one by itself is can motivate any student to pursue the approach advocated in the passage.

Ex.8: ... *a green wave has swept through consumerism, taking in people previously untouched by environmental concerns* (Advanced 1, Unit 8).

This extract, similar to the title Statement, utilizes a strong metaphor as *a green wave swept through consumerism*, which involves desirable qualities of strength and popularity of the green mode of consumerism.

Ex.9: ... *what we dream about today will become reality tomorrow* (High Intermediate 1, Unit 6).

This extract is a simultaneous evaluation and prediction. The word *dream* denotes desirability of robots which is going to happen in the future.

### *Legitimation*

Legitimation is used in hortatory texts to urge actions in descriptive texts. Legitimization can be through explicit or implicit reference to the justifiability of the procedure at issue and can be claimed in a number of ways (Fairclough 2003):

- a. **Rationalization:** *Legitimation by reference to utility of institutionalized action and to the knowledges, society has constructed to endow them with cognitive validity.*
- b. **Authorization:** *Legitimation by reference to the authority of tradition, custom, law and of person in whom some kind of institutional authority is vested.*
- c. **Moral Evaluation:** *Legitimation by reference to value system.*
- d. **Mythopoesis:** *Legitimation conveyed through narrative.*

Ex.10: *I always tell people to think of the biggest industrial disaster that they've ever heard about. Usually it was caused at least in part by sleep deprivation* (High Intermediate 2, Unit 5).

In this Statement the director refers to an unspecified incident as the biggest industrial disaster and claims that it happened as a result of sleep deprivation. This reference can tap the social cognition of readers to rationalize the action of taking care of insomnia and to provoke action toward its cure. Something that can cause such a great accident deserves great attention.

Ex. 11: *His friend Steve Fletcher came up with the idea of democratic selection process* (High Intermediate 1, Unit 5).

The activity in this extract is referred to as 'democratic'. The authority of the tradition of democracy in this discourse has been used to give credit to and legitimize the action of advertising for a wife on the Internet.

Ex.12: ... among green consumers animal testing is the top issue (Advanced 1, Unit 8).

The Moral Evaluation strategy by reference to the *animal testing* in this example tries to legitimize the green consumerism.

Ex.13: *One couple stopped by from the hospital with their new baby three months ago. It still makes me chills to think about it* (Advanced 1, Unit 4).

The strategy of Mythopoesis is devised in this example. The narration of the worker's personal experience is used to give legitimacy to the action implicitly required by the writer.

## V. DISCUSSION

As the analysis shows the hortatory nature of the passages which were examined in terms of the promoting characteristics i.e. Activity Exchange types disguised as Knowledge Exchanges, Prediction and Legitimation strategies was revealed. Predominant Evaluations of all kinds such as Evaluative Statements, Modalized Evaluations, Affective process types and Value Assumptions, along with Irrealis Statements of Prediction marked and explained through the analysis verify that there is a hidden agenda lurking beneath the descriptive surface of these texts. In addition, the Legitimation strategies of Rationalization, Authorization, Moral Evaluation and Mythopoesis which were exploited throughout the texts for the purpose of providing the readers with 'rationale' for advocated actions revealed that the primary purpose of the texts analyzed was not giving mere information to the readers. The table below summarizes the value-laden, legitimating and predicting statements discovered through the course of the analysis of the 15 reading texts contained in the textbooks investigated.

Evaluation (Total)	96	Legitimation (Total)	52	Prediction (Total)	10
Evaluative Statements	43	Rtionalization	22		
Deontic Modalities	11	Authotization	15		
Affective Statements	24	Moral Evaluation	10		
Value Assumptions	18	Mythopoesis	5		

In order to give more explanation of the linguistic features described in the analysis section, this discussion tries to provide a broader picture of them and connect them to the social issues of contemporary world which nevertheless affects the life of every people across the glob.



Fairclough (2003) argues that the transformation of new capitalism is transformation in the networking of social practices across various fields of social life such as the economy, education, or family life, and across different scales of social life (global, regional, local) in modern societies. This transformation also includes the transformation of orders of discourse and the processes of networking of the texts and genres (Fairclough, 2003). Therefore one might conclude that as a result of the new arrangement of the networks of the social practices, the new orders of discourse allow for new processes of text production which lead to production of quite new genres and texts.

It is also maintained that the process of globalization as a significant part of new capitalism, involves the more ability for some people to *act* upon and shape the *actions* of other people across far distances of place and time in the world. Textual mediation of social events is a significant vehicle in this process and the ability to control the mediation of texts is a crucial aspect of power in contemporary societies (ibid.).

Keeping in mind that genres are ways of *acting* that figure in discourse, genre chains (linking of different genres) are of particular importance in the process of globalization. Genre chains contribute to the possibility to *act* in different times and spaces by linking together social events, in different social practices, in different countries. This capacity of action at distance is a defining feature of contemporary globalization and thus facilitating the exercise of power.

Genres are important in maintaining the institutional structure of contemporary society such as structural relations between government, business, education, the media and so forth. These genres are known as genres of governance. The term governance is used in a sense for any activity in an institution that aims to *regulate* or *manage* some other social practice(s). The genres of governance, it is further argued that, are essentially mediated genres specialized for *action at a distance*.

Promotional genres, which have the purpose of selling commodities, brands, organizations, or individuals, are types of these genres of governance. Pervasiveness of these promotional genres is one aspect of new capitalism (Wernick 1991, cited in Fairclough 2003) which constitutes partly to the colonization of new areas of social life by business.

Fairclough (2003) links the hortatory texts to promotional genres. Hortatory texts are thought of as texts, *on the level of the clause*, which are descriptions with a covert intent to prescribe, aimed at getting people to act in certain ways on the basis of representations of the described entity. As was mentioned one way to this is to disguise the Activity Exchanges as Knowledge Exchanges and demand as if it is a factual statement by loading them with persuasive value judgments. Other ways to send a hortatory message were prediction and Legitimation which along with disguised Statements characterize hortatory texts.

Moreover, to explain this contemporary social phenomenon of non-congruency between the mould and objective of some modern texts, Fairclough (2003) links the notion of the hortatory

text, especially those with predominant Evaluations and Predictions, to Habermas's theorization of modernity which is centered on communication. Central to this account of modernization is the separation of 'Systems' (notably the state and the economic system, the market) from 'lifeworld' (the world of ordinary experiences). This separation is characterized by two contrasted modes of action i.e. strategic and communicative action. Habermas believes that development of systems depends on an instrumental rationality in which action is strategic, people act in a way that is oriented to achieving results. Strategic action is distinguished from communicative action which is oriented to understanding in the ordinary life, lifeworld. Habermas however sees no problem in the development and refinement of systems and strategic action in modern life. What is problematic is the *colonization* of the lifeworld by systems by means of over-extension of strategic action (Fairclough, 2003, Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999).

Fairclough (2003) adopts this idea in his method of textual analysis. One way to operationalize Habermatian perspective is in terms of Exchange types and Speech Functions at the level of clauses in text analysis. The purpose is to examine the Speech Functions of the exchanges in terms of what functional influences they could have on the readers in some contemporary texts.

The problem pointed out in the present study goes in line with this theoretical account of modernity. The texts analyzed in this study involve the colonization of the students' personal life by economic system. On the one hand, the social practice for which these textbooks are a part is second language learning; on the other hand they contain strategic and means-end oriented texts which persuade the readers to buy goods or services through reading comprehension activities. The pervasive evaluative nature of the apparently factual statements about different commodities or services such as food, entertainment facility, medical care, Internet site, social service, athletic lesson, etc are all instances of 'soft-sell advertisements' (Myers 1999) which indirectly address those to whom these texts try to sell.

This problem is also in agreement with Wernick's (1991) (quoted in Fairclough 2003, p.112) view of contemporary culture (in the world with predominant new capitalism) as promotional culture which is summarized as: "the range of cultural phenomena which, at least as one of their functions, serve to communicate a promotional message has become, today, virtually co-extensive with our produced symbolic world" (Fairclough 2003, p.112). A promoting message understood by Wernick is one which simultaneously *represents*, *advocates* and *anticipates* whatever it refers to (ibid). The pervasive implicit value content of factual statements and the calculative selection of factual statements for the values they evoke as well as the predictions of various state of affairs throughout the texts analyzed in this study corresponds with the concept of promoting message as simultaneously representing, advocating and anticipating.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The result of this study shows that the textbooks, used in one of the popular and credited ELT programs in Iran contain reading passages which are pathologic in terms of potential

manipulative and colonizing influences on the learners aiming at sustaining unequal power relationship between dominant economic and political ideologies on the one hand, and disempowered people on the other. In other words, the evaluation, prediction and legitimating strategies in the reading passages which got their ways into these textbooks through material development procedures, were inferred as purposefully planned for persuading their readers to take action in a predictable way.

However as a concluding remark, it is *not* suggested that the material development in ILI ELT project should undergo a thorough revision to exclude these kinds of texts clearly from the textbooks or the texts selected for the reading activities have to be modified in order to remove or mitigate ideologically problematic features. Quiet the contrary. Drawing on the literature of the critical pedagogy, I would like to argue that, the learners should be provided with as many as possible various authentic texts which are the productions of the discursive processes shaped by current order of discourse of the target native society.

Wallace (2003) drawing on Apple, Giroux and Canagarajah's theories maintains that critical pedagogical theories, on the one hand, point to the way in which education serves the status quo, making the dominant ideologies appear natural and legitimate, and on the other hand, seek transformative possibilities for learners to be empowered. In other words, critical pedagogy attempts to develop a language of critique to deconstruct dominant educational processes, including dominant discourses and the texts they integrate, while offering a language of possibility to promote social change.

Therefore adopting a critical approach to teaching in general and to teaching reading comprehension in particular might provide better solution. This, however may bequeath us to re-conceptualize what we mean by reading *skill* in the contemporary complex world of change and also what we expect from 'readers' encountering a tremendous amount of written information through various media in their everyday life.

One of the most insightful ways to deal with this problem is suggested by Wallace (2003) who argues for readers to be critically equipped and empowered rather than mastering mere linguistic literacy. This approach necessitates a "rich understanding of context" (pp. 44) so as framing the reading activity within a broad micro and macro social and cultural matrix in which literacy asks questions such as "who reads how, what, when and where, and with or to whom" (pp. 35). But such an orientation is absent at least in the reading exercises of the textbooks. A close look into both prereading and postreading activities in the textbooks reveals that non of them addresses any social issues related to the production, interpretation or dissemination processes of the texts which appear in the textbooks as if they had popped from nowhere.

To address such consciousness raising issues, Wallace (2003) proposes a perceptive critical literacy procedure which is composed of four stages as: A) *Situated Practice*: immersion in a community of learners engaged in authentic everyday literacy experience. B) *Overt instruction*: when aspects of texts and reading are made explicit and key terms included C) *Critical framing*: [which] involves students gaining some critical stands on the texts they have engaged with

experientially or analytically. D) *Transformed practice*: to return the learner to situated practice through "re-practice" where theory becomes reflected practice (pp. 33-34).

She also spells out many reasons for including the Systemic Functional Grammar to be covered in critical reading classes for it takes a wide view of context to move beyond the immediate textual environment to take account of the cultural context (for further detail, see Wallace 2003, Ch 1).

Therefore, even if it may, on the face of it seem an irrelevant conclusion for this study, the researcher would like to suggest that the textbook construction processes include procedures, exercises or otherwise techniques to evoke critical social issues with emancipatory purposes in mind. To this end this study refers the interested practitioners to the literature of CDA critical pedagogy referred to in this study as works by Fairclough, van Dijk, Wodak, Wallace, Pennycook, among others.

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