

THE REPRESENTATION OF SOCIAL ACTORS IN TOP NOTCH 2A AND 2B

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ABSTRACT

This study, based on CDA, investigates the representation of social actors in Top Notch 2A/2B as EFL textbooks used widely in language institutes in Iran. In order to meet the objectives of the study, following the framework utilized by Van Leeuwen (1996, 2008) as well as Halliday's (1985) transitivity model, the textbooks in question were textually analyzed. The study examined the linguistic representation of male and female social actors with an emphasis on deletion, rearrangement and substitution. The results of the analysis showed that the social actors were represented differently in some discursive features. Female social actors were represented as less successful and intellectual than males. In addition, they were represented as belonging to more ordinary jobs and did not play more central roles in society. More to the point, a female subordination can be implicitly understood from the textbooks.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, ideology and power, social actors, textbook evaluation, discursive features.

INTRODUCTION

According to Van Dijk (2001, p. 352), CDA 'is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context'. The basis of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is on the key role of the text and the talk in maintaining and legitimizing inequality and oppression in society.

As CDA is regarded as an approach not as a single method, Pennycook (1994, p. 121), points to the various approaches to CDA (e.g., Fowler et al. 1979; Fairclough, 1989; Kress, 1985) and suggests that although these approaches:

"Differ in a number of ways, they share a commitment to going beyond linguistic description to attempt explanation, to showing how social inequalities are reflected and created in language, and to finding ways through their work to change the conditions of inequality and their work uncovers."

For Fairclough (1989), one of the objectives of CDA is to uncover the ideological assumptions that are hidden in the words of our written text or oral speech in order to resist and overcome various forms of power "over" or to gain an appreciation that we are exercising power "over", unbeknownst to us" (see Google search, Theoretical Foundation p. 15).

The point is that, this ideological assumption is not directly imposed by curriculum to the learners; rather it is carried out through the underlying "hidden agenda" which resides within the text (see Cameron, 2001, P. 123). In other words, the dominant cultural group controls, classifies, produces, and transmits what kind of knowledge is to be learnt and what values

and attitudes are acceptable in that society. This results in accepting a particular attitude and value as something normal and natural by learners.

The most significant aim of CDA is that it attempts to uncover, reveal, or disclose the hidden and implicit meanings in the discourse of text and talk which are not immediately obvious at the sentence level.

Critical discourse analysis takes language as a means of addressing problems of social change. In other words, without any exceptions, the language used in any text including EFL textbooks can be ideologically loaded although at first glance they may seem innocent.

With regard to the effects of textbooks on learner's attitude and ideologies, the present study examines the ways in which social actors are represented in the texts under study in order to uncover the hidden discursive structures. To discover how social actors are represented in Top Notch 2A/2B textbooks, the present study has adopted Van Leeuwen's (1996, 2008) framework of representing social actors. In addition, the visual representation of social actors is also explored. Specifically, the study seeks answers to the following research questions:

1. Are men and women (social actors) represented differently in the textbooks, and if they are, how is this achieved linguistically and pictorially?
2. What are the ideological assumptions made about the differences?
3. Are particular words or expressions used to represent the ideological process at work?

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

The data selected for this study came from two English textbooks of Top Notch 2A and 2B used in various educational institutes in Iran. The two textbooks as a six-level communicative English course contain 10 units on the whole. Each unit includes 3 conversations and a reading part related to the particular topic of that unit. They were written by Joan Saslow and Allen Asher and published in the United States of America by Pearson Longman Incorporation in 2006. All the sentences in texts and dialogues were extracted and analyzed through Critical Discourse Analysis.

Procedures of the Analysis

In order to achieve the goals of the study, all of the sentences in reading passages and conversations were read critically, focusing on each phrase, clause, and sentence separately and in conjunction with the neighboring phrases, clauses and sentences. The features of Van Leeuwen's framework (1996, 2008), representing social actors, were considered as a basis for the analysis of the textbooks under investigation. Clauses were counted and analyzed critically through discursive features of the framework.

In addition to the above features of analysis, types of processes introduced by Halliday (1985) were scrutinized. Through the transitivity processes, the representation of social actors and the sort of activities they were involved in were identified. In line with the purpose of critical discourse analysis and also to identify the representation at work, the current study was concerned with language used in the texts.

To analyze the discursive strategies utilized in the textbooks under question, both inter-coder reliability and intra-coder reliability were estimated to verify the researchers' findings. In this respect, to assess the inter-coder reliability of the data, 20% of the whole data was given to two friends who were familiar with the procedures of the study. The results of the friends'

analyses were in accordance with the researchers' point of view; they showed high agreement with the researchers. In terms of intra-coder reliability, after gathering the data, the researchers checked 20 percent of the whole data once more within an interval of three weeks. The time interval for eliciting two sets of data enabled the researchers to double check the data to avoid any uncertainty.

Discursive Features of the Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is based on “socio-semantic inventory” which is introduced by Van Leeuwen (1996, 2008). Van Leeuwen draws on a socio-semantic inventory of the ways in which social actors can be represented in discourses verbally or visually. The “network” he proposes consists of three main types of transformation; deletion, rearrangement, and substitution. In other words, the “network” shows whether the social actors were excluded or included; whether through rearrangements different roles were assigned to different social actors; and whether any substitutions were used in their representation.

In terms of “deletion”, the included social actors could be represented in the form of activation or passivation. It means that the doer of the action is the subject of the clause in activation rather than passivation. Regarding exclusion, when the social actors involved in an action are excluded the exclusion does leave a trace. In this case the excluded social actors are back grounded, otherwise they are suppressed. Put another way, in terms of suppression, there is no trace of excluded social actors in anywhere in the text.

As the name implies, “role allocation” or “rearrangement” is concerned with the roles assigned to the social actors in representations in discourses. The term “transitivity” in Van Leeuwen's framework refers to the identification of the activities, activation and passivation, that are related to the roles at issue.

The “transitivity system” draws on Halliday (1985, p. 101), ‘specifies the different types of process that are recognized in the language and the structures which they are expressed’. It consists of 6 types of processes: material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, and existential. Material processes are processes of “doing” and mental processes express sensing, and relational processes are those of being. As the fourth type, “verbal processes are processes of saying and behavioral are those of physiological and psychological behavior, like breathing, dreaming, smiling, and coughing. Grammatically, they are between material and mental processes”. “The behavior is typically a conscious being, like the senser: but the process functions more like one of “doing” (Halliday, 1985, p. 128). The processes represented something as existence or happening are called existential. The clauses in existential processes typically have the verb be, or the verbs indicate existence, such as exist, arise and followed by a nominal group functioning as Existent.

Substitution as the third main types of transformation contains some discursive structures which are as follows: objectivities/ abstraction, personalization/ impersonalization and categorization/nomination, etc., through which the representation of social actors is identified.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Deletion

Deletion, as an important part of critical discourse analysis, can be used to indicate the process of inclusion/ exclusion. As Van Leeuwen (2008, p.28), mentioned “representations include or exclude actors to suit their interest and purposes in relation to the readers for

whom they are included”. Some exclusion may be “innocent”, details which readers are assumed to know already, or which are deemed irrelevant to them; others tie in closely to certain ideology which should be considered. Table 1 summarizes the inclusion and exclusion of males and females:

Table 1. Chi-square Results for Inclusion of Male and Female Social Actors

	<i>No</i>	χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>sig.</i>
Male	253	15.858	1	.000
Female	171			

From Table 1, it can be concluded that Top Notch included male actors with considerably more frequency than female actors which is in contrast with more excluded female actors. The difference is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Although the texts tend to represent both actors equally to reflect a gender neutral bias, the qualitative analysis reveals the case to be different. The text which introduced famous social actors included male actors in action verbs and excluded female actors from being involved in social actions. Stated in another way, the woman’s life was described through passive agent deletion while the man himself was the doer of the action. The Examples display the point properly:

Example 1: Michael Rennie stars as Klaatu, arrives on Earth with his robot companion, Gort (Book 1, p.14).

Example 2: Mexican painter Frida Kaholo’s life is brought to the screen (Book 1, p.14).

Furthermore, another text introduced the ordinary artist man as being in a family of talented artists. While the ordinary artist woman was introduced as liking a piece of jewelry began to get interested in art. In Book 1 page 16, the actor Antonio Banderas, was included as an example of being a successful and famous male actor while the famous female actor was excluded. More to the point, the textbooks included famous male actors such as Van Gogh, Picasso, Michelangelo and the like, but famous females were not included so much.

Considering the exclusion as an important aspect of critical discourse analysis, Top Notch excluded both social actors in some passages too. It is a common phenomenon in newspaper texts and political speech. In this way both social actors and their activities and in some cases just the actors involved in actions were excluded. The following examples make the point clear:

Example 3: *Viruses sent through* the Internet are destroying information and causing too many computers to crash (Book 2, p.106).

Example 4: *Internet fraud* is a growing international problem (Book 2, p.106).

Role Allocation

Role allocation as a discursive structure has an important role in CDA. In Van Leeuwen’s words (2008, pp. 32-33), “representations can relocate roles or rearrange the social relations between the participant.” He further points out the distinction between either active or passive roles of social actors. So in activation “social actors are represented as the active, dynamic forces in an activity, and in passivation, they are represented as “undergoing” the activity, or

being “at the receiving end of it”. In this respect, the current study investigates the type of roles given to social actors. The findings of the analysis are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. Comparison of Male and Female Role Allocation

	<i>Passivated</i>			<i>Total</i>
	<i>Activated%</i>	<i>Subjected%</i>	<i>Beneficialized</i>	
Male	212 96.80%	5 2.28%	2 .92%	219 100%
Female	140 94.59%	8 5.41%	0 0%	148 100%
Total	352 95.91%	13 3.54%	2 .55%	367 100%

The above Table indicates that in textbooks both males and females as social actors were mostly activated in activities (96.80% and 94.59% respectively) and rarely passivated in subcategory of passivation (3.2% and 5.41% respectively). As can be seen, Top Notch activated both social actors in more than 95% of the cases. Therefore, the activation of both social actors rather than passivation in such kinds of textbooks could indicate that they are prepared for EFL learners whose knowledge of English is assumed to be low or average.

Table 3. Chi-square Results for Male and Female Activation

	<i>No</i>	χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>sig.</i>
Male	212	14.727	1	.000
Female	140			

As can be seen in Table 3, the activation of male actors is greater than that of females (60.22% and 39.77% respectively) and the difference is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). So, it can be concluded that Top Notch represented males as active and dynamic actors in their social context. More to the point, the type of the activity they are represented as being active draws on Halliday’s work (1985, p. 106), on ‘transitivity system’, which “construes the world of experience into a manageable set of process types”.

Transitivity

The main concern of transitivity is to show the activities in which social actors are involved. The analysis of different types of processes revealed that material processes were the most frequent ones (41.31%) which was followed by mental processes (25.07%), verbal and behavioral processes (14.25% each), relational processes (4.27%) and the least ones were existential processes (0.85%) as a whole (see Table 4).

As it is shown in the Table 4, although both males and females were mostly activated in relation to material processes, the nature and sense of their actions were represented differently. It can be concluded that the books in question appeared to represent male and female actors differently; that is, males were the actors of material processes about 60% of the time and females 40%. Furthermore, in mental processes males (65.91%) were more active than females (34.09%).

Table 4. Transitivity in Representing Male/Female Actors

<i>Participation</i>	<i>Material process</i>	<i>Mental process</i>	<i>Verbal process</i>	<i>Behavioral process</i>	<i>Relational process</i>	<i>Existential process</i>	<i>Total</i>
Male	87 (60%)	58 (65.91%)	25 (50%)	30 (60%)	10 (66.67%)	2 (66.67%)	212 (60.40%)
Female	58 (40%)	30 (34.09%)	25 (50%)	20 (40%)	5 (33.33%)	1 (33.33%)	139 (39.60%)
Total	145 (41.31%) 100%	88 (25.07%) 100%	50 (14.25%) 100%	50 (14.25%) 100%	15 (4.27%) 100%	3 (0.85%) 100%	351 100%

Males were represented as actors in material processes 87 times while females participated in the process in 58 cases. Moreover, the proportion of mental process referring to males to females is almost 2:1. The Chi-square results in Table 5 show that the difference is statistically significant in both processes.

Table 5. Chi-square Results for Transitivity Processes in Males and Females

<i>Participation</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>sig.</i>
Material process	87	58	5.80	1	.016
Mental process	58	30	8.91	1	.003

Examples below verify the different representation of males and females as actors in material processes. Both males and females are activated in relation to driving and motion, but they are depicted differently.

Example 5: Mr. Soo is planning a *road trip* through the lake with his brother and they plan to *drive* on some rough roads (Book 1, p.44).

Example 6: Ms. Montez wants to *drive* there with her husband and five children. They plan to do a *lot of shopping* (Book 1, p.44).

Example 7: Has she *gone up* to the top of the Empire State Building yet (Book 1, p. 7)?

Example 8: Has he *climbed* the Pyramid of the Sun yet (Book 1, p. 7)?

Although the same phenomenon is expressed by both actors, males were activated in relation to actions more than females. In this case, they have different effects on readers or listeners.

Moreover, in terms of mental processes, the activation of males is almost twice as much as female activation (65.91%, 34.09% respectively). More to the point, males were more activated in relation to verbs like “think” and “believe” than females. Interestingly, the writers of the book intend to present a gender neutral text. The same phenomenon is demonstrated for both social actors and represented them as the “thinker” of liking and enjoying something. However, the realization of the same phenomenon has been statistically and linguistically different and the underlying ideology represented in these textbooks reveals something else. Here are some examples:

Example 9: He wants to paint the bedroom red (Book 2, p.77).

Example 10: She enjoys painting (Book 2, p.77).

Example 11: He likes to drive (Book 1, p.44).

Example 12: She liked the piece so much (Book 2, p.92).

Marginal roles were also assigned to women as caregivers at home which showed the traditional role of women represented as housekeepers:

Example 13: He wants his daughter to stay home and have children (Book 2, p.116).

Example 14: An Indian girl wants to play pro soccer, but her traditional Sikh parents want her to marry a nice Indian boy (Book 1, p. 21).

Substitution

Social actors are represented through different discursive features under substitution. They are as follows: personalization, impersonalization, functionalization, classification, relational identification, nomination, individualization, assimilation, and association.

Social actors can be either represented as personalization or impersonalization. In the former, they are represented as human beings but in the latter they are not. It can be noticed that social actors are almost always personalized. As two types of impersonalization, abstraction and objectivation, only in 3 cases males were objectivated. The examples below verify the point further:

Example 15: Paul Preston's *company* wants him to save some money by sharing a room with a colleague (Book 1, p. 36).

Example 16: His *paintings* often have the same themes (Book 2, p.94).

Example 17: "We have people on staff constantly watching this kind of activity all over the world." said Jeff King of CyberSource, a *company* that manages online billing (Book 2, p.106).

Concerning Functionalization and Identification as two types of categorization, males and females were not equally functionalized. Out of 104 instances of functionalization, 65 cases referred to male actors and 39 cases to female actors (62.5% and 37.5% of the total respectively).

From Table 6, Top Notch functionalized ordinary females more often, mostly in terms of their occupation as low-status jobs (pick up laundry, take away the dishes) than males. Out of 26 low-status jobs, 17 (65.38%) belonged to females and 9 (34.62%) to males. On the contrary, as high status persons, ordinary male actors were more functionalized as professors, authors and lawyers. Out of 28 high-status jobs, 19 (67.85%) belonged to males, whereas females functionalized as having high-status jobs 9 times (28.67). Moreover, Chi-square results indicate that the difference is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Table 6. Functionalization of Ordinary Male and Female Social Actors

	<i>High-status job</i>	<i>Low-status job</i>	<i>Total</i>
Ordinary male	19	9	28
Ordinary female	9	17	26
Total	28	26	54

$\chi^2 = 5.967$, $df = 1$, $p = .015$

As can be seen in Table 7, famous males and females were functionalized differently too. The proportion of functionalization referring to famous males to famous females was almost 3:1. The difference is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Table 7. Functionalization of Famous Male and Female Social Actors

	<i>No</i>	χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>sig.</i>
Male	37	11.52	1	.001
Female	13			

The different functionalization of male and female social actors indicates that females were not associated with high-status activities. Stated in another way, although females were not shown as housewives, only very few instances of functionalization of females concerned high-status jobs. The underlying ideology of such a representation ensures the construction of a male-dominant society.

In the case of classification, males were mostly classified in terms of age, provenance and gender than females (67% and 33% respectively). Males were classified by provenance in 14 cases, by age in 4 cases and also by gender in 4 cases. Here are some examples:

Example 18: *Dr. Augusto D. Litonjua* of the *Philippines* blames what he calls “malling” (Book 2, p. 68).

Example 19: I’m a *24-year-old man* who is already losing his hair (Book 1, p. 58).

Considering relational identification in terms of their kinship and personal relations, males to males were more frequently used (61%) than females to females (39%). Thus, the difference is statistically significant. In this respect, male actors were more dependent on each other than female actors. However, both males and females were rather equally identified in terms of their kinship, personal, or work relations to each other (44% and 56% respectively). So, the difference is not statistically significant. The relational identification of both social actors indicates that, there is no mutual dependency to either of the social actors.

Example 20: These coins are *my husband’s* and mine (Book 2, p. 120).

Example 21: Banderas met *his wife* on the set of *Two Munch* (Book 1, p.16).

Nomination is one of the important factors employed to represent social actors. According to Table 8, out of 221 instances of nominations 126 cases (including 20 formal, 65 semiformal, and 41 informal) refer to males and 95 cases (including 13 formal, 37 semiformal, and 45 informal) refer to females. Moreover, in 11 cases the males and in 10 cases the females had titles, mostly “Mr.” and “Mrs.” In this respect males and females were equal and the difference was not statistically significant.

Table 8. Types of Nomination

<i>Nomination</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>sig.</i>
Formalization	20	13	1.49	1	.223
Informalization	41	45	0.19	1	.666
Semi formalization	65	37	7.69	1	.006
Total	126	95	4.35	1	.037

From Table 8, male social actors are more frequently nominated in semi-formalization than females (64% and 36% respectively). Clearly, as the Table shows, the difference is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). More to the point, Top Notch nominated famous males two times more than famous females (68% and 32% respectively). The underlying ideology of nomination shows that male actors were represented as unique and independent characters.

With regard to individualization and assimilation, both social actors can be individualized and assimilated. In other words, social actors can be referred to as individuals or as groups. From Table 9, Top Notch textbooks tend to individualize famous male actors more frequently than female actors (77% and 23% respectively). Put another way, elite male actors were more frequently represented as specific, identifiable individuals than elite females. As can be seen in Table 9, the Chi-square results show that the difference is statistically significant.

Table 9. Individualization of Famous Social Actors

<i>Individualization</i>	<i>No</i>	χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>sig.</i>
Famous male	48	18.645	1	.000
Famous female	14			

It can be concluded that the individuality of elite male actors has been emphasized and also they are referred to as more independent individuals than elite females.

Both social actors were represented in two forms of assimilation, that is, aggregation and collectivization. The former treats social actors as statistic, but the latter does not. Here are the examples of aggregation:

Example 22: The number of *obese Asians* has been increasing dramatically (Book 2, p.68).

Example 23: Only 16 percent of *computer users* reported they were free from any viruses on their computers (Book 2, p. 106).

Collectivization was also frequently used:

Example 24: *North Americans* like a firm handshake. But *the French* prefer a light, short handshake (Book 1, p. 8).

Example 25: Police chief Martin Beck warns, “*Parents* need to know that when their *children* visit chat rooms, there are *Internet predators* out there who may want to hurt *them*” (Book 2, p. 106).

And also association, groups of social actors, either generically or specifically was also common:

Example 26: *Emily and Robert* are discussing right and wrong (Book 2, p.120).

Example 27: *Mr. and Mrs. Moore* are checking into a single room. Their twelve-year-old daughter is with them (Book 1, p.36).

Example 28: Both *men and women* of all ages request this popular and effective surgery (Book 1, p. 58).

CONCLUSION

Among different approaches to CDA, Van Leeuwen's framework (1996, 2008), was utilized to analyze Top Notch 2A/2B textbooks. The employed model comprises various discursive features to analyze and determine the ways social actors are represented through the texts. Based on the analysis, the discursive structures such as deletion, role allocation and substitutions provided a distinct representation and depiction of social actors in the textbooks.

What this work on the analysis of Top Notch textbooks reveals, is the different representation of both social actors in Top Notch in some discursive features. This analysis suggests that there may be some powerful and profound strategies to see such differences as well as underlying ideologies. Since at first sight the norms and values which underlie texts cannot be understood, it is the aim of Critical Discourse Analysis to make these ideological systems and representations clear and display their relations to the broader social order. In this sense, it can consider CDA as investigating discourses "with an eye to their determination by, their effects on, and social structures" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 36).

It is worthy of note that the most common use of textbooks is to convey certain types of knowledge to learners, they are also considered as effective means of constructing social members' identities and also imposing certain normative identities on its members. So, a critical analysis needs to investigate such effects which are imposed on learners and they accept the messages reflected in particular texts without any resistance.

One of the most central and pervasive concepts in conveying ideologies is power which is concerned with the group or persons who have the capability to use linguistic means for proper disputation. But, some powers are observed to be more powerful than others. In this case, the dominant groups with having this ideology feel superiority over others. Then, the power relations and its inherent ideology is exercised and reinforced through text and talk with the aim of shaping people's unconscious thought. The proponents of CDA believe that the ways social actors are represented in the media including textbooks contribute to gender-role differentiation and gender inequality in society. So, fundamental to the development and use of CDA is being able to identify and explore such issues as gender, hidden ideology, identity, and power structures and their reflection in particular texts. Moreover, to expose and unmask the social inequality which is stated through the language. Such analyses can also provide a wealth of additional information, including insights into both the curriculum developer and the teachers to interpret and respond to the propositional content of discourse. In this way, learners find out how to read critically and understand the underlying ideological structures of the texts and comprehend better.

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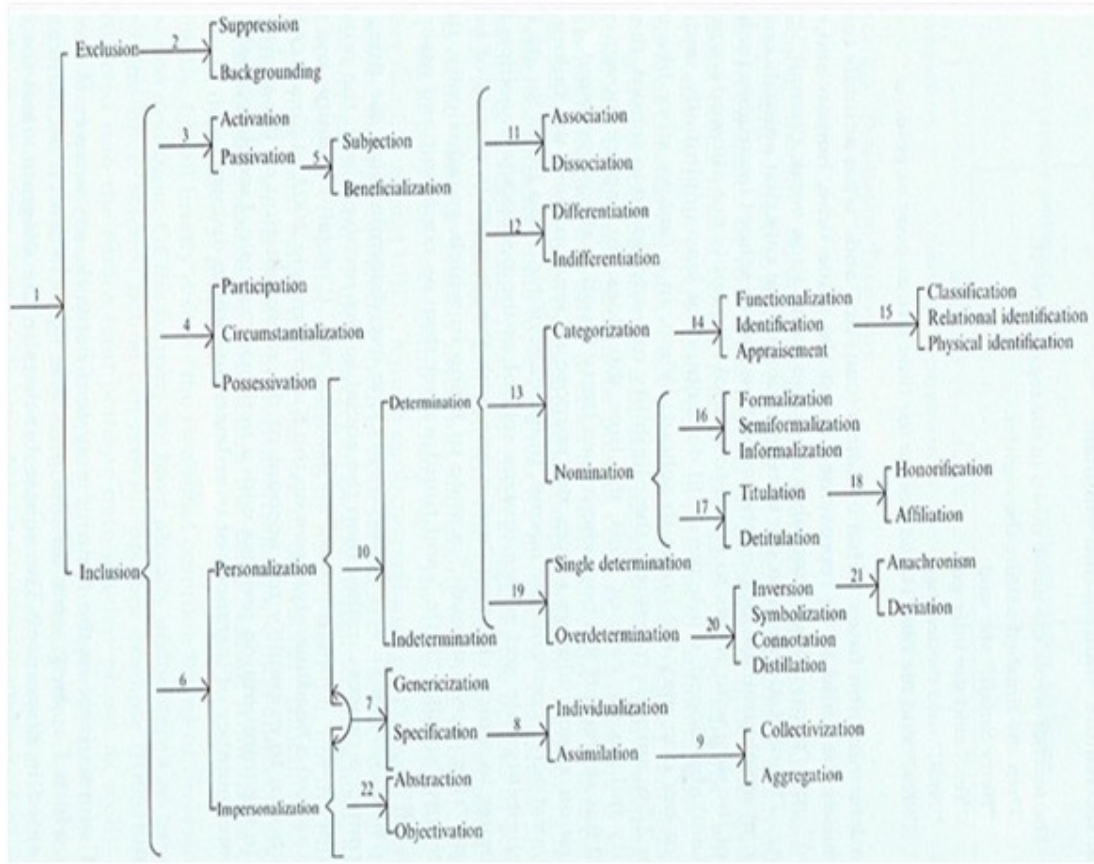


Figure 1. Social Actor Network