



Critical Discourse Analysis as a Methodology: A Brief Summary

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Abstract

Critical Discourse Analysis refers to the analysis of any written, verbal or transcribed language within a specific context or genre. CDA has become a well-known interdisciplinary paradigm of analysing the connection among language, power, and ideology in social, political, and educational dimensions. CDA is useful in studying new forms of communication as it offers researchers the means of analysing the way digital discourse determines the opinion of the population, identity and social interaction. The paper was a systematic summary of the theoretical development, methodological advancement, and recent use of CDA, drawing on contemporary contributions. The overview combined studies on media discourse, educational policy, digital communication, corpus-assisted analysis, and ideological representation. The focus was on how discourse practices change in the digital era, as social media, online forums, and techno-cultural spaces have transformed the production and distribution of meaning. The paper used a systematic thematic review of major analytical models, such as socio-cognitive, socio-semiotic and corpus-assisted models, and their relevance to the discovery of hidden forms of dominance and manipulation. These results indicated that CDA is an ever-changing, evolving methodology that is expanding its scope to encompass multimodal, digital, and comprehensive analysis. The findings of the study suggested that CDA still provides a solid methodological and theoretical basis for critically examining the discursive practices and ideological formations practised today across various fields.

Keywords: CDA, Language, Power, Ideology, Media



INTRODUCTON

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has become a strong and cross-disciplinary methodological approach to analysing complex interactions of language, power, and ideology in different social situations. A product of linguistics, sociology, and critical theory, CDA transcends the superficial nature of the study of a text to reveal the suppositions, power relations and ideological pressures that lie behind a discourse. This is especially true as a methodology because it is especially concerned with the ways in which language reflects and reproduces social realities, often reinforcing inequalities or confronting common narratives. In recent years, CDA has become more and more relevant with the blistering development of online communication and media on the international level. The emergence of social media, online news, and online discourse has opened up new arenas in which power relations and ideological struggles are negotiated on a daily basis. Also, CDA has been extensively used in educational research studies, especially in analysing classroom discourse, curriculum planning and linguistic policies (Fairclough, 1993). The CDA evolution may be dated to the late twentieth century when researchers started doubting the objectivity of language and its importance in creating social meaning. Instead of perceiving language as a passive mode of communication, CDA sees discourse as a mode of social practice which is directly connected to matters of power and control. The given viewpoint enables the researchers to critically analyse how some groups of people take dominance and marginalise others by making some linguistic decisions in texts, speeches, and media, as well as in institutional communication. Disclosure of concealed ideologies working within discourse is one of the most important objectives of CDA. These ideologies are naturalised, that is, they have been put across as being common sense or truth of the matter, thus being hard to detect unless analysed systematically (Fairclough, 2001).

Through CDA, researchers have the opportunity to dismantle these assumptions and uncover the role of language in producing and reproducing social inequalities. This is what makes CDA particularly valuable for analysing political discourse, media images, educational representatives, and policy reports. CDA as a methodology is flexible and not confined to any specific analytical framework; rather, it encompasses a range of approaches and models. Renowned researchers have contributed diverse perspectives that focus on different elements of discourse analysis (Van Dijk, 1983). For example, some methods examine the linguistic features of texts, such as vocabulary, grammar, and cohesion, while others consider the wider socio-cultural context within which discourse is both created and received. Despite these differences, there is a shared core, as all CDA approaches critically examine the role of language in society, particularly regarding issues of power, dominance, and resistance. Methodologically, CDA involves a systematic and interpretive analysis of texts, employing both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The process typically involves selecting the most relevant texts or discourses based on the research questions, followed by a thorough analysis of linguistic features and patterns. This analysis is then situated within broader social, political, and historical contexts to understand how discourse functions within specific power relations. The interpretive nature of CDA allows scholars to produce detailed accounts of how meaning is constructed and how it influences social practices (Fairclough, 1985).

Research Objective

- To review CDA as a multidisciplinary methodology in linguistics



METHODOLOGY

This study used a systematic qualitative literature review design to examine the theoretical basis, methodological advances, and contemporary applications of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in media, online environments, education, corpus linguistics, grammar, and ideology. The review was both interpretive and analytical, aiming not only to summarise previous work but also to synthesise the dominant trends and paradigms in CDA research critically.

Research Design

The research was conducted within the framework of a systematic review and a thematic approach to analysis. The theoretical basis of this review was the work of Norman Fairclough, Teun A. van Dijk, and Theo van Leeuwen, whose models are all relevant to the informational process of identifying the analytical categories of literature. Instead of conducting a primary discourse analysis, the paper critically examined how these frameworks have been used across fields such as media discourse, educational policy, neoliberal ideology, corpus-assisted studies, and digital communication.

Review Criteria

Using academic databases, such as Scopus-indexed journals, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, as well as peer-reviewed journals in linguistics and education, relevant academic works were identified.

The selection criteria are as follows;

- Peer-reviewed journal articles and academic books.
- Primarily focused on the studies published between 1985 and 2023
- Research explicitly grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis or closely related approaches, i.e., corpus-assisted CDA, techno-cultural discourse analysis.
- Research focused on power, ideology, neoliberalism, media representation, education policy, religion, and digital discourse.

Studies that relied solely on descriptive discourse analysis, without a critical or ideological dimension, were excluded to maintain conceptual reliability.

Thematic Categorization

This study followed the following clusters for analysis;

- CDA & Power
- CDA & Ideology
- CDA vs DA
- CDA vs Digital Media
- Corpus-Based CDA
- CDA vs Educational Policy
- CDA vs Grammar

Each study was examined in terms of methodology, theoretical framework, analytical tools & key findings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA focused not only on the role of language but also on the processes of politics and society through targeted texts produced by elites and powerful sectors, i.e., newspapers and politicians' speeches (Bouvier & Machin, 2020). This study aimed to reveal the buried discourse beneath the shadow of language, specifically used as a powerful and effective tool to structure power and prior social relations. With the rise of modern technology (social



platforms), the process of regular communication and conversation has declined, which is a significant challenge and also presents opportunities for critical discourse analysis. The relationship between the authors and readers, as well as between ideologies and the text, has changed. It is assumed that new methods for data collection have already been developed. That content has also taken on a new shape, moving away from running text toward an integrated mode of data and images. In this case, new digital models are also required to shape how modern technologies adapt to the nature and settings of discourse and to its content. In the last couple of years, text analysis in linguistics has taken a stronger approach to analysing media messages and news articles. Discourse analysis is not only a modern method for analysing text but also a research application and paradigm (Van Dijk, 1983). After the descriptive details, the results showed that most news articles followed a systematic pattern in the last couple of years. Stylistic and coherence analyses are relevant in media. One of the most important concepts of critical discourse analysis is manipulation, which leads toward further theoretical frameworks (Van Dijk, 2006). This study investigated triangular analysis to manipulate social issues, i.e., power, class, and discourse interaction. Manipulation is linked to social instability, and cognitively, the mind shapes ideologies by considering social ideas. Manipulation often involves ideas of formal and informal discourse, i.e., negative images or positive views. This level of analysis shows how manipulation differs from the legal mindset. Through this theory, Tony Blair's House of Commons speech on legalising is analysed in the context of the US war against Iraq in 2003. Tenorio, E. H. (2011). explored the importance of critical discourse analysis as an overview of the origins of education. In the last couple of decades, it has maintained a strong, positive attitude toward making a difference through approaches and methodologies, and has contributed several theoretical frameworks to research studies. Critical discourse analysis not only contributes as a methodology but also has limitations and modern inventions and techniques. English teaching, as well as general textbooks, is considered an acknowledgement of social sites for the production of dominant ideologies (Babaii & Sheikhi, 2018). This study sought to uncover the neoliberal mindset in ELT textbooks and materials used in private colleges in Iran. The methodology followed by different CDA models, i.e., Language and Power by Fairclough, N. (2001). The subcategories of neoliberalism were also examined, such as multiculturalism, branding, market consumerism, and individual productivity, to present a clear picture of the West. Findings revealed that following the CDA models proved effective in counterbalancing the pedagogy of teaching. Discourse is considered a form of social practice through critical discourse analysis. In this regard, language is seen as socially oriented and influenced.

CDA also has an engaged, to-the-point agenda that examines how language shapes social practices and investigates the relationships among language, race, power, and ideology (Cots, 2006). This critical study examined learners' capacity to judge and manipulate words carefully in the educational context, and to change them when necessary. These views nevertheless often disappeared from second-language programs. The major concerns of critical discourse analysis were presented in this study, along with the basic principles and specific proposals and models for implementation in foreign or second-language programs. (Breeze, 2011) Briefly reviewed the emergence of CDA and also provided a detailed analysis of the various critiques that have been practised in the last twenty years. This paradigm also levelled the contributions of scholars and critics



regarding CDA. A wide variety of criticisms is also discussed from the perspective of analytical methodologies, including the areas and interests of responders and readers.

CDA & Language Power

(Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000) provided a descriptive survey of the relationship between power and inequality within the context of the language of a school and an analysis of the discourse. Critical discourse analysis provided in-depth details on social theories, and discourse analysis mainly focused on social agendas and research interventions. The focused points discussed are the features of the programmatic and inquiry domains of critical discourse analysis (CDA). Furthermore, several theories of CDA, including Norman Fairclough's approach, were reviewed to provide a broader paradigm and picture of the critical, developing context within disciplinary and sub-disciplinary fields. Different topics, i.e., ideology, power, and inequality, were also examined in this paradigm to gain insight into language study. This study explored Islamic and Muslim concerns in conversations and debates on social media by using critical discourse analysis. For this purpose, Facebook was followed for the representation of the religion of Islam and also the Muslims. After analysing Facebook through CDA, it was revealed that people's concerns and perceptions changed with social media platforms. Netizens and critics share their concerns and ideas according to their ideologies via commenting, sharing, and liking interests. This study found that religion, Islam, and Muslims are only being portrayed as negative and banned concerns on social media. The most frequent discourses on Facebook were about terrorism, jihad, the niqab, mosques, and monasteries (Ittefaq & Ahmad, 2018). This study analysed the cross-section process among free labour, the cognitive capitalism and the financial debate by employing critical discourse analysis of companies on social media that are offering statements of registration, i.e., initial public offerings (IPOs). Firstly, a theoretical framework for cognition, capitalism, and the political economy of culture was established. Cultural political economy helps analyse the financial role of communication, which plays a key role in assessing the interests of cognitive capitalism and the use of unskilled labour to protect the regime of stationary accumulation (Joo, Seok & Nam, 2020). Furthermore, IPOs of social media companies were critically analysed to investigate how these companies, which aim to foster ideas such as economic growth, novelty, connectivity, and the communication of financial forms, advance their financial needs. Results showed that IPOs' statements on social media led to open self-expression and community building, while concealing the economy of social media through free labour and the extraction of value.

CDA VS Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is not only a methodology for addressing social issues in research but also has distinct characteristics that explain its different interests (Uzokova, 2020). This research specifically aims to explore the major rules and procedures of discourse analysis. It also summarised the basic rules of discourse analysis (DA). This study set out the authors' discourse analysis views and different discursive approaches, as well as public discourses on marketisation in the context of higher education, specifically in Britain. Different aspects of analysis, i.e., discursive practices, discursive discussion in the society of capitalists, and a brief account of discourse analysis, are also included as the theoretical framework for the analysis of the discourse of higher education marketisation. This study also discussed the value and necessity of CDA as a methodology for social and scientific investigation of any aspect of social phenomena, including struggle (Fairclough, 1993). This study aimed to



systematically and critically explore the discourse on international scholarships in higher education departments (George Mwangi et al., 2018). For this purpose, papers from top education journals were collected from 2000 to 2016. The findings of these articles focused on the lack of counselling on international scholarships among students at higher education universities. Using discourse analysis, the orientation of education at higher universities was investigated with respect to equality and balance between journals and perceptions of international studies. By recognising the discourse of higher journal studies, scholars and researchers continued to contribute to the scope of scholarship. This research also contributed to the discourse, a structured approach to helping students in this context. For investigating phenomena related to digital technology, aircraft, the Internet, and culture, critical techno-cultural discourse analysis (CTDA) is an analytical, multi-model technique. It initiated the user discourse on aircraft and technology from a cultural perspective and through theory, to unlock the semiotic and material connections among ICT, belief, function, and form. Critical theory is essential for CTDA, including critical race theory, queer theory, and feminism. The detailed formulation of Black Twitter was described in this research by applying the author's research. Results revealed that the CTDA technique not only reflects cultural background but also shapes the concept of technology (Brock, 2018).

CDA & Corpus Tool

Approximately 40,000 US women die of breast cancer each year, compared to over 300,000 deaths from heart disease. Online patient forums for breast cancer are renowned for their high levels of engagement and emotional support (O'Hanlon, 2019). In this study, the conversation on social media about breast cancer was contrasted with the conversation about heart disease. Computer-assisted text analysis of tweets from December 2013 to December 2014 that included the hashtags heart disease and breast cancer." AntConc was used for lexical analysis, and DocuSoap for lexicogrammatical analysis. There were 592,046 postings in the #BreastCancer corpus, and 57% were retweets. There were 269,769 tweets and 13% retweets. The discussion of #BreastCancer and #HeartDisease on social media focused on women, new findings, pleas for assistance, and illness risks. The #BreastCancer corpus used gendered language and links to activism and art, whereas articles on #HeartDisease were scientifically examined with other ailments. Community-specific initialism hashtags were incorporated for the first time in the #BreastCancer corpus. The #HeartDisease corpus posts were more academic and used contingent and oppositional reasoning, language from institutional and academic registers, citations, and meta-discourse. In contrast, the #BreastCancer corpus posts were more socially oriented, marked by constructive reasoning, inclusive language, and abstract thinking. In comparison to #BreastCancer, the #HeartDisease social media community is less active, and the information is less tailored to the disease and the individual experience. The success of the #BreastCancer community might be replicated by creating an online community for women with heart disease. Baker et al. (2008) manipulated the method, which is closely associated with corpus linguistics and is widely used by discourse analysts. For this purpose, British news articles on refugees, immigrants, migrants, and asylum seekers (RASIM) were collected to develop a corpus of 140 million words. The collocation and concordance analyses identified common trends in RASIM. This study in critical discourse analysis suggests a framework for following corpus trends.



CDA & Grammar

Drawing on Foucault's discourse theory, Halliday's systemic functional linguistics, Martin's activity sequence theory, and recontextualization, this book reconstructs these frameworks for the manipulation of reality and the shaping of social practices through detailed text analysis (van Leeuwen, 2008). The social action representation, social actors, and the location of spatial, timing, and location of the social context and practices, including different methods of analysis, are also investigated and constructed through discourse with the perspective of legitimations and the evaluation of moral and social practices. Various examples that demonstrate this agenda, along with a wide range of social theories linked to the discourse, are also discussed to explore their relevance for CDA. The methodological framework is also applied in the final part of this book for the analysis of multi-model texts, including children's toys and visual images. Discourse analysis is one of the most popular multidisciplinary approaches and is considered a complete field in education for investigating discourse. (Van Dijk, 2011) The Handbook of Discourse Studies is one of the most comprehensive books for studying any aspect of discourse analysis, including semantic, pedagogical, pragmatic, and cognitive. To explore any discourse, i.e., political, social, or economic approaches. The purpose of this study was to relate the notions of field and genre through the development of systemic functional linguistics within the wider practice of critical discourse analysis. The structure of the genre is articulated in the speech-act sequence and in the core realisation of discursive practices. The structure of the field is interpreted as the recontextualization of social exercises and as the realisation of discourse, which is knowledge of the specificity of the content construction of social practices. This concept is broader than the different models of texts, including verbal and visual. This application is the first in CDA to examine the constitution of discursive practices, with rare guidance from professionals (Van Leeuwen, 1993). Digital Free Tourism (DFT) refers to a situation in which mobile networks, the Internet, or technology are unavailable or controlled by authorities (Li, Pearce & Oktadiana, 2020). This study examined 450 media texts produced between 2009 and 2017 using critical discourse analysis. This study also reported an understanding of the DFT concept, which has been used in the last couple of years to broaden the idea of social context and the conversations in which this concept is applied. A concept of representation was established after reading and reviewing the lexicogrammar data and the manual coding shift. The initial frame suggested that these disconnectivity issues led to human flourishing, a healthy environment, and a pure lifestyle. The conclusion also illustrated that technology-free or technology-controlled holidays will allow people to manage their holiday experiences and relationships effectively.

CDA & Ideology

(Fairclough, 1985) discussed ideological discourse (IDF) within several groups in the institutions. IDF is usually a type of speech community linked to letters and their forms, as well as to its discourse. A major characteristic of the IDF is its ideological neutrality. It is argued that the order of interaction is based on such neutral ideologies. Furthermore, he suggested that social structures shaped the properties of structured discourse involved in denaturalisation. The requirement of this agenda is a global framework of explanation that contrasts the explanatory and non-explanatory work of discourse analysis. He also included features of a critique of such work, using background concepts, power, and the speaker's goal. Lastly, he mentioned social instructions through which CDA can become an effective



tool, supported by significant elements of mother-tongue education. The construction of discourse, its maintenance, legitimisation, and social injustice are the major concerns of critical discourse analysis, which is also considered a qualitative approach for investigating, describing, elaborating on, and explaining social phenomena. Critical Discourse Analysis examines the use of language through discursive approaches, whether conscious or unconscious. Several approaches and models are being used in research, guided by researchers' goals and agendas, to manipulate hidden social realities (Mullet, 2018). This methodological study presented a general critical discourse analysis framework and its various applications to systematically review the educational literature using the discipline of critical discourse analysis. Critical Discourse Analysis research is considered valuable and effective across other fields of study because it produces investigations of ideology that are truthful and qualitatively rigorous, as discussed. A study by N. Fairclough (2013) illustrated the contribution of critical discourse analysis to make a comparative analysis between critical policies of study (CPE), critical political economy in the journal, and (PDA) post-structuralist discourse analysis. From a discursive perspective, there is a slight difference among CDA, CPE, and PDA. CDA contributes specifically to the policy of argumentation within CPE and PDA. The conclusion of this research showed that the analysis of argumentation is not confined to CPA and PDA but is necessary for all analyses of political speech. The analysis of the global politics of education is smart, intricate, and intriguing (Rizvi & Lingard, 2009). It is the first truly thorough study and analysis of international trends in educational policy, their structural and human consequences, and the opposition to them. This book stands out in the vast body of material on globalisation and will be used as a foundational text in education policy courses worldwide. Karl Mannheim, Stephen J. Ball, and the University of London's Institute of Education's professor of sociology of education. How have globalisation processes altered the landscape of educational policy? How can we analyse the education policies that are implemented in this new environment that is simultaneously local, national, regional, and global? The authors of *Globalising Education Policy* look at the main global forces. They investigate how globalisation has altered the discursive environment in which educational policies are created and implemented, contending that this environment is increasingly shaped by a variety of neo-liberal principles that have profoundly altered how we view educational governance. They also argued that, despite some resistance to these precepts in some nations, they have come to be seen as hegemonic, and that this hegemonic view of globalisation has led to crucial problems in educational policy.

In the last couple of decades, critical discourse analysis has been used by educational researchers to investigate the relationship between language and society (Rogers et al., 2005). This article reviewed the author's suggestions and findings through critical discourse analysis in educational research. The findings followed the aforementioned lines of inquiry: multiple approaches to defining CDA, the relationship between CDA and the context methodology questions, and the problems of reflexivity. The conclusion illustrated that, by using critical discourse analysis as an approach, the researchers introduced valuable frameworks into the educational context, recasting the boundaries and limits of critical discourse analysis. The purpose of this study was to examine the representation of Muslims worldwide in the corpus of 105 million words from a large Swedish internet forum from 2003 to 2013, using a topic model and a critical analysis of the discourse. This was also the first study, despite the growing importance and need for



modern technologies, including social media. The data revealed that Muslims are considered a sign of violence, a homogeneous group, morally conflicted, and also signs of extremism, which are also considered taboo characteristics in Islam. These examined data are also the same as those found in the traditional media analysis. These results indicated that on social media platforms, it does not matter how specific the discourse is. Traditional media can easily disrupt public discourse, including across religions and other groups (Törnberg & Törnberg, 2016).

CONCLUSION

This study discussed Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a dynamic, constantly evolving methodology in linguistics and related fields. It has traced the theoretical underpinnings of CDA and methodological extensions to media discourse, educational policy, neoliberal ideology, digital communication, corpus-assisted research, and grammatical analysis, drawing on the work of Norman Fairclough, Teun A. van Dijk and Theo van Leeuwen. The review shows that CDA has moved beyond textual analysis to encompass socio-cognitive, socio-semiotic, and corpus-based methodologies, making it more analytically rigorous and interdisciplinary. The results suggest that CDA is especially useful for revealing hidden frameworks of power, ideological construction, and discursive legitimisation within institutional and digital settings. The combination of corpus and multimodal analysis is another indication of its flexibility in modern communicative conditions shaped by globalisation and technological change. Nevertheless, as the review indicates, there are still controversies regarding methodological consistency, reflexivity, and the relationship between critical interpretation and empirical validation. CDA remains an excellent theoretical and methodological framework for critically investigating language as a social practice. Future research must enhance corpus-based and digital tools while retaining the critical stance that distinguishes CDA from descriptive discourse analysis.

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