Critical Studies in the Humanities: Critical Discourse Analysis as an Emerging Discipline.

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- **Abstract:**

Critical discourse analysis is a contemporary approach to the study of language and discourses in different social institutions. Historically speaking, critical discourse analysis is regarded as a part of the broad spectrum of the critical studies in the field of humanities. Critical discourse analysis, a discipline which is still in its infancy, developed out of the pioneering work of Roger Fowler and his colleagues at the university of East Anglia in the late 1970s. It focuses on how social relations, power, identity, and knowledge are constructed through written and spoken language in communities, schools, and many other social settings. Critical discourse analysis is based on the idea that a social change is possible when individuals' consciousness about some social problems as well as about their rights and duties is raised. Consequently, critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily examines the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in social and political contexts. The present paper describes the historical contexts and theoretical precedents for the study of language and discourse in a critical way. Then it outlines key terms, assumptions and practices of critical discourse analysis.

Keywords: Critical studies, humanities, social change, critical discourse analysis.

- **Introduction**

Humanities are academic disciplines that study aspects of human culture. Generally speaking, it is a field that gives a general knowledge about the accomplishment of human beings throughout history and life span. Humanities include the study of modern and classical languages, linguistics, literature, philosophy, history, jurisprudence and even arts and music. The interpretation of these areas helps to organize humans' ideas and thinking, ease communication and understanding of one's self and the world around, facilitate discussions and most of all helps

shaping and documenting human experiences. It is worth mentioning that the field of humanities scrutinizes the human experience in a qualitative way. Thus, subjectivity and rationality are the most used methods for such investigations. Critical discourse analysis is regarded as a part of the broad spectrum of the critical studies in the field of humanities. The present paper describes the historical contexts and theoretical precedents for the study of language and discourse in a critical way. Then it outlines key terms, assumptions and practices of critical discourse analysis. So, it is a theoretical study about the emerging discipline of critical discourse analysis.

1. Discourse Analysis Defined

Discourse analysis , this interdisciplinary approach which operates at two macro and micro levels using both linguistics and social analysis, has grew out of the work in different disciplines in 1960 and early 1970's including linguistics, semiotics, anthropology, psychology, and sociology. In the early years, linguistics was concerned only with the analysis of single sentences, but later on, Zellig Harris published a paper in 1950 which is entitled 'discourse analysis' focusing on the distribution of linguistics elements in extended texts. From here stamps the idea that discourse analysis does not study language use beyond the sentence boundary but analyze naturally occurring language use. Michael Stubbs[1] (1983: 131) said that: 'Any study which is not dealing with (a) single sentences, (b) contrived by the linguist, (c) out of context, and may be called discourse analysis'. This means that studying the language is about studying it as discourse i.e., utterances in context rather than sentences in isolation. In this sense Leech[2] (2008: 76) states that 'knowledge of a language is more than knowledge of individual sentences'. In the same vein, Chomsky[3] (2002: 103-04) claims that 'to understand a sentence we must know more than the analysis of this sentence on each linguistic level. We must also know the reference and meaning of the morphemes or words of which it is composed; naturally, grammar cannot be expected to be of much help here.' Discourse analysis therefore refers to a number of approaches to analyze written, oral or any significant semiotic event and it is important to make a difference between discourse analysis and text linguistics in which the formal seeks to reveal socio-psychological characteristics of a person rather than text structure.

In humanities, discourse analysis is described as a formal way of thinking that can be expressed through language. In this sense, discourse analysis is neither a qualitative nor a quantitative research method; rather it is a manner of questioning the basic assumptions of these research methods. Olson[4] (2007:28) claims that 'discourse Analysis is meant to provide a higher awareness of the hidden motivations in others and ourselves and, therefore, enable us to solve concrete problems - not by providing unequivocal answers, but by making us ask ontological and epistemological questions'. Thus, discourse analysis does not provide absolute answers to a certain problem; rather it helps to understand the reasons behind the problem faced and try to find some solutions of the matter at hand.

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[1] Stubbs, M. (1983). Discourse analysis: The sociolinguistic analysis of natural language. Chichago: Cichago University Press.
[2] Leech, G.N. (2008). Language in literature: Style and foregrounding. London: Pearson Longman
[3] Chomsky, Noam. (2002). Syntactic structures. New York: Mouton de Gruyter
[4] Olson, B. 2007. Quantitative "versus" Qualitative Research: The Wrong Question. Edmonton. University of Alberta Press
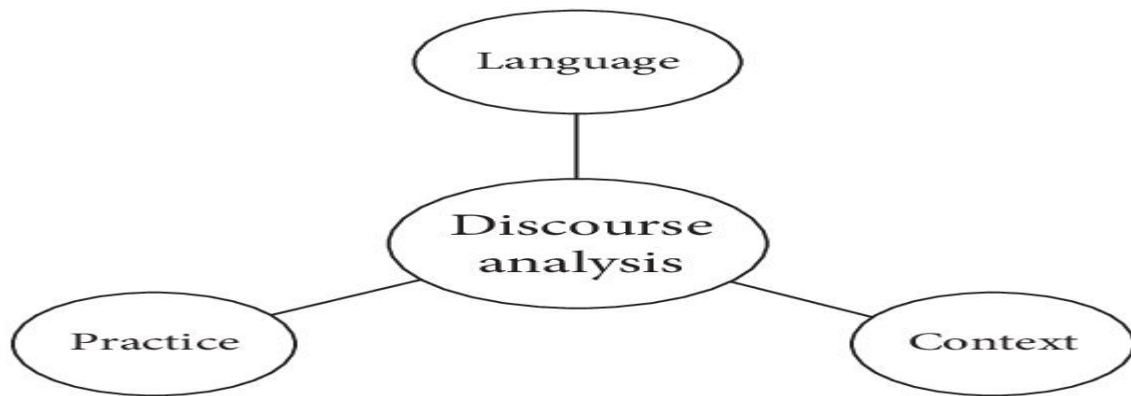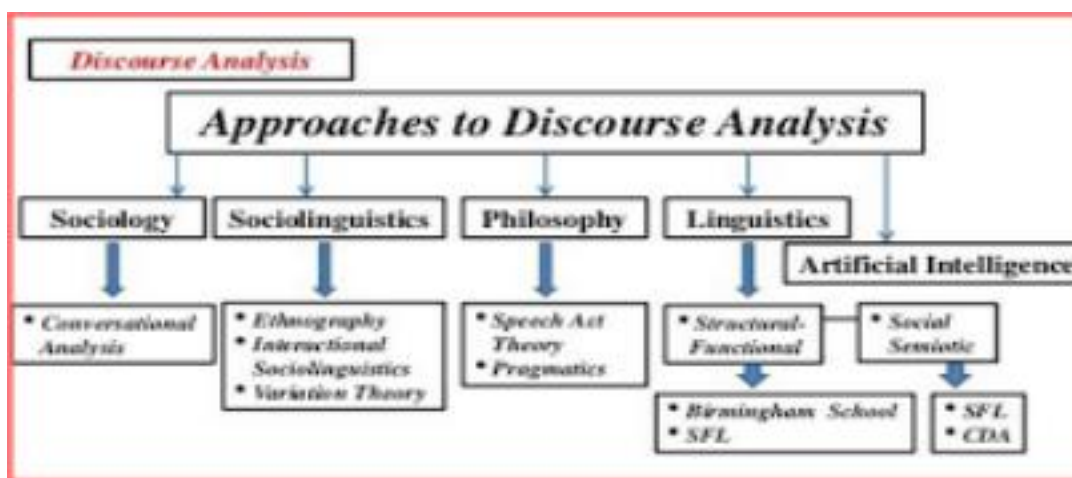
Figure 1: Discourse Analysis

Figure 2: Approaches to Discourse Analysis

2. Critical Discourse Analysis Defined

Critical discourse analysis is one of the most fundamental and influential branches of discourse analysis. It developed out of the pioneering work of Rodger Fowler and his colleagues at the University of East Anglia. Fowler is the co-author of the book *Language and Control*, in which the term *critical linguistics* was first coined in the late 1970s. (Fowler, Hodge, Kress and Trew 1979). In this book, methods and concepts about text analysis were presented in an attempt to raise consciousness about how language is used in society. Although there are some noti²+9ceable differences between critical linguistics and critical discourse analysis, both can, in Wodak's [5] words, occupy the same "paradigmatic space" in that implicit argumentations, for example, opaque texts are deconstructed and their underlying meaning made explicit. CDA employs procedures not essentially different from literary criticism to identity ideological bias in texts. (Wodak, 1995).

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[5] Fairclough, N., and R. Wodak (1997) Critical discourse analysis. In T. van Dijk (ed.), Discourse as Social Interaction. London: Sage

There is not one homogenous version of CDA. According to Fairclough (1992:3), "Discourse is a difficult concept, largely because there are so many conflicting and overlapping definitions formulated from various theoretical and disciplinary standpoints." Van Dijk (1998) defines critical discourse analysis as the field that is concerned with studying and analyzing written and spoken texts to reveal the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality and bias. It examines how these discursive sources are maintained and reproduced within specific social, political and historical contexts. Moreover, Fairclough and Wodak[6] (1997: 258), explain the term critical discourse analysis as follows:

> CDA sees discourse-language use in speech and writing- as a form of social practice. Describing discourse as a social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s), and social structure(s) which frame it. A dialectical relationship is a two-way relationship: the discursive event is shaped by situations, institutions, and social structures, but it also shapes them. To put the same point in different way, discourse is both socially *constitutive* as well as socially *shaped*: it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and knowledge, and groups of people. It is constitutive in the sense that it contributes to transforming it.

3. Objectives of Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis concerns itself with studying and analyzing written and spoken texts in the sense that it shows the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality, and bias and how these sources are initiated, maintained, reproduced, and transformed within specific social, economic, political, and historical contexts (Van Dijk, 1988)[7]. In the same vein, Luke(1997)[8] states that critical discourse analysis focuses on the social relations, identities, knowledge and power and how they are constructed through written and spoken texts in different settings such as school, media, communities and even political arena.

Moreover, Rogers et al (2005:368)[9] claim that 'critical theories are generally concerned with issues of power and justice and the ways that the economy, race, class, gender, religion, education, and sexual orientation construct, reproduce or transform social systems' and Thompson(2002)[10] says that critical discourse analysis helps make a clear connection between language use and the exercise of power. Thus, we understand from this that the main objectives of CDA is to make people critically thinkers concerning the issues of knowledge power, justice and constructively analysts in the sense that they construct these matters through written and spoken texts in different settings in their daily and professional lives.

4. Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis

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6 Fairclough, N., and R. Wodak (1997) Critical discourse analysis. In T. van Dijk (ed.), Discourse as Social Interaction. London: Sage

7 Van Dijk, T. A. (1988). News as discourse. Hillside, NJ: Erlbaum

8 Luke, A. (1997). Theory and practice in critical science discourse. In L. Saha (Ed.), International encyclopedia of the sociology of education (pp. 50-56). NY: Pergamon. Retrieved from http://pages.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/ed270/Luke/SAHA6.html

9 Rogers, R., Malamcharuvil-Berkes, E., Mosley, M., Hui, D and O' Garro Joseph, G. 2005. Critical -+Discourse Analysis in Education: A Review of the Literature. Washington. Sage Publications

10 Thompson, M. P. A. (2002, December 12-14). ICT, power, and developmental discourse: A critical analysis. In W. Wynn, E.

Critical discourse analysis as an approach considers itself not as dispassionate, detached and objective social science, but as an *engaged* and *committed* discipline that intervenes in social practice and social relationships. General principles of CDA are presented by many theorists; the most well-known ones are provided by Fairclough and Wodak (1997). The following is a brief summary of these principles.

The first principle of critical discourse analysis is its concern with social issues. It does not only study language and language use, but also focuses on social, political and cultural matters and how they are constructed and reflected in discourse. CDA tries to make power relationships explicit which are frequently hidden (Fairclough and Wodak 1997)[11].

The second principle is that power relations are discursive. This means that critical discourse analysts try to provide details about how social relations of power are negotiated and performed through language.

The next principle is that discourse does ideological work. To put it differently, ideologies are often presented through language. To understand how ideologies are produced and constructed, one needs not only to analyze texts, but also to take into account how those texts are interpreted and received by individuals and what social effects they may have.

Another important principle is that discourse constitutes society and culture. Critical discourse analysis implies that discourse shapes society and culture, as well as being shaped by them.

Another principle underlines that discourse is historical. It means that "discourse is not produced without context and cannot be understood without taking the context into consideration." Therefore, discourses cannot be understood without reference to their historical contexts.

Critical discourse analysis, then, focuses on the relationship between discourse and social power. Its main aim is to "describe and explain how power abuse is enacted, reproduced or legitimized by the text and talk of dominant groups or institutions" (Van Dijk, 1996, p.84)[12]

5. Practices of Critical Discourse Analysis

As a matter of fact, people generally get influenced or misled by persuasive language in the form of publicity or marketing, many of which can disfigure the truth in different ways. The analysis of such texts is one of the concerns of critical discourse analysts. The work of CDA may focus on visual representation, written or spoken discourse or on the complementary nature of both the visual and the verbal texts. (Bloor & Bloor, 2007) CDA

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[11] Fairclough, N., and R. Wodak (1997) Critical discourse analysis. In T. van Dijk (ed.), Discourse as Social Interaction. London: Sage
[12] Van Dijk, T. A. (1988). News as discourse. Hillside, NJ: Erlbaum

can be practiced in this domain by making individuals aware of the methods used by advertisers in order to help them resist pressure to buy goods which they often do not need. In addition, CDA is concerned with issues like criminality. "These include the identification of criminals, police interviewing techniques, confessions, and cross-examination in court." (Bloor & Bloor, 2007)[13]

It is worth mentioning that there are some social problems which are particularly hard to analyze; this leads critical discourse analysts to work in co-operatively with other specialists in a particular field of study. In this respect, Bloor & Bloor (2007) provides an example of a difficult social issue which is as follows:

We can observe often in our own homes, that families can observe aggressive speech styles, which then become habitual. These can be transmitted to the children who then use aggressive speech styles in a wider social context, such as school playground. This can make it difficult for them to form viable friendships and can result in bullying either by others or by themselves. A critical discourse analyst would need to study such a family in some depth in order to reach any conclusion about how the situations in further studies of the children outside the home and so on. CDA could discover a great deal about what was going on in such situation, but, in order to enact change, other professionals would need to be involved-perhaps child psychologists, social workers and certainly, of course, the teacher. For this reason there is a great scope for CDA as part of team research. The choice of combination of methods of analysis is greatly related to the nature of the social problem and on the disciplinary background of the analyst.

Conclusion

To conclude, critical discourse analysis occupies a significant role in a variety of domains. However, this field of research receives many critics from the part of some researchers and

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[13] Bloor, P.M., Bloor, T. (2007) The practice of Critical Discourse Analysis: an introduction. Great Britain: Routledge

specialists such as Widdowson (1998, 2004), Van Noppen (2004), Schegloff (1997)[14]. Some critics believe that Critical Discourse Analysis does not always consider the role of reader in consumption and interpretation of a text. Some others want Critical Discourse Analysis to be more demanding in tools of analysis.

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Appendices

Figure 1: Discourse Analysis

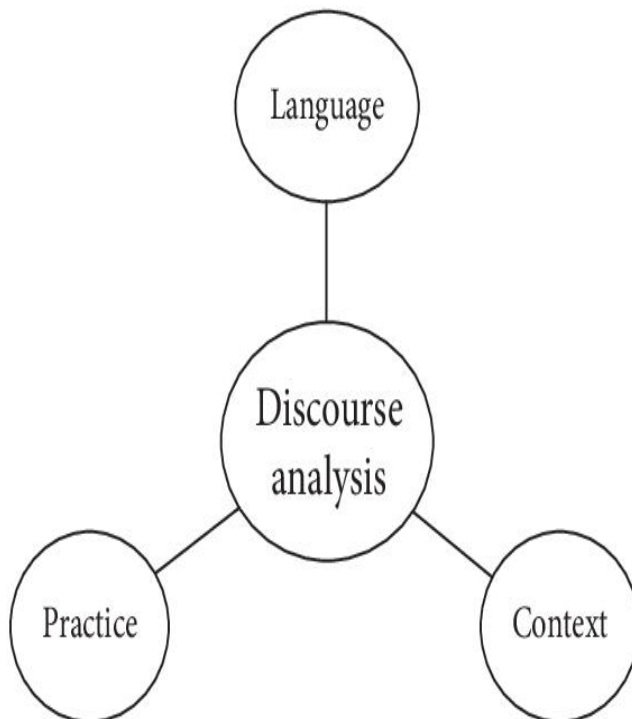[14] Schegloff, E. (1997) Whose text? Whose context? Discourse and Society 8.2: 165-187

Figure 2: Approaches to Discourse Analysis