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What is Discourse Analysis?

Definitions & Introduction

It is a modern discipline of the social sciences that covers various different sociolinguistic approaches.

Analyzing written, spoken or sign language or any semiotic event

- Lyons (1977): a set of meanings through which people communicate about a particular topic.
- Crystal (1992): It is a continuous stretch of (esp. spoken) language larger than a sentence often forming a coherent unit
e.g. argument, sermon, joke, narrative, novels, short conversations, interview
- Yule (1996): DA focuses on spoken or written records where language is used in contexts to express intention.

Schiffrin defines discourse analysis as ‘the study of language use above and beyond the sentence’. The first trend in defining discourse analysis is a formal or structural trend. In this paradigm, discourse analysis is seen as the exploration of language use by focusing on pieces larger than sentences. Schiffrin (1994) explains that discourse is merely a higher level in the hierarchy: morpheme, clause and sentence; she also explains that the pursuit of discourse analysis is to describe the internal structural relationships that tie the units of discourse to each other: to describe formal connectedness within it.

The second trend is functional in perspective: it is not so much concerned with intra-sentential relations as much as with language use.

Van Dijk (1985:10): discourse analysis involves all •
the levels and methods of analyzing language,
cognition, interaction, society and culture.

So,

- Not only study language use beyond the sentence boundary but also analyze naturally occurring (not invented examples) language use
- Spoken or written language that has internal relationship of form and meaning (e.g. words, structure, cohesion) related coherently to an external communicative function (the relation between language and all the situational, social and cultural factors related to the situation in which language is used) or purpose and a given audience.

- Whenever we speak or write, discourse analysts will look at any text (i.e. anything that communicates a message) and how that message constructs (build) a social reality or view of the world)

Social reality or view of the world:

1. The meaning and value of the aspects of the material world:
I enter a plain, square room, and speak and act in a certain way (e.g. like someone to run a meeting), and where I sit becomes the “front” of the room.
2. Activities: We talk and act in one way when we engage in formal opening of a committee meeting (formally); and we talk and act in another way when we engage in “chit- chat” before the official start of the meeting (informally)
3. Identities and relationships: I talk and act in one way one moment as “chair” of the committee; Then, I speak and talk in a different way as a colleague speaking to another

e.g. When a speaker, in an interview, tells that his son goes to Chicago University, he establishes **his first identity: being a father and a husband,** and in the same interview, if he discloses to the audience that he is a high ranking officer in the army , he constructs **his second identity: being an army officer**

- Discourse analysis reveals the hidden motivations behind a text or behind the choice of a particular method to interpret that text
- It provides a higher awareness of the hidden motivations in others and in ourselves and therefore, it enable us to solve problems by making us ask ontological and epistemological questions

- It provides a way for the writer to provide details
 - e.g. the way a place looks,
 - e.g. how something feels
 - e.g. the way something tastes.
- It answers questions or provide facts
- It is the communication that a writer uses to involve the reader
- It conveys attitude or persuade political or religious beliefs

Discourse and Gender

Sex: biological characteristics which determine humans as being females or males.

Gender: as a grammatical category, is used for the analysis of word classes displaying such contrasts as masculine, feminine and neuter, animate and inanimate.

Gender is a major social and theoretical category which is more significant than other familiar sociological categories of class and race.

It is determined by the tasks (functions/ roles) and relations attributed to women and men in society, in public and private life (that is, it is socially constructed).

Gender norms assign specific entitlements and responsibilities to men and women

"The culturally shaped attributes given to the female or to the male" (Humm 1989:84).

Gender relations are characterized by unequal power

Inequality between the roles of men and women in our society

e.g. women are expected to take domestic duties and remain close to home , while men are the main breadwinner, working outside the house, with greater freedom to be in public places.

Women continue to exist in roles and relationships that often make them subordinate to men , because they are paid less than men for the same work, because their movement are restricted, or because they are not permitted to take higher status work.

Gender difference is a popular research in many fields, such as in psychology, in sociolinguistics, and in female study.

In these fields, the differences between male and female in many aspects have been studied from different angles with different methodologies.

The gender approach focuses on women and men and not on women in isolation, thus it highlights:

- The differences between women's and men's interest even within the same household and how these interact and are expressed.
- The conventions and hierarchies which determine women's and men's position in the family, community and society at large, where women are usually dominated by men .
- The differences among women and among men, based on age, wealth, ethnic background and other factors.
- The way gender roles and relations change often quite rapidly as a result of social economic and technological trends (Wijk and Francis, 1999).

Gender difference is not only reflected in the speeches between male and female, but also in their different living styles and attitudes.

From a research perspective, gender differences mean:

women are different from men, but rarely is the reverse question asked: How are men different from women?

(Birrell, 1984)

Women's experiences are seen as variations (or deviations) on men's; we know women only in relation to men.

So, the studies on gender assume that gender means women (and not men)

Many researchers and theorists relate discourse to power structures in a given society

The relationship between the language of male and female

Approaches to gender and discourse research analyze:

the way language (discourse) reflects or describes gender stereotypes (men and women)

e.g. analyzing the way men and women are viewed in public communication, such as advertising or TV.

how men and women use language differently.

These studies almost concentrate on a particular culture or sub - culture

The relation between gender and language (discourse)
is always indirect and mediated by something else,
viz.

- certain roles: mother, teacher, wife, etc.
- activities: shopping, praying, gossiping
- personality traits: modest, arrogant, etc.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

CDA is a transdisciplinary (multidisciplinary) approach to the study of DA
It is not associated with any theory or certain science.

Focus on:

Looking at how social injustice and political domination, and how the distribution of social goods are represented and reproduced by text and talk semiotically, and how certain social groups may be misrepresented in discourse

i.e. how discourse is shaped and constructed by ideology, power and belief and how texts are used to maintain or create social inequalities through representation of reality which are not explicit to discourse participants

Interest in social and cultural issues and how these issues affect society as a whole

It views "language as a form of social practice" (Fairclough, 1989)

That is, language is both socially constructed as well as "socially shaped" and shaping (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997:258; Wodak & Meyer, 2002).

Van Dijk (2001: 352) It is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies how social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in social and political context.

As such, critical discourse analysts want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality.

The British sociolinguist **Fairclough** (1995: 132-133) it explores opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony.

Wodak and Meyer (2001: 2) it is concerned with analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language.

In other words, CDA aims to investigate critically social inequality as it is expressed, constituted, and legitimized, and so on by language use (or in discourse).

Benwell and Stokoe (2006: 43-44) claim that CDA begins from the premise that language is not a neutral or transparent medium that unproblematically reflects an objective reality. Rather, it is a form of ideological practice that mediates, influences and even constructs our experiences, identities and ways of viewing the world.

Scollon (2001: 140), CDA is critically analyzes discourse as a means of directing social change.

So, combining all these elements in an analysis offers a comprehensive understanding of the discourse, situates it in its social and cultural contexts, and finally explains the ideologies that are in and between the lines.

So, CDA is like hype- **linguistic or supralinguistic, local to global**, whether based on political, economic, cultural, religious, or gendered grounds, that exist in a certain society.

So, CDA has **moved from** focusing on just the **What? of the text description toward the How? and Why? of the text interpretation and explanation**, i.e. why a speaker/writer selects certain forms or models.

There are reasons behind these selections and these reasons are not innocent, but they are ideologically loaded.

So, a critical analysis might begin by deciding:

- what discourse type (genre) that the text represents
- and to what extent and in what way the text conforms to it or not.
- to what extent the procedures of the text has gone beyond the normal boundaries for the genre to create a particular effect (That is, consider the framing of the text, i.e. how the content of the text is presented, and the view that the writer or speaker is taking)

e.g.

At the word and phrase level:

The analyst may consider the connotations of a particular word and phrase

e.g.

At the sentence level:

The analyst may consider what has been topicalized in each of the sentences in the text

e.g.

The degree of formality and informality of the text

Historical Background (Origin)

CDA is a reaction against the formal (asocial, uncritical) trends in 1960s and 1970s

Van Dijk (2004) mentions that in the 1980 and 1990s, it was argued that DA should have a **critical dimension**

It is not just an analysis for the sake of analysis, where the goal is to demonstrate how textual features are used in certain patterns or to show stylistic or genre features.

CDA, although it includes textual analysis, includes also the social, historical, and cognitive contexts (larger contexts) that surround the creation of a text

This is what distinguishes CDA from other discourse analysis frameworks

In the late 1970s, it was considered a field of investigation

Also, CDA has relation with the "critical" developments in sociolinguistics, psychology and the social sciences in the early 1970s

The principles of CDA can be found in the **Critical Theory (Linguistics)** (mostly in UK and Australia) at the end of 1970

Developed by The Frankfurt School before 2nd World War

Critical Theory (Linguistics)



analyzes competing power interests
between groups and individuals within a
society (identifying who gains and who
loses in specific situations).

Privileged groups often have an interest in
supporting the status quo to protect their
advantages

So, the focus of critical research is attempting to expose the forces that prevent individuals and groups from shaping the decisions that affect their lives.

Discourse and Identity

2) Maintaining social contacts with others even when one has

very little content (information) to communicate (Otto Jespersen)

This function is:

the communication of identity



about one's own identity, about oneself in relation to

the listener, and to define the situation in which language itself is being used. (According to Fasold)

Norton (1997: p. 410) argues that whenever people speak, they are not only exchanging information with their interlocutors, they are also constantly organizing and recognizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world.

In other words, they engage in identity construction and negotiation.

This point is also made by Peter Trudgill in the introduction of his

Sociolinguistics: An Introduction to Language and Society:

Since people will define themselves and their own identity through their relationship to others and through their own inclusion in or exclusion from a group, so communicating, when one has no clear message to express, such as in the case of small talk, is a way of establishing a connection between oneself and another, and also simultaneously of defining one's identity in relation to the other person.

This communication shows the type of the relationship between the two by allowing the speaker to communicate his identity both as an individual and in relation to the second person, for example, as a local, as someone friendly, and as belonging to the same social status as his interlocutor.

This is important as each person will then be able to decode these messages regarding identity in order to understand how to behave towards one another.

Eggins and Elade (1997): people don't engage in casual conversation just to kill time but rather negotiate social identities and to negotiate, clarify and extend interpersonal relations.

Aitchison gives examples where language is used to communicate little information, but a maximum of supportive chat, such as small talk, or in ritual greetings, where the focus of the communication is to convey the identity of the speaker in relation to the interlocutor rather than a specific message, such as by showing the speaker to be someone who is aware of the social rituals of the society in which he speaks, and willing to adhere to them.

For example, when a British speaker asks ‘How are you?’ he/she is often not interested in the response, and will be expecting the standard ‘fine’. The main meaning of this message is not literally to find out the health of the interlocutor, but rather to show friendly solidarity between the two acquaintances, following social norms.

e.g. if a teacher commands a pupil in his class to sit down, the language he uses tells the child both that it is necessary to sit down (transactional), and highlights the teacher's position of power over the child in the classroom (interactional).

What is Identity?

Researchers consider identity as the inherent property of human interaction.

How you talk, dress, and behave are important ways of displaying who we are, indicating your social identity

Our birth date and age may suggest certain characteristics or features of our attitudes, clothing styles and music preferences. Our photograph may promote ideas about our ethnic or cultural location. All of these are but superficial markers of an assumed identity (Fearson, 1999).

So,

It is the relation between what we say and who we are

It is something people own (personal possession that can be authenticated or falsified)

It is agentive, internal project of the self

The word identity stems from the Latin word idem, which means sameness. Identity derives mainly from the work of psychologist Erik Erickson in the 1950.

Identity is who you are; individuality, the condition of being a certain person. In the social sciences, identity is the way that individuals label themselves as members of a particular group, in psychology it refers to an individual's self-esteem or self-image.

Identity can be described as the entirety of how we as individuals view or perceive ourselves as unique from others.

Identity emerges from the individual's different relationship with others.

As Thornborrow explains, one's identity is not always fixed. Instead it is something we constantly build and negotiate (construct) all over our life through our interaction with others (society)

It is interpreted by others (part of having a certain identity is that it is recognized by other people)

It is a response to the activities of others [this is the early philosophical view (close to the discursive view)] Hegels: I am a self only in relation to certain interlocutors so my self exists only within webs of interlocation

There are two aspects that make up an identity:

I

Me

(Person)

(individual awareness)

(social identity)

Political Discourse

Political discourse plays an important role in shaping human viewpoints. For this reason, a statement of the speaker must be fluent and persuasive so that he or she could direct recipients' feelings

The study of political discourse covers a broad range of subject matter. So, political discourse analysis had been interpreted differently by different authors

The term "Political Discourse" is suggestive of at least two possibilities:

1. a discourse which is itself political
(the words and text produced by politicians)

Although discourse is in spoken and written word, the definition may be widened to include communication by actions, as in political demonstrations and sit-ins

excludes the everyday discourse of politics which is part of people's lives. The balance is a difficult one, and perhaps all we can expect from analysts is that they make clear in which way they are viewing political discourse, because they too, like politicians, are limited and manipulated in by their own discourse.

2. political discourse is an example discourse type, without explicit reference to political content or political context

Chilton and Schaffner (1999: 212): written or spoken language used in formal political context with political actors (such as politicians), political institutions, political media and political supporters operating in political environments with political goals (to steer the emotions of audience to affect their opinions and attitudes/ to provide others with reasons for thinking, feeling or acting in some particular way; to motivate them; to invite them to trust one in uncertain conditions; to get them to see situations in a certain light)

Baranov (1998: 131- 145): discourse practices, identifying the participants of political discourse and forming the range of themes of political communication

Van Dijk (1998: 43,52): a class of genres restricted by the social sphere, and by the sphere of politics.
It is the institutional type discourse accompanying the political act in political context

Van Dijk (1998, p.22) hold that political discourse analysis focuses on the analysis of political discourse as well as the reduction of political power, and power abuse or domination through political discourse in conjunction with the discursive conditions and consequences of social and political inequality that results from such domination.

Van Dijk (2002 : 225) "political discourse" is not primarily defined by a topic or style, but rather by who speaks to whom, as what, on what occasion and with what goals. In other words, political discourse is especially 'political' because of its functions in the political process.

Chilton (2004: 4): the enactment of politics occurs at both the "micro" and "macro" levels of society:

- Micro politics take place between individuals, genders, and social groups and is enacted through acts of persuasion and argumentation, threat, bribes and so on.
- Macro politics involves conflicts between and within political institutions and manifests in legal codes, precedent practices, and democratic constitutions.

Chilton (2004:3) views politics in two ways: First, as a struggle for power between those who want to preserve it such as governments, politicians, etc. and those who want to grab it, for example, opponents, resisters, etc.; Second, as a matter of cooperation (making collective decisions) between individuals, genders, institutions, etc. in order to fulfill their goals and to satisfy their interests when there are struggles and conflicts.

Shapiro (1981): All discourse types may be considered political; then all analyses of discourse are potentially political and political discourse

Politics is a struggle for power in order to put certain political, economic and social ideas into practice.

In this process, language plays a crucial role since every political action is prepared, accompanied, influenced and played by language which results in political discourse.

Fairclough and Fairclough (2012:17): it is primarily argumentative discourse

Chilton and Schaffner (2002) argue that politics is largely language, and thus argue for the study of politics by linguists alongside political philosophers and political scientists.

Political linguistics was the first attempt to create an academic discipline for the research of political discourse.

Klein (1998) argues that the linguistic study of political discourse should be defined as a sub-discipline of linguistics, citing the critical linguist research that began in the wake of National Socialism which was conducted primarily by Victor Klemperer (1947.2005), Rolf Sternberger and Storz (1957) as having paved the way for the new discipline

The essential issue in political discourse is the balance between the linguistic analysis and the political analysis

Registers (forms/ types) of Political Discourse

1. Spoken

e.g. The speech and debate within the congress or parliament of a nation (parliamentary discourse)

e.g. government press releases or press conferences, conventions

e.g. election campaigns (electoral speeches)

e.g. interviews, televised debates between parties and public meetings

2. Written

e.g. the written record of speeches or draft laws
and resolutions

e.g. legislation approved by the legislative body

e.g. newspapers or pamphlets where parties issue
their own literature, aimed at electors on a
federal, state or municipal level

e.g. books, magazines and films where some
politicians and pressure groups communicate
their ideas (an example is the environmental
movement)