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Cultural Hegemony Mapped: Applying Critical Discourse Analysis on Iran Language Institute's Reading Passages

Behnam Ameri
Kerman Education Department, Ministry of Education, Kerman, Iran.
behnam.ameri@iau.ac.ir

ABSTRACT

This article studies the way Western cultural hegemony materializes itself as a discourse in High-Intermediate reading passages of the Iran Language Institute's textbook series. Analyzing three purposively selected texts from the ILI Textbook High-Intermediate Series, this study employs Critical Discourse Analysis guided by Fairclough's three-dimensional model and informed by Gramsci's theory of hegemony. The chosen texts represent three distinct discursive domains: consumerism ("It's a Bargain," High-Intermediate 1), politics ("Candidate for Mayor," High-Intermediate 2), and morality ("Compassion," High-Intermediate 3). The findings show that although the texts are considered neutral language teaching materials, they – through discursive mechanisms – naturalize neoliberal and liberal humanist precepts of Western societies as universal and common sense. The linguistic mechanisms include presuppositions, direct address, metaphor, and strategic omissions. The Iranian reader assumes the role of a savvy consumer, an informed voter in a US-style election, and a morally exemplary individual measured against a secular humanist ethical framework. What comes to light is a cumulative hegemonic project across proficiency levels, illustrating how learners' subjectivity is progressively shaped in alignment with Western cultural and ideological norms. The study concludes that reading passages in the ILI High-Intermediate series systematically construct a cumulative hegemonic project that positions Iranian learners as imagined Western subjects, revealing that even locally produced materials can reproduce Western cultural and ideological norms.

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1. Introduction

The spread of English as an international language is rightly celebrated as a vehicle for economic opportunity and cross-cultural communication. Nevertheless, scholars have argued that this dissemination is barely ideologically neutral. Robert Phillipson (1992)

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defines linguistic imperialism as "the dominance of English being asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages" (p. 47). This phenomenon is illuminated by Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony, which explains how a ruling class maintains dominance "by persuading the other classes to accept the system of beliefs of the ruling class and share their social, moral and cultural values" (as cited in Davies, 2011, pp. 106-107). Within this paradigm, textbooks are "curriculum artefacts that embody particular ideologies and legitimise specific types of knowledge" (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991, p. 3). Reading passages, given their extended discursive nature, are particularly potent sites for this ideological work, as they embed narratives and assumptions that can shape learners' perceptions of themselves and the world.

In this study, the term 'hidden curriculum' needs clarification. It is employed to denote the implicit ideological content embedded in the reading passages. By implicit ideological content, it is meant to refer to the values, assumptions, and subject positions that are not directly articulated but are nonetheless systematically constructed through linguistic and discursive choices. This usage should be distinguished from the hidden curriculum as it operates through classroom practices, institutional structures, and pedagogical interactions, which would require a different methodological approach to investigate.

There is no need to assume that textbook authors were consciously intent on producing ideologically charged materials. The patterns identified in this research may arise from a range of factors: the authors' own embeddedness within Western-oriented educational traditions, institutional pressures to conform to global ELT norms, or the unconscious reproduction of assumptions that have become naturalized within the field of English language teaching. However, it must not be forgotten that the primary concern is not authorial intent but the discourses that are produced and the ideological effects they generate.

The term "liberal humanist" is used throughout this research to refer to a set of philosophical assumptions that prioritize individual autonomy, universal moral values, secular ethical frameworks, and the belief in human progress through reason and education. These assumptions, which underpin much of Western liberal thought, are often presented in ELT materials as universal rather than culturally specific (Pennycook, 1994). As Zhao et al. (2022) argue, liberal humanism's claim to universality has long served to obscure its particular Western origins. It often positions non-Western traditions as either incomplete or premodern versions of the Western ideal. This process, they contend, produces a form of epistemic colonialism that marginalizes alternative ways of knowing and being, especially in postcolonial contexts.

There are two terms that need to be clearly distinguished in this respect. The first one is liberal humanism which refers to a philosophical tradition that privileges individual autonomy, universal moral values, and secular ethical frameworks. The second one, neoliberalism, is – by contrast – a political-economic doctrine that prioritizes market logic, deregulation, and individual responsibility. These frameworks operate in a complementary tension within the texts examined here. In other words, liberal humanism supplies the moral vocabulary through which Western cultural norms are legitimized, while neoliberalism provides the economic rationality that frames social interaction as a market-based exchange. The three texts illustrate different facets of this interplay. The first reading, "It's a Bargain," exemplifies neoliberal consumer subjectivity. The second one, "Candidate for Mayor," naturalizes neoliberal governance. And the last reading,

"Compassion," draws on liberal humanist moral discourse. These three selected passages together constitute a cumulative hegemonic project that synthesizes both traditions to construct an idealized Western subject.

This dynamic plays out with particular intensity in the Iranian context. The desire to learn English for global connectivity and advancement coexists with a deep-seated official and popular discourse of resistance to "Westoxification": a perceived cultural invasion undermining local values and identity. The Iran Language Institute (ILI), as a major state-affiliated provider of English education, represents a key point of negotiation between global linguistic demands and national cultural preservation. It was established in 1981, following the 1979 Islamic Revolution, and was tasked with providing English language instruction within the framework of the new Islamic Republic's educational policies. The ILI's history reflects the broader swings in Iranian language policy documented by Borjian (2013), who traces "how the status of English has shifted from one extreme to another" in post-revolutionary Iran (p. 45). The textbooks analyzed in this analysis – the High-Intermediate series – were first developed in the mid-2000s, a period characterized by what Borjian describes as "the language of globalization" (1997–2005) before shifting toward a more conservative discourse (p. 45).

This historical context significantly shaped the institutional constraints, pedagogical assumptions, and cultural orientations embedded in these materials. The ILI, as a state-affiliated provider, navigated the competing pressures of global English proficiency demands and national cultural preservation, a tension that is reflected in the content of the passages analyzed here. The ILI's High-Intermediate Series, aimed at B1–B2 learners on the Common European Framework of Reference, serves as a crucial textual territory where global English meets local Iranian educational policy. Recent scholarship has highlighted the ongoing tensions in Iranian ELT policy, noting the continued ambivalence in the Iranian political system's relationship with English (Borjian, 2013, p. 60). An examination of the ILI's content is not merely an academic exercise but an investigation into how a state-affiliated institution navigates the ideological currents of global ELT.

While critical analysis of EFL textbooks has gained traction both globally and within Iran, existing studies often focus on lexical content, visual representation, or dialogues. There remains a significant gap in sustained, discourse-level analysis of extended reading passages across a coordinated proficiency series, particularly within a major institution like the ILI. Previous research (Sadeghi & Richards, 2015; Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2015) has provided valuable insights into cultural representation, but few studies have employed systematic Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to unpack how hegemony is linguistically constructed not as overt propaganda but as common sense across distinct thematic domains, such as everyday consumption, civic life, and moral reasoning. This gap has been recently reaffirmed by Burden (2023), who argues that critical discourse analysis of ESL/EFL materials must extend beyond surface-level content analysis to examine the discursive mechanisms through which ideologies are constructed and naturalized. The present study addresses this gap by applying a fully realized Faircloughian CDA framework to three extended reading passages from the ILI High-Intermediate series.

As mentioned, this present investigation aims to conduct a critical discourse analysis of selected reading passages from the ILI High-Intermediate series (Books 1-3). As van Dijk (1998) defines it, CDA "primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk" (p. 352). This research is guided by three questions: (1) What are the dominant themes constructed in

the passages, and how are they discursively realized? (2) How do these constructions align with Western cultural hegemony and neoliberal subjectivity? (3) What are the implications for Iranian learners' cultural identity and critical awareness? This study frames the third question in terms of "potential implications" to reflect its methodological boundaries, as textual analysis can reveal how texts position readers but cannot directly measure how learners actually respond.

This research contributes to multiple scholarly and practical conversations. Theoretically, it tests and refines critical applied linguistics theories (Gramsci, 1971; Fairclough, 1992; Said, 1978) within the under-explored context of a semi-state Iranian ELT institution, exploring how hegemony adapts to local constraints. Methodologically, it demonstrates the value of a multi-dimensional CDA approach that links detailed textual analysis to broader socio-political critique. Pedagogically, its findings are intended to empower Iranian ELT practitioners – teachers, materials developers, and curriculum planners – with a framework for critical literacy. By making the hidden ideological curriculum visible, the study advocates for a more conscious, negotiated, and potentially resistant engagement with global ELT materials, fostering linguistic proficiency without demanding cultural assimilation.

Research Question 1: How is Western cultural hegemony constructed through discursive mechanisms in the ILI High-Intermediate series?

Research Question 2: What subject positions do these texts offer to Iranian learners, and how are these subject positions in keeping with neoliberal and liberal humanist ideologies?

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Cultural Hegemony, Linguistic Imperialism, and the Politics of ELT

Gramsci (1971) argued that dominant groups maintain power not merely through coercion but by shaping society's "common sense": a conception of the world which is "not something original and systematic but, rather, is 'disjointed and episodic'" (p. 12). This process of consent-making is particularly relevant to global ELT, where the spread of English is often framed as an apolitical, benevolent tool for development. Phillipson (1992) directly applies this to language policy, asserting that English dominance serves Anglophone economic interests while marginalizing local knowledge systems (p. 74). He writes that "the arguments in favour of English are intuitively commonsensical... but only in the Gramscian sense of being based on beliefs which reflect the dominant ideology" (p. 74).

It is important to acknowledge that Gramsci's concept of hegemony does not posit a unidirectional or deterministic model of ideological influence. As Gramsci himself recognized, hegemony is always a contested and negotiated process, involving what he termed 'contradictory consciousness': the coexistence of dominant and oppositional ideas within the same individual (Gramsci, 1971, p. 333). Hegemony is never total; it requires constant re-assertion and is always vulnerable to resistance, re-interpretation, and appropriation. This investigation adopts this nuanced understanding of hegemony, recognizing that the texts analyzed here do not simply impose ideology but invite a range of possible readings. While the analysis focuses on the ideological potential of these texts – the subject positions they construct and the common-sense assumptions they naturalize – it does not assume that Iranian learners passively accept these positions. Rather, the texts are understood as hegemonic in the Gramscian sense: they work to secure consent

through the naturalization of particular values, but this consent is always provisional, contingent, and subject to challenge (Crehan, 2016).

Building on this foundation, scholars in critical applied linguistics have further dissected the mechanisms of hegemony in ELT. Canagarajah (1999) highlights how periphery communities negotiate English yet acknowledges that "the dominance of Western conventions in scholarly communication leads directly to the marginalization or appropriation of the knowledge of Third World communities" (p. 4). Pennycook (1994) insists that language teaching must be understood through "the worldliness of English," defined as "the idea that English can never be removed from the social, cultural, economic or political contexts in which it is used" (p. 24). As Apple and Christian-Smith (1991) argue, textbooks are "conceived, designed and authored by real people with real interests" and "the selection of textbook knowledge is an intensely political activity" (p. 3).

2.2. Critical Discourse Analysis as a Methodological Framework

To operationalize the critique of hegemony in textual materials, this study employs CDA. Fairclough (1992) defines CDA as seeking to uncover "the often opaque relationships between causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures" (p. 4). His three-dimensional model advocates analysis at the levels of "text (linguistic features)," "discursive practice (production, distribution, and consumption of the text)," and "social practice (broader ideological effects)" (p. 73). This framework moves analysis beyond mere content description to an examination of "how texts construct social realities, position readers, and sustain or challenge power relations" (p. 73).

Key tools, from Fairclough (1992), include modality ("what people commit themselves to when they make statements" (p. 75)), presupposition ("the propositions which are taken by the producer of the text as already established or 'given'" (p. 77)), and lexical choice. Fairclough (1992) notes that "what is 'absent' from a text is as important as what is present" because "significant presences and significant absences can be ideologically invested" (p. 85).

More recent scholarship in CDA has extended Fairclough's framework to incorporate multimodal analysis, recognizing that texts communicate meaning not only through language but also through visual images, layout, and design (Kress, 2010; Machin & Mayr, 2012). While the present study focuses on linguistic analysis, future research might extend this analysis to the visual elements of the ILI textbooks. Additionally, contemporary CDA scholarship emphasizes the importance of context, including the institutional and historical conditions of textual production (Wodak & Meyer, 2016; Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018), a consideration that is taken up in the limitations section of this study.

2.3. Textbook Analysis in the Iranian Context

A growing body of research has applied critical perspectives to ELT materials in Iran. Borjian (2013) traces how "the status of English has shifted from one extreme to another" in post-revolutionary Iran, observing that "the Islamic Republic's relationship with English has been characterized by ambivalence, swinging between indigenization and internationalization" (pp. 45, 60). Zarei and Khalessi (2011) found that the Interchange series is "heavily tilted toward Western, particularly American, lifestyles, with topics such as Hollywood, fast food, and dating occupying significant space while local Iranian cultural practices are largely absent" (p. 92). Farhadnia and Hassanpour (2017)

demonstrated that global textbooks "systematically marginalize Iranian identity through omission, othering, and negative representation" (p. 201).

Tajeddin and Teimournezhad's (2015) comparative analysis concluded that "most of the cultural elements embodied in the localised textbooks were culturally neutral" and that "first language/local culture did not feature at all" (p. 180). Derakhshan (2021) examines cultural representations in the Iranian EFL national textbook Vision 1 from a semiotic point of view. The study delineates that co-instantiation of text and image was largely indexical with cultural awareness and connotations almost entirely untouched, which, he maintains, leaves little space for users to develop cultural awareness. Babaii (2022) clearly demonstrates how Iranian ELT policy has struggled to resist Western cultural influence through the development of localized teaching materials that are rooted in the national-religious values of the society.

Sadeghi and Richards (2015) note "near-total reliance on imported Western-produced textbooks" in Iranian private institutes (p. 210). The scholarship in the Middle East has highlighted the complex interplay between cultural, religious, and pedagogical factors that shape English language education in the region (Moskovsky & Picard, 2019). Babaii (2022) examines Iranian language policy through the perspective of intercultural communication. She finds that protectionist approaches to nationalism and identity in educational policies limit openness toward intercultural encounters. Beyond the Iranian context, Burden (2023) argues that Critical Literacy and Critical Race Pedagogy are necessary tools for ensuring equitable egalitarian representation in ESL textbooks. This position is in compliance with the present study's call for systematic CDA of Iranian EFL materials.

2.4. Synthesis and Research Gap

The literature establishes that ELT is ideologically charged, CDA provides robust tools for analysis, and Iranian studies have identified problematic cultural patterns. However, as Farhadnia and Hassanpour (2017) observe, most studies prioritize "the analysis of vocabulary, images, or dialogues" (p. 201), leaving a gap in sustained analysis of extended reading passages across a coordinated proficiency series from a major institution like the ILI. This gap has been recently reaffirmed by Bagheri Nevisi and Reisi (2024), who call for more systematic discourse-level analysis of Iranian EFL materials, while Burden (2023) advocates for the application of fully realized CDA models to uncover ideological mechanisms in textbook discourse. The present study addresses this gap by applying a fully realized Faircloughian CDA framework to three extended reading passages from the ILI High-Intermediate series.

3. Methods (Theoretical Framework)

3.1. Research Design and Rationale

A qualitative design centered on CDA is employed in this article. The qualitative approach provides "a complex, detailed understanding of the issue" (Creswell, 2018, p. 46). CDA is selected because it explicitly bridges linguistic detail and social critique, seeking to "demonstrate how texts are designed to get us to see and believe things in particular ways" (Janks, 1997, p. 33).

3.2. Data Selection and Sampling

The data consist of three reading passages from the ILI High-Intermediate series (B1–B2 level). The passages which were selected here represent distinct thematic domains pertinent to the research questions on hegemony using a purposive sampling strategy: "It's a Bargain" (Iran Language Institute, 2006a, pp. 29-30): consumerism and cross-cultural interaction in a market setting, providing a site to examine discourses of tourism, commodification, and Orientalism. "Candidate for Mayor" (Iran Language Institute, 2006b, pp. 10-11): political discourse and civic ideology, offering insight into the naturalization of a specific (U.S.-style) democratic model and neoliberal governance. "Compassion" (Iran Language Institute, 2006c, pp. 99-100): morality, emotion, and ethical reasoning, allowing an analysis of how liberal humanist values are universalized within a sentimental narrative.

The selection of these three passages was guided by clear, theoretically informed criteria: the representation of distinct thematic domains (consumerism, politics, and morality) pertinent to the research questions on hegemony. While the sample size is small, this is consistent with qualitative CDA studies, which prioritize depth of analysis over statistical representativeness. The selection was not intended to claim that these are the "most ideologically charged" passages, but rather to demonstrate how hegemony operates across different discursive domains within a coordinated proficiency series.

This tripartite sample ensures analytical breadth, covering the consumer, political, and moral-discursive domains through which hegemony can be operationalized. For transparency and to allow readers to verify the analysis independently, the full text of each reading passage is included in Appendices A, B, and C.

3.3. Analytical Framework and Procedure

The analysis follows the three-dimensional model of Fairclough (1992), which "brings together three analytical traditions: the tradition of close textual and linguistic analysis, the macrosociological tradition of analyzing social practice in relation to social structures, and the interpretivist or microsociological tradition of seeing social practice as something actively produced by people in social interactions" (p. 60). An analytical coding framework organized inquiry into three dimensions: (1) representations and themes, (2) linguistic and discursive features (modality, presupposition, lexical choice, metaphor, pronoun use), and (3) omissions and silences. The procedure involved multiple iterative readings, deductive coding, and comparative synthesis.

3.4. Ethical Considerations and Limitations

The study analyzes publicly available texts. Limitations include a small purposeful sample (not statistically generalizable) and focus solely on reading passages. As Merriam (2016) notes, qualitative value lies in "reader or user generalizability" through "rich, thick description" that enables readers to determine how closely their situations match the research context (p. 223).

This study acknowledges that the analysis focuses exclusively on reading passages, excluding other textbook components such as dialogues, vocabulary exercises, listening tasks, and visual materials. These components may reinforce, complicate, or even counteract the ideological patterns identified in the reading passages. For example, while a reading passage might naturalize Western consumerist values, accompanying discussion questions or vocabulary exercises might invite critical reflection or introduce alternative perspectives. A more comprehensive analysis incorporating these other

components would provide a fuller picture of the ideological work of these textbooks. Future research should extend this analysis to include these elements.

This article is aware of the fact that the analysis focuses exclusively on linguistic features of reading passages, excluding multimodal elements such as images, layout, and design. Future research might extend this analysis to incorporate these visual dimensions (Kress, 2010; Machin & Mayr, 2012). Furthermore, the study does not systematically address the institutional and historical conditions of textual production (Wodak & Meyer, 2016; Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018), a dimension that would enrich understanding of the ideological constraints shaping these materials.

It also acknowledges that the study does not incorporate triangulation through interviews with textbook authors, classroom observations, or reader-response data from learners. Such data would provide valuable insights into how these texts are produced and received, and future research should extend this analysis in these directions.

4. Analysis and Findings

4.1. Text 1: "It's a Bargain" (Iran Language Institute, 2006a, pp. 29-30)

The first text is presented as a travel advice column authored by a purported Times travel editor. It opens with a narrative vignette of a Western tourist bargaining for an "oriental rug" in a Turkish market, then shifts to direct-address instructional mode, offering the reader practical tips for successful bargaining abroad.

4.1.1. Representations and Themes

The text operates within a neoliberal consumerist framework that, while not explicitly neoliberal in the same sense as the political discourse of "Candidate for Mayor," positions the tourist as an individual consumer exercising strategic choice in a transactional encounter. This framing aligns with broader neoliberal logics of individual agency, market-based exchange, and the commodification of cultural experience (Harvey, 2005, p. 3). In this sense, the bargaining encounter can be read as a microcosm of neoliberal subjectivity, where the consumer is expected to be informed, strategic, and emotionally disciplined in pursuit of personal gain. However, it must be acknowledged that the text's consumerist framing is less explicitly neoliberal than the political discourse analyzed in Text 2. The term "neoliberal" is applied here cautiously, recognizing that the text does not explicitly reference market ideology but rather naturalizes a consumerist orientation that resonates with neoliberal values.

Bargaining is consistently framed through the metaphor of a "game" or "ritual," a lexical choice that trivializes what is, for the vendor, a livelihood transaction. The text positions the tourist as the active, savvy protagonist who "knows she shouldn't pay the full price" and performs "mock frustration" as a calculated strategy. The vendor becomes a reactive figure whose sole function is to "go after her" and ultimately concede to the tourist's terms. This representational asymmetry enacts a clear power hierarchy: the Western consumer possesses knowledge, agency, and mobility, while the local vendor is part of the exotic scenery to be navigated and, ultimately, mastered. This construction aligns with what Said (1978) describes as the Orientalist framing of the East as a passive object for Western consumption and mastery. More recently, Dabashi (2015) has argued that such Orientalist tropes continue to permeate Western representations of the Middle East, often serving to justify neoliberal and neocolonial interventions.

The setting, an "open-air market in Turkey," is imbued with Orientalist overtones. The adjective "oriental" to describe the rugs invokes what Edward Said (1978) describes

as "a long tradition of thinking, imagery, and vocabulary that have given [the Orient] reality and presence in and for the West" (p. 5), a colonial tradition of framing the East as a site of exotic craftsmanship and timeless tradition, available for Western aesthetic pleasure and material acquisition. The market is depicted not as a complex economic and social institution but as a stage for the tourist's performance. This representation aligns with what Pennycook (1994) identifies as "the colonial construction of the Other" within seemingly neutral pedagogical content (p. 46).

The text promotes a distinct neoliberal subjectivity, addressing the reader as a prospective traveler ("So you're visiting another country this year? You already have your tickets..."). This direct address presupposes a reader with disposable income, leisure time, and the freedom to travel internationally, a position that may not be compatible with the lived reality of many Iranian learners. The text thus constructs an ideal reader who is already a mobile, wealthy Western subject, implicitly teaching Iranian students to occupy that subject position, if only imaginatively.

4.1.2. Linguistic and Discursive Features

The instructional section relies heavily on commanding language and expressions of obligation. "Never accept the first offer," "Be prepared to walk away," "Be sure to wear sunglasses." These operate as commands, positioning the travel editor as an unquestioned authority. Fairclough (1992) notes that such prescriptive discourse "naturalizes" particular behaviors, presenting them as "obvious, or correct" so that they become accepted as "common sense" while remaining "implicit, backgrounded, taken for granted" (p. 77). Here, the strategic, emotionally disciplined approach to bargaining is presented not as one cultural style among many but as the universally correct method.

The consistent use of second-person "you" throughout the advice section collapses the distance between the Western author and the Iranian reader, interpolating the learner into the role of the tourist-consumer. This discursive strategy enacts what Fairclough (1992) terms "synthetic personalization, ... a compensatory tendency to give the impression of treating each of the people 'handled' en masse as an individual" in order to mask underlying power asymmetries (p. 62). The reader is made to feel personally spoken to, yet the position they are invited to occupy is one of cultural and economic privilege.

Metaphor reinforces competitive framing. Bargaining is a "game" with an "object"; the tourist must "stick to [their] guns." The vendor, if the tourist walks away, "will most likely come running after you." This predictive certainty denies the vendor any independent agency or dignity, reducing the interaction to a predictable script. The advice to "wear sunglasses to conceal your anxiety" frames emotional transparency as a weakness to be strategically managed, promoting intercultural encounter as adversarial performance.

4.1.3. Omissions and Silences

The text offers no perspective from the vendor. His economic circumstances, his skill in crafting the rugs, his family, and his own bargaining goals are entirely erased. He exists only as a function of the tourist's experience. Also absent is any acknowledgment that bargaining, far from a universal "ritual," carries different meanings in different contexts. By claiming this ritual exists "all over the world," the text ignores different cultural practices and overlooks the financial hardship that forces many sellers to bargain. The text does not question the ethics or sustainability of tourism itself. These silences actively

construct a worldview in which Western mobility and consumption are natural and desirable.

4.2. Text 2: "Candidate for Mayor" (Iran Language Institute, 2006b, pp. 10-11)

The second text comprises paired campaign speeches from two candidates for mayor in an unnamed American city: Daniel Baker (Democrat) and Gabriela Soto (Republican). The text presents their platforms side by side, ostensibly to illustrate political discourse and conditional grammar.

4.2.1. Representations and Themes

The text naturalizes the U.S. two-party system as the default model of democratic governance. No explanation is offered of what a "Democrat" or "Republican" is, nor is there acknowledgment of multiple-party or parliamentary systems. The text presents these two options as the universe of political possibility. This is a classic Gramscian maneuver: a historically and culturally specific arrangement is rendered invisible as an arrangement and instead appears as simply "the way things are" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 12).

Both candidates operate within a shared neoliberal framework. Baker states: "If our city offers an educated workforce, business will thrive here." Education is thus framed not as a right or a public good but as an investment in human capital to attract business. Soto promises lower taxes and that "if businesses return, our youth will have the hope of finding jobs." The state's role, in both speeches, is limited to creating conditions for private sector growth. This erasure of alternative political traditions (social democracy, democratic socialism, public ownership) is what Harvey (2005) terms the "hegemonic" status of neoliberalism, which has "pervasive effects on ways of thought to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world" (p. 3).

4.2.2. Linguistic and Discursive Features

The text's presuppositions are its most powerful ideological tool. The very format with party labels presupposes that the reader understands and accepts the U.S. political system as the normative frame. Fairclough (1992) argues that presuppositions are crucial sites of ideological reproduction because they are rarely challenged; they slip into discourse as "already-agreed-upon truths" (p. 85). Here, the presupposition is not only that this is how politics works but that this is how politics should work.

Both speeches employ first-person plural pronouns strategically. Baker uses "we" inclusively: "we have come a long way," "we will finish the work," "we work together." This constructs a collective civic identity under his leadership. Soto uses "we" more adversarially: "Together we will fight for every street and every house, and together we will win." This enacts what van Dijk (1998) identifies as "organizing Us vs. Them polarization, typically involving positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation" (p. 67).

4.2.3. Omissions and Silences

The most conspicuous absence is any reference to Iran's own political system. One might argue that a language textbook does not need to reference every political system. However, the absence of any Iranian frame of reference, combined with the detailed naturalization of the U.S. model, constitutes a form of cultural disinvestment (Phillipson, 1992, p. 58). An Iranian learner reading this passage is presented with an elaborate

depiction of U.S. electoral politics, yet no invitation is offered to compare, contrast, or critically examine their own national context. The reason why Phillipson (1992) identifies it as cultural disinvestment is the fact that in this text "the cultural norms of the dominating group" are presented as universal while "the dominated group's cultural capital... [is] rendered invisible" (p. 58). Also absent is any critical perspective on electoral politics: money in politics, voter suppression, or disenfranchisement. The text presents a sanitized, idealized version of American democracy, one that is in line more closely with civic mythology than political reality.

4.3. Text 3: "Compassion" (Iran Language Institute, 2006c, pp. 99-100)

The third text recounts the true story of Reg and Maggie Green, a British-American family whose seven-year-old son Nicholas was fatally shot by robbers while vacationing in Italy. In response to their tragedy, the Greens chose to donate Nicholas's organs, an act that inspired widespread admiration and reportedly increased organ donation pledges across Europe.

4.3.1. Representations and Themes

The text constructs liberal humanist moral hegemony. The text portrays the Greens as the embodiment of civilized virtue. It presents their decision to "return good for evil" as a profound moral choice, elevated above the "revenge" that might be expected. The narrative structure – tragedy, moral deliberation, redemptive action, international acclaim – positions the Western family as the universal moral subject. Reg Green's words, "Someone should have the future he lost," are presented as simple, universal wisdom, without asking whether this view is shaped by his own culture or not.

The text constructs a stark moral hierarchy with the Greens at its apex. The criminals are "small-time Calabrian thugs," a characterization that evokes regional stereotypes of southern Italy as backward and criminal. Yet the Italian public is portrayed as morally redeemed through their response to the Greens' act: they are "profoundly moved," they "poured out their emotions," they "begged their forgiveness." The talk show host's statement that the Greens "have given us a lesson in civility" is particularly significant. This dynamic echoes what Said (1978) describes as the Western "cultural mission" to instruct "backward" peoples, wherein the other is shown "as something one judges (as in a court of law), something one studies and depicts (as in a curriculum), something one disciplines (as in a school or prison)" (p. 41).

Organ donation is presented as an unqualified good. No mention is made of the complex ethical debates surrounding organ procurement, the global inequities in transplant access, or the fact that some religious and cultural traditions hold different views on bodily integrity after death. The concluding question, "How many of us would do the same thing if given the chance?" transforms this culturally specific response into a universal test of character.

4.3.2. Linguistic and Discursive Features

The text employs emotionally charged lexis to guide reader interpretation: "compassionate," "profound," "sorrow," "shame." This lexical field constructs a moral atmosphere in which critical distance becomes difficult. The reader is positioned not to analyze the Greens' choice but to admire it.

The order in which events are presented makes the moral lesson more powerful. The opening establishes the Greens as innocent victims: they had spent "a wonderful day

exploring the ruins," and their children were "sleeping peacefully." The text portrays the violence as pointless and unnecessary, which deepens the reader's emotional response. The narrative then pivots on the phrase "This was not the end of the story, however," signaling the transition from tragedy to redemption. This structure, common in inspirational journalism, discourages alternative readings.

Representation of speech is significant. Reg Green is directly quoted, lending him individual voice and moral authority. The Italian talk show host is also quoted, but his words are framed as a grateful response to the Greens' lesson. The criminals, by contrast, are never granted voice; they are simply "turned over to the police" and "placed on trial." This distribution of voice reinforces the moral hierarchy.

4.3.3. Omissions and Silences

The most significant absence is any Iranian or Muslim perspective on death, organ donation, or forgiveness. An Iranian learner reading this text encounters a powerful moral narrative that, while framed within a secular humanist ethical framework, may also resonate with universal values of compassion and selflessness. Islamic traditions similarly emphasize charity and saving life, reflecting the Qur'anic principle that "whoever saves one life—it is as if he had saved mankind entirely" (The Qur'an, 5:32). However, these resonances are not explicitly invoked, leaving the text's ethical framework implicitly aligned with Western secular humanism. It is important to note that this absence does not necessarily constitute a systematic omission; a text cannot include every cultural perspective. However, the cumulative effect of such absences across the three texts – the absence of local consumer practices, the absence of Iranian political perspectives, and the absence of Islamic ethical frameworks – suggests a pattern of cultural disinvestment that is worth interrogating. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that Iranian learners may read the text with critical distance, finding points of resonance or resistance that a textual analysis alone cannot capture.

Also absent is any structural critique of the conditions that produced this tragedy. The text notes that the killers were "small-time Calabrian thugs" who mistook the Greens for jewelers. Yet there is no examination of the poverty, organized crime, or regional marginalization that shape Calabrian criminality. The crime is treated as a random act of evil, not as a symptom of social failure. This individualizing frame follows what Harvey (2005) describes as "a neoliberal market-based populist culture of differentiated consumerism and individual libertarianism" that renders "collective judgements" devalued and positions "individual freedom" as the "central value of civilization" (p. 41).

4.4. Cross-Text Synthesis: Patterns of Hegemony

Across the three texts, a coherent and cumulative hegemonic project emerges. Each passage, while operating in a distinct discursive domain, contributes to the construction of an idealized Western subject characterized by consumer savvy, civic participation in a neoliberal democratic framework, and secular humanist moral virtue.

First, all three texts naturalize Western cultural norms as universal common sense. Bargaining is a universal "ritual" rather than a culturally specific practice; U.S. electoral politics is presented without explanation as the template for democratic governance; organ donation is framed as a transcendent moral act rather than one ethical choice among many. In each case, the ideological work functions not through explicit argument but through presupposition and omission. The Western way is simply presented as the way.

Second, the texts consistently position the Iranian learner as an imagined Western subject. The reader of "It's a Bargain" is addressed as a prospective tourist; the reader of the mayoral texts is invited to evaluate U.S. candidates as if a voter; the reader of "Compassion" is asked, "How many of us would do the same?" This interpellation into Western subject positions is a subtle but powerful form of cultural alignment.

Third, the three texts escalate in ideological sophistication across proficiency levels. The consumer discourse of High-Intermediate One is explicit and instructional. The political discourse of High-Intermediate Two is more complex, presenting managed debate within hegemonic limits. The moral discourse of High-Intermediate Three is the most sophisticated, embedding ideology within an emotionally resonant narrative that discourages critical resistance. This progression suggests a scaffolded curriculum of cultural hegemony, in which learners are gradually trained to adopt increasingly subtle and internalized forms of Western-aligned subjectivity.

Fourth, all three texts are characterized by systematic erasure: of the vendor's perspective, of non-American political models, of Iranian ethical traditions, of structural critiques of crime and capitalism. These silences are not accidental; they are the negative space that gives hegemonic discourse its shape. What is unsayable within these texts is as constitutive of their ideology as what is explicitly stated.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study offer several insights that extend beyond the specific texts analyzed. In response to the first research question, the analysis reveals that each passage operates within a distinct ideological domain, the domains which were enumerated as consumerism, politics, and morality. However, all three passages deploy similar discursive mechanisms to naturalize Western cultural norms. This consistency across domains suggests the ideological work of these texts is not incidental but systematic, reflecting a coherent project of subject formation.

Regarding the second question, the passages consistently position the reader to adopt Western-oriented subject positions: the savvy consumer, the informed voter, and the morally compassionate individual. Crucially, these subject positions are presented not as culturally specific options but as universal norms. This enacts precisely the Gramscian process whereby particular class interests are rendered as common sense. The neoliberal dimensions of this project are equally evident: consumer choice is framed as a matter of strategic calculation; political participation is reduced to market-based decision-making; and moral action is presented as an individual choice divorced from structural critique. This convergence of liberal humanist and neoliberal discourses within a single curriculum suggests that the ILI series participates in a broader global trend in ELT materials in which the twin imperatives of market logic and Western moral universalism are combined into a coherent pedagogical project (Babaii, 2022; To, 2026).

The findings also contribute to ongoing debates about the relationship between text and reader in CDA. While the texts analyzed here construct powerful invitations to identify with Western subject positions, the concept of interpellation (Althusser, 1971) does not imply deterministic effects. Iranian learners are not passive recipients of these invitations; they bring their own cultural knowledge, religious beliefs, and critical capacities to the reading process. They may reinterpret, resist, or appropriate textual meanings in ways that diverge from the texts' ideological intentions (Canagarajah, 1999; Pennycook, 1994). The analysis presented here describes the texts' ideological potential: the subject positions they offer and the common-sense assumptions they naturalize.

However, it does not claim to predict how learners will actually respond. This is a methodologically significant distinction: textual analysis reveals the nature of the invitations, but how learners respond is an empirical question that requires classroom-based research.

Regarding the third question, the cumulative effect constitutes a form of cultural disinvestment (Phillipson, 1992, p.58), whereby Iranian learners are consistently invited to identify with Western perspectives while their own cultural frames remain systematically absent. The texts provide no invitation to compare, contrast, or critique the values they promote. This absence may shape learners' perceptions of their own cultural and religious traditions as irrelevant to the modern, globalized world depicted in the textbook, not through direct denigration but through the more powerful mechanism of erasure.

It is of importance to clarify that the critique advanced here is not an argument against the presence of Western cultural content in ELT materials per se. Exposure to target-language cultures is a legitimate and valuable component of language education; there is nothing inherently problematic about learners encountering Western narratives, values, or perspectives. The concern, rather, is the exclusive and uncritical presentation of such content as universal, natural, and the only available frame of reference.

When Western cultural norms are presented without comparative perspective, without critical distance, and without acknowledgement of the learners' own cultural frameworks, the pedagogical act shifts from intercultural education to cultural imposition. The issue is not authenticity or cultural representation in isolation, but the systematic erasure of alternative perspectives and the implicit message that Iranian learners must adopt Western subject positions to participate in the globalized world depicted in the textbook. This distinction better articulates the normative stance underlying this article's critique and clarifies that this argument is for critical, dialogic engagement with cultural content, not for its exclusion.

The findings align with prior research (Borjian, 2013; Farhadnia & Hassanpour, 2017; Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2015; Zarei & Khalessi, 2011) while extending it by demonstrating how ideology operates at the level of sustained discourse across multiple thematic domains within a coordinated curriculum. They are also in line with Babaii's (2022) analysis of Iranian educational policies which argues that protectionist approaches to nationalism and identity limit openness toward intercultural communication and foreign cultures. In the same way as Bagheri Nevisi and Reisi's (2024) analysis of Iranian EFL textbooks found that cultural representation in these materials often neglects critical reflection and national historical perspectives, the findings of this study resonate with this line of inquiry by demonstrating similar patterns of cultural erasure in the ILI High-Intermediate Series.

More recent scholarship has similarly called for a more nuanced understanding of how neoliberal and liberal humanist values are embedded in ELT materials (Derakhshan, 2021; Babaii, 2022; To, 2026). This research contributes to this growing body of work by providing a systematic analysis of three distinct yet interconnected discursive domains, revealing a cumulative hegemonic project that earlier studies, focused on isolated lexical or visual elements, have not fully captured.

It is important to acknowledge that the concept of interpellation, while useful for understanding how texts address readers, does not imply deterministic effects. As Althusser himself recognized, individuals are always already subjects who may accept, resist, or negotiate ideological hailing (Althusser, 1971, p. 174), the notion of 'imagined

Western subjects' is not intended to claim that Iranian learners passively adopt the subject positions these texts construct. On the contrary, following Canagarajah (1999) and Pennycook (1994), learners are active participants in the reading process and may appropriate, resist, and recontextualize textual meanings in ways that diverge from texts' ideological orientations. The texts analyzed here offer invitations to identify with Western subject positions. How learners respond to these invitations, however, is an empirical question that lies beyond the scope of textual analysis. The contribution of this study lies in identifying the nature of these invitations, not in predicting their effects.

This study has limitations. The sample is small and not generalizable. The analysis focuses only on reading passages, excluding other textbook components. It does not incorporate teacher or learner perspectives, nor does it address the institutional and historical conditions of textual production. Future research should address these through larger-scale analysis and classroom-based ethnographic studies.

6. Conclusion

6.1. Summary of the Study

This study has investigated how Western cultural hegemony is discursively constructed in reading passages of the ILI High-Intermediate series. Through systematic CDA of three texts – "It's a Bargain," "Candidate for Mayor," and "Compassion" – the analysis has revealed a coherent ideological project. Across consumerism, politics, and morality, these passages position the Iranian learner as an imagined Western subject and present neoliberal, Western-oriented norms as universal common sense. The study concludes that even materials which are locally produced and developed within a state-affiliated institution can reproduce Western cultural and ideological norms. This happens often through subtle discursive mechanisms rather than overt propaganda.

6.2. Contribution of the Study

Theoretically, the study demonstrates the continued relevance of Gramsci's concept of hegemony and Fairclough's CDA framework for understanding contemporary ELT materials. It extends this framework by showing how hegemony operates across multiple discursive domains within a coordinated curriculum, revealing a cumulative project of subject formation that earlier studies which focused on isolated lexical or visual elements have not fully captured. Methodologically, it offers a replicable analytical framework for examining reading passages. Empirically, it provides the first sustained CDA of reading passages in the ILI High-Intermediate series, filling a significant gap in the literature on Iranian ELT materials.

6.3. Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings of this research carry implications for multiple stakeholders. For curriculum developers and materials writers at Iran Language Institute, it invites critical self-reflection. Local production does not automatically guarantee cultural autonomy. Hegemonic content can be – and, this study argues, has been – reproduced from within. A more deliberate, critical approach to materials development is needed, one that consciously seeks to represent Iranian perspectives and experiences not as exotic additions to a Western-centric curriculum but as legitimate, complex subjects of inquiry in their own right.

For teacher educators, the study underscores the urgency of incorporating critical literacy frameworks into training. For classroom practitioners, the answer is not to

abandon the textbook but to teach it critically, asking questions the text does not ask: What is the vendor thinking? How else might a society organize its politics? What might an Islamic ethics of organ donation look like?

To translate this critical stance into classroom practice, four pedagogical strategies are worth considering. Firstly, texts can be used as prompts for cross-cultural comparison, inviting learners to examine how the same topics such as bargaining, political participation, or moral decision-making might be represented differently from Iranian or Islamic perspectives. Secondly, learners can be engaged in critical questioning of the values embedded in passages and not simply comprehending the text but interrogating its assumptions, omissions, and subject positions. Thirdly, learners can be encouraged to rewrite texts from alternative cultural perspectives: how a passage like "It's a Bargain" might read from the vendor's viewpoint or how "Compassion" might be told from the perspective of an Italian family in need of organ donation. Fourthly, a dialogic approach can be adopted that invites learners to share their own cultural frameworks while creating a classroom space where multiple perspectives coexist and are negotiated rather than a single Western norm being imposed.

It must be acknowledged that each of these strategies involves different forms of resistance and that the choice of approach depends on institutional constraints, teacher readiness, and learner proficiency levels. The goal is not to reject English or Western culture but to equip learners with the analytical tools to encounter both consciously and critically.

6.4. Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should extend this study in several directions. First, larger-scale analyses of the complete ILI series across all proficiency levels would reveal whether the patterns identified here are consistent or variable across the curriculum. Second, comparative studies examining reading passages from other Iranian ELT providers would situate the ILI materials within a broader national context. Third, classroom-based ethnographic research is urgently needed to investigate how teachers and learners actually engage with these texts. Fourth, action research studies that develop and implement critical pedagogical interventions would provide practical guidance for educators who seek to transform their classrooms into sites of genuine intercultural dialogue rather than cultural reproduction.

6.5. Concluding Reflection

English in contemporary Iran has been considered both a necessity and a threat. This study has shown it is also a carrier of values that can subtly erode learners' attachments to their own traditions. This is not an argument against teaching English. It is an argument for teaching it differently. The goal of critical language education is not to shield learners from Western culture but to equip them with the analytical tools to encounter it consciously, to recognize its appeals and its erasures, to accept what serves them and to resist what does not. Every presupposition can be interrogated. Every silence can be brought into view through critical pedagogical practice. The task for Iranian educators is to create pedagogical conditions in which such refusal becomes possible, transforming the language classroom from a site of cultural reproduction into a site of cultural dialogue, critique, and freedom.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Disclosure of AI Use in Manuscript Preparation

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author used AI-operated software to assist with linguistic error detection and formatting of the article. The author has thoroughly reviewed and revised all content produced by this tool and accepts full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and originality of the final work.

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Appendix A

It's a Bargain

By Tammy Samuelson

In an open-air market in Turkey, a tourist is admiring the beautiful oriental rugs on display. She finds one she likes and asks the price. "One thousand dollars," the vendor says. She knows she shouldn't pay the full price, so she says "six hundred." "Nine

hundred," the vendor counters. The woman throws up her hands in mock frustration and walks away. The vendor goes after her. Not long afterwards both vendor and buyer agree on eight hundred dollars, a 20 percent reduction. Both vendor and customer are smiling and happy. They've just participated in a ritual that has existed for centuries, all over the world: bargaining.

So you're visiting another country this year? You already have your tickets, and you leave next Tuesday at 4 p.m. A week from now you'll be relaxing in the sunshine or visiting famous landmarks. By the end of the summer, you'll have been traveling for several weeks, and it'll be time to think about bringing back some souvenirs for friends and family. Souvenirs cost money, though, so maybe if you do some bargaining, you'll be able to get some good buys. What? You don't know how to bargain? You're afraid to? Relax. In my capacity as Times travel editor, yours truly has been making trips abroad since 1995, and bargaining is one thing I've learned how to do. In this week's column I'm going to give you some tips on how to perform this most enjoyable activity.

First tip: Find out how much something is worth. When you bargain with someone, the object of the game is not to beat the vendor. It's to pay a fair price for whatever you want to buy. So do some research. Get a good idea of the general price range for an item. That way you'll be able to bargain with confidence.

OK. You've been doing your research. Now you know how much things cost, so you can go shopping. Second tip: Never accept the first offer. You'll need to make a counter-offer when the vendor announces the price. Remember: The vendor expects this.

Third tip: Treat the vendor with respect. Remember that, while the bargaining experience should not be a competition, it should be a game. Stick to your guns, but have fun with the process. If the vendor insists it's impossible to go any lower on the price, show him or her how much money you have. But be polite.

Fourth tip: Be prepared to walk away if you don't get a fair price. Don't get angry. Just make it clear that you're not going to buy if the vendor doesn't come down. If he doesn't, start to walk away. As soon as you do this, he will most likely come running after you.

The final tip: Be sure to wear sunglasses. For centuries people of many cultures have regarded the eyes as "the windows of the soul." If you're nervous or intimidated, this will show in your eyes. Wear dark glasses to conceal your anxiety. You'll feel more confident if you do.

So, are you persuaded? Feel a little more confident, or at least a little less nervous? If you go home without having experienced bargaining, you'll have missed out on one of life's most interesting experiences. Give it a try. Have a great trip and have no fear!

Appendix B

Candidate for Mayor
Daniel Baker
Party: Democrat
Occupation: Mayor
Background: City Clerk, State Assemblyman, attorney
Education: Yale Law School, LL.B.; Howard University, B.S. cum laude
Four years ago, I promised to create a government that you could count on. Today, after four years as mayor of this great city, I am proud to say that we have come a long way. But the job is not finished. If I am reelected, we will finish the work we started four years ago.

My first priority is education. In the next ten years, there will be millions of new jobs in this country. Many of those jobs could be filled by citizens of our city if we prepare them. But they won't be ready unless we improve our school system now.

My second priority is housing. It won't do any good to provide jobs if people continue to live in bad conditions. We must rebuild housing in our city neighborhoods. My opponent talks about a "war on crime." I agree that violent crime is a problem. But we're not going to solve the social problems in this city unless we house people better.

If our city offers an educated workforce, business will thrive here. This will provide more money to rebuild housing. If our citizens have decent homes, then our neighborhoods will become healthy again. These problems won't go away quickly. But if we work together, we will solve them. I urge everyone to get out and vote on election day.

Mayoral Candidate Gabriela Soto
Party: Republican
Occupation: City Comptroller
Background: District Attorney, lawyer
Education: U.C.L.A. Law School, LL.B.; U.S.C., B.A.
Today, street crime has made many people afraid to leave their homes. If I am elected, I will give neighborhoods back to their citizens. A lot of this violence is being committed by young offenders. My administration will say to them: If you want to stay out of trouble, we will help you do that. But if you do the crime, you'll do the time. If you commit a violent crime, you will go to jail and serve your full sentence.

If I become your mayor, I will put more police on the streets and set up a cooperative program between police and communities. Together we will fight for every street and every house, and together we will win. This will be my first priority if I am elected.

But our young people won't avoid crime unless they have hope for their futures. That's why my second priority as mayor will be to bring businesses back to our city. My opponent raised taxes as soon as he took office four years ago. As a result, many businesses left town. If we lower taxes, they will return. If businesses return, our youth will have the hope of finding jobs. And if they have hope, they will not turn to a life of crime. I urge you to vote for me next Tuesday. If I am elected, we'll hang out a sign: "Open for business again."

Appendix C

Compassion

It was the evening of September 29, 1994. Having spent a wonderful day exploring the ruins at Paestum in southern Italy, Reg and Maggie Green were driving south in the area of Italy known as the boot, their children Nicholas and Eleanor sleeping peacefully in the back seat. Suddenly an old and decrepit car pulled up alongside them, and an Italian with a bandana over his face screamed at them, signaling them to stop. Not knowing what to do, Reg weighed the gravity of the situation. If they stopped, they risked a potentially deadly confrontation with criminals; if they sped away, they might escape. Guessing that their newer-model car could probably get away from the old car the criminals were driving, Reg floored the gas pedal. Shots rang out, shattering both windows on the driver's side of the car.

The Greens' car took off, easily outdistancing the bandits' car. Checking the children, Reg and Maggie found them still sleeping peacefully in the back seat. A bit farther down the road, Reg saw a police car parked on the shoulder and pulled over to

alert the authorities. Upon opening the door, he saw blood oozing from the back of Nicholas's head. Rushed to a hospital, Nicholas lay in a coma for two days. Then doctors declared him brain-dead.

This was not the end of the story, however. As Nicholas lay on his deathbed, Reg and Maggie decided that something good ought to come out of the situation. Realizing that it would be far better to return good for evil than to seek revenge, they offered Nicholas' organs for transplant. "Someone should have the future he lost," Reg said. Profoundly moved by the gesture, Italians poured out their emotions. Maurizio Costanza, the host of a talk show, summed up the common feeling by saying, "You have given us a lesson in civility ... I should say we are not in the face of pain and sorrow."

The great irony of this tragedy was that it was a mistake. Investigators later determined that Nicholas was killed by two small-time Calabrian thugs who thought the Greens were jewelers carrying precious stones. Having been turned over to the police, apparently by the Calabrian Mafia, they were placed on trial.

People all over Europe and North America reacted in sorrow. Headlines in Italian newspapers spoke of LA NOSTRA VERGOGNA ("Our shame"). Wherever the Greens went, they met Italians who begged their forgiveness. The Greens were given a medal, Italy's highest honor, by the Prime Minister.

Some good has indeed come out of Nicholas's death. Seven Italians received Nicholas's heart, liver, kidneys, islet cells, and corneas. Perhaps more importantly, a blow was struck for organ donation. Having heard Reg and Maggie speak on French television, 40,000 French people pledged to donate their organs when they died. After returning to the United States, the Greens began to receive requests to tell their son's story and speak about organ donation. "It gradually dawned on us," says Reg, "that we'd been given a life's work." Nicholas Green is gone, but others live on because of his parents' compassionate act. How many of us would do the same thing if given the chance?