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# Depoliticization of the problem and privatization of guilt - the issues related to environmental disaster in English textbooks

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## Abstract

The study is focused on examining the content English language textbooks and the main research question (How is the issue of responsibility for global problems related to threats to the natural environment presented in the textbooks?) was accompanied by detailed questions related to the image of causes, symptoms and solutions of the environmental problems depicted on the pages of the textbooks. For the analysis I selected 22 textbooks at the intermediate level, published by various, leading publishers on the textbook market in Europe. Texts containing more than 50 words were qualified for analysis and the research sample in the study consisted of 153 texts related to environmental issues. The choice of textbooks for learning English was primarily due to the popularity of this language and, therefore, the textbooks, but also their perceived political neutrality and ideological "innocence". Methodology of the research was based on content analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Content analysis, with the application of the coding system proposed by Saldaña (2013), allowed for organizing of the research material. In the first cycle of coding, initial list of codes, rooted in the research questions, was used to categorize the data. The second coding cycle meant combining fragmented data, reorganizing them, grouping similar codes, reducing their number, identifying dominant codes and selecting representative examples illustrating a given analytical category. The next stage of coding involved assigning codes derived from CDA. In this phase, I coded individual fragments taking into account discursive strategies present at various levels of the examined content: thematic, grammatical, lexical and compositional. The thematic level of analysis included both quantitative and qualitative research. The quantitative study allowed for the specification of topics within causes, symptoms and solutions, while the qualitative one focused on coding specific features of the texts such as the level of their generality, vagueness indirectness and the use of presuppositions. The grammatical level of the study was intended to reveal grammatical structures of the text and the analysis at this level consisted largely in examining whether and how the agency of the described actions is expressed in a given text. For example, the presence of impersonal structures (nominalizations and passive voice) was examined. The analysis of the lexical level was focused on the vocabulary used (including euphemisms and personifications) and the compositional level of the research was concentrated on the structure of the text as a whole (Fairclough 2001; Machin and Mayr 2012; Molek-Kozakowska, 2018; van Dijk, 2006).

The study showed that the texts related to the environmental problems create a coherent message consistent with neoliberal ideology. The main tendency observed in the study is the depoliticization of the problem and the privatization of guilt and responsibility for

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environmental degradation. At all levels examined the individual agency is emphasized while ignoring the causes and solutions for the environmental disaster lying on the side of states and corporations, whose role in this matter is obfuscated and concealed in various ways. At the same time, the depoliticization of ecology can be seen as one of the elements of promoting the neoliberal ideology by language textbooks. In this respect, the study may be a voice in the discussion on the role of textbooks in shaping the value system of their users.

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