

# The Role of Critical Discourse in the Reproduction of Social and Political Power

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## Abstract

Nowadays with increasing theoretical criticism of positivism approach, many social and humanities scientists emphasize qualitative methods of research rather than quantitative data collection and statistical analysis. One of the common methods of qualitative research is critical discourse analysis. From the perspective of philosophy, critical discourse analysis is based on structuralism which emphasizes human role (i.e. reduces reality to human structures). This article is to present a review of the origins of critical discourse analysis and influential theoretical schools and expresses the most common and different approaches. The article analyzes the logical implications of the structural foundations of critical discourse analysis. It also comes to the conclusion that diversity in discourse is inseparable from social and political factors. As a result, linguistic diversity reflects structured social differences that creates it.

**Keywords:** Discourse, Discourse analysis, Critical, Ideology, Power, Social, Political

## 1. Introduction

Critical discourse analysis is rooted in critical linguistics. In late 1979, a group of linguists -Fowler, Hodge, Kress and Trew- at University of East Anglia, who were followers of Halliday's functional linguistic school, created a critical attitude control toward language with

the publication of a linguistic book. Halliday's called this approach "critical linguistics". The status of the term was revealing the hidden power relations and ideological processes in the language texts. Critical linguists, knew this movement as a separation from descriptive linguistics that just structures and form of the text are given and the social functions are ignored. They were working on three major tasks:

- 1). The language practice represents "a particular view of reality",
- 2). Species diversity in the discourse is inseparable from social and economic factors. Therefore, linguistic diversity is reflecting the structured social differences which create the mentioned linguistic diversity,
- 3). Use of language and social organization is not the reflection of process and social organization, but part of the social process (Soltani, 2005).

## **2. Different Approaches in Critical Discourse Analysis**

In the field of critical discourse analysis, as well as many social sciences and humanities areas of study, there is no single approach. In spite of the same common concepts and goals in all critical discourse analysis approaches, based on the difference between the theoretical foundations and analysis tools, different approaches can be taken in this field of study, including Teun Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach (Van Dijk, 2003), Rupert Mark, Ideologies of Globalization (2000), Kress and Van Leeuwen social semiotics approach (1996) discursive psychology (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002) and Fairclough's approach which considers discourse as a social action.

### *2.1 Discourse*

Different definitions of discourse and discourse analysis are presented here Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) defined discourse as: "a given way to talk about the world and its scope" (p, 17).

Teun Van Dijk (2003) considers discourse as the following three elements "A. Language use; B. The relationship between beliefs (cognition) and C. Interacting in social situations (Van Dijk, 2003).

According to Fairclough's critical discourse analysis is an integration of text analysis, analysis of production, distribution and use of text process and socio-cultural analysis of discourse event as a whole.

### *2.2 Power*

Critical Discourse Analysis of the power, views society from the traditional viewpoint in which it is divided into two poles of ruler and obedient. Power in this sense, is what is available to some people and not to others. Thus, critical discourse analysis involves a theory of power expressed by Steven Lukes (1974) in a three-dimensional view. Lukes believes that in the three dimensional view of power, the most effective mode of power, is the prevention of conflict but not the exercise of power in a state of war. In Foucault's view, the power is not in the hands of any social class or range and a particular group is not attributed to it, but it is

scattered in the population, and like a blood flows in the capillaries of the body of society. Power is never focused anywhere, is not in the hands of anyone and never recorded as a whole or part of the property (Foucault, 1991).

According to Fairclough (2000), power relations are asymmetric and unequal. Therefore he, like other critical discourse analysts, emphasizes on the leading role of language and ideology to justify, produce and reproduce unequal power relations and considers critical discourse analysis mission as attention to the deepest and finest aspect of the exercise of power in society through exposing language hypocrisy.

### *2.3 Language and Ideology*

Despite the different perceptions of ideology (Mannheim, 2001) from the perspective of critical discourse analysis, to understand the scientific discourse the key concept is "ideology", since ideology "implies a representation of the world from the perspective of the specific benefits" (Fairclough, 2000) and it is a tool to create and maintain unequal power relations in society. This is done with the help of language. However, our access to reality is always done through language, but language is not a neutral reflection of the pre-existing reality, but only creates representations of reality, and it is involved in its reconstruction (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Thus, critics think that language has ideological charges. According to their points of view Ideology flows through social institutions with the help of language.

According to Fairclough (2000), Ideology is in fact "Meaning in the service of power" (Fairclough, 1995). In fact, ideologies are meaningful constructions which help the production, reproduction, and transformation of domination relations. Ideology occurs in societies in which relations of domination are based on social structures such as class and gender. Fairclough like Thompson (1984) and many other theorists in the field of critical discourse analysis such as Althusser (1971) believes that the production of meaning in everyday life has an important role in maintaining social order. Fairclough in a summation of his views, said:

A) Ideologies and ideological practices may be disrupt from its origin and special interests, which have built them. In other words, it may be more or less "natural" and as a result, rather than being driven by the interests of classes or social groups, seems to be common sense, and are attributed to the nature of things or people;

B) In this way, ideologies and practices have become part of the base knowledge and will be active in engagement. As a result, the discipline of interaction can be associated with them;

C) Thus, the layout of interactive events as "trivial" and "local" ones will be dependent on a higher "discipline", the agreement on the ideological positions and actions (Fairclough, 2000).

### *2.4 Order Interactions and Naturalization*

Fairclough considers the ability for naturalizing ideologies such as the characteristics of an ideological discourse formulation as dominant, i.e. the formulation of the dominant

ideological discourse, can gain acceptance as a case of "common sense" non-ideology for ideologies (Fairclough, 2000). Discourse seems to lose its ideological specificity in the process of naturalizing a special discourse and developing a common understanding, and wants to be considered as a self-institution discourse rather than a species of discourse of a special group within an institution (Fairclough, 1996). "Interaction order" means participants' feeling in an interaction. "They feel that things are as they should be, i.e. they are the same as one normally expects to be" (Fairclough, 2000).

### *2.5 The Critical Concept*

There are different interpretations of the "Criticism" concept in this attitude. Some have turned to the Frankfurt School, some to literary criticism and the others to Marx. Critical discourse analysis is critical in the sense that the world is going to reveal the role of discourse in the survival and protection of societies such as those of social relations that are associated with unequal power relations. Fairclough in the book, *Language and Power* (1996) presents the main objective of criticism as follows: helping the correction of extensive attention deficit toward the importance of language in the production, maintenance and changing the social relations of power. The book also helped to increase awareness of how language contributes to the dominance of some over others, because awareness is the first step towards freedom. The study will be influential if a reduction in social inequalities will be seen (Fairclough, 1996).

### **3. Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis**

Jørgensen, and Phillips (2002), stated a six stage of research in critical discourse analysis. They believe that we do not need to use all the mentioned methods in the same order, but the selection and use of these tools, depends on the question and extensive range of research because they believe that in qualitative research methods such as discourse analysis, there is no fixed procedures for data or analysis. The study is specifically based on the characteristics of each project. Therefore, determining the stages of research and its internal order are ideal (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002).

Among the various approaches to critical discourse analysis, we can identify five common principles that Jørgensen and Philips (2002) have summarized them as follows:

1). Part of social and cultural processes and structures, not all of them of course, have somewhat linguistic-discursive nature. Discursive practices, production and consumption (receive and interpret) of the texts are considered an important social function that helps social world, including social identities and social relations. Another part of social and cultural processes and structures are realized through the reproduction of social and cultural changes and the actions of everyday discourse.

2). Discourse is both creator (creator of identity, knowledge, social world, etc.) and created. Discourse is a form of social practice that makes the social world and the other hidden social actions. Discourse as a social practice, has a dialectical relationship with other social aspects. It does not merely help the formation and transformation of social structures but reflect them.

3). The use of language must be analyzed experimentally in the context of society. Critical Discourse Analysis analyzes the integration, linguistic aspect of context and use of language in social interactions. This definition, distinguishes discourse analysis theory from Laclau, and Mouffe (1990) approach that does not study the use of language in the form of systematic experimental function.

4). Discourse has an ideological function. It is claimed that in the critical discourse analysis, discursive practice helps the creation and reproduction of unequal power relations between social groups (between classes, men and women, ethnic minorities and the majority).

5). Critical research. The aim of criticism of discursive analysis is to express its role in the production and reproduction of unequal power and the use of critical studies for the emancipation of the oppressed. Critical Discourse Analysis, knows itself politically neutral but politically committed to change. To be a critical analyst, the analyst should have a clear political and social position. (Jørgensen et al., 2010).

#### **4. The Philosophical Foundations of Critical Discourse Analysis**

Social Constructivism is based on the fundamental principle that human understanding of the world around is formed by various categories of world. Human attributes different mental meanings to that. Thus, they make the world around themselves (Louzyk, 2004). According to this perspective, social reality as physical reality is not prefabricated, given, external and resistant to man, but it is built in the process of man's definition of their social status and social interactions arising from their social situation (Ritzer, 1995).

Anti-foundationalism, essentialism and the emphasis on the historical and cultural identity and human knowledge are the foundations of constructivism. We are essentially historical and cultural entities. Our views about the world and our understanding of it, is "the product of historic relations between human beings. As a result, our understanding of the world and the way of its representation is always historical, cultural, and random and are subject to change. In this view, since this attitude attributes our knowledge and identity to the conditions of history and culture, it is considered as anti-foundationalism and knowing that it does not attach to any fixed essence and takes a relativistic approach, it will be anti-essentialist. According to constructionism the world built according to communities. As a result, the external conditions do not pre-determine or define the characteristics of the social world, humans do not have a fixed and original set of features and essence.

#### **5. Fairclough's Approach**

Fairclough is one of the influential people in the field of critical discourse analysis. In his view, critical discourse analysis, is a method that along with other methods are applied to assess the social and cultural changes, it is a reference that is used in the struggle against exploitation and domination. Fairclough's approach (1995) is a sort of text oriented discourse analysis that tries to combine three traditions with each other: (1) detailed and comprehensive analysis of the text in the field of linguistics, (2) analysis of macro sociology of social interaction, (3) minor interpretational tradition in sociology that based on these, daily life is the product of everybody's social interactions, which follows a set of rules and procedures on

the basis of "common knowledge" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002).

Fairclough begins his work by criticizing the descriptive and uncritical approach in linguistics and language phenomena studies. According to Fairclough (2000), these views do not consider social interactions in the formation of discursive practices or social impacts, but only consider a descriptive study of the structure and function of the discursive actions. However critical discourse analysis, in the study of the language phenomena and discourse functions, considers the ideological processes in discourse, the relationship between language and power, ideology, hegemony and power, ideological presuppositions with ideological charges in discourse and inequality in discourse (Fairclough, 2000). Fairclough's discourse analysis model, derived from the interaction between power and language. He knows discourse as text and social knowledge of text generation and interpretation discourse and believes that the social knowledge are in three different levels of social organization: Social conditions and the immediate social environment that the discourse has been caused, social institution that covers discourse in a wide range and community as a whole. Fairclough checks discourse at three levels: discourse as a text, discourse as discursive practices and interaction between the production and interpretation of the text and finally discourse as the context and as a means of discursive functions of social, political, historical and cultural relations (Fairclough, 2000). Social or linguistic phenomena, means that at anytime, anywhere and in any way (speaking, writing, and reading) that the language is used by people, are under the influence of society and social conditions. When an individual is within the family and not in the community around, the language is used based on the social contracts. The important point according to Fairclough is that although all linguistic phenomena are societal, the reverse is not true that all social phenomena are not linguistic. Therefore, the relationship between language and society, is not symmetrical and one by one, but the community is the whole, and the language is only part of it (Aghagolzade et al., 2012).

It was said that Fairclough knows discourse with three aspects of the text, discursive practice and social practice. Therefore, in any event three dimensions should be considered. In fact, the three-dimensional model is the analytical framework for empirical research on communication and community. Any discourse analysis of communicative events should cover the aspects mentioned. Thus, discourse analysis should focus on the following: (1) linguistic characteristics of the text (text), (2) processes associated with the production and consumption of text (discursive practice), (3) a broader social practice which communication event (social practice). The model indicates that the text cannot be understood or analyzed in a vacuum, the text must be understood in relation to the text networks and social context.

## **6. Conclusion**

There is no single approach in the field of critical discourse analysis, as well as many areas of study such as: social sciences and humanities. In spite of the same common concepts and goals in all critical discourse analysis approaches, based on the difference between the theoretical foundations and analysis tools, different approaches can be expressed in this field of study. As it was mentioned, the methods of research in critical discourse analysis, are not very different from quantitative research methods (Kiwi et al., 1991). A "rational" program

makes a systematic progress in the knowledge and understanding of us in the scope of the discussion here. In fact the data may be numerous. In such programs samples should be selected on the basis of principles. So when discourse analysts look at their samples like natural objects, i.e. until the pieces of discourse are analyzed by ignoring or attention deficit to their position in institutional frameworks, systematic sampling will not be possible. Systematic sampling, requires that at least the following issues are met:

A) The sociological description of respective institution, the relationship of respective institution with other institutions, the social formation and the relationship between the forces within it;

B) The "order of discourse" description in the respective institution, the description of formulations based on ideological discourse and relations between them according to given linkages between A and B.

C) An Ethnographic description of these formulations.

Only by having this information, some interactions can be collected and analyzed; interactions representing a spectrum of ideological discourse formulations, verbal incidents of formulations, and interactive "Nodes" that are particularly important according to the tension between formulations or subjects. Using this method, a systematic understanding of the function of discourse in institutions and institutional change, will be possible.

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