SPECIFICITY OF CRITICAL THINKINGIN THE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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Abstract: Contemporary society is characterized by accelerated development, high social uncertainty, and transition to the new system of communicative interactions in the global information space. In terms of the rigid ideological competition, power structures actively affect discursive practices towards manipulating public opinion and individual conscience. Latent nature of authoritative influence on the discourse makes a person defenseless against manipulative influences by the social interaction participants. Critical discourse analysis is a research field of contemporary social science, associated with the study of discourse. It lays claim to overcome the abuses of power, social inequality, discrimination, racism, etc. Recognizing that domination and subordination relations are realized through the assimilation and recognition by social actors of a specific type of language, adherents of critical discourse analysis hold their approach as an analytical intervention into social and political practice.

However, it appears that the action mechanism of critical discourse analysis on real social relations is somewhat overvalued, and disclosure of the ideological influence of discourse is not a means of overcoming social inequalities, impairment of a right, and the suppression of social groups through the discourse. Information security of social relations actors depends on their ability to independently analyze information, predict course of events, draw conclusions, and make decisions within short time frames that is impossible with a lack of developed critical thinking skills. Therefore, from our viewpoint, the development of critical thinking among civil society members is more effective means to protect against the manipulation of collective and individual consciousness. Providing high resistance against manipulative influences, critical thinking skills involve the ability to see and find the problem solving ways, select and systematize the needed information, identify unsupported assumptions and assessments, demonstrate the accuracy and selectivity in language exercising and perception of language means, be able to interpret facts and information, weight the evidence, detect the availability or lack of logical relationships between propositions, make logically valid conclusions and generalizations, and keep opportunity to put them into question based on own belief system, as well as to make correct judgments and estimates concerning the everyday life.

Thus, the critical perception of information is a precondition for going beyond the cycle of power discourses, since it ensures the improvement of the overall level of criticality of public and individual consciousness as well as logic culture of thinking of social actors at the level of the masses. This leads us to conclusion that the critical discourse analysis, as the analytical method of intervention in social and political practice, should be supplemented by critical thinking. Due to this circumstance, experience gained in critical discourse analysis can be used to improve the methodology of critical thinking while experience gained in the discourse analysis will become available to the mass consciousness that will allow the wider society to be involved in the transformation of the power discourse, and would facilitate constructive dialogue between power and society.

Keywords: Critical thinking, discourse, discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis, text, discursive practice, social practice.

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INTRODUCTION

Among the contemporary theories aimed at finding bases for interpreting social phenomena we should mention the widespread theory and methodology of discourse analysis. The main development centers of this theory were established in Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, and the UK. Various discourse analysis schools are united by a common methodological approach, which considers the study of oral or written text as the basis for interpreting social phenomena. Discourse is seen here as a form of social practice, and the study of discursive acts, metaphors, and collective symbols used in the communications, mass media, politics, etc. are considered as the key to understand social situations, social institutions, and social processes (*Link, 1978; Wodak et. al., 1999*).

Critical discourse analysis is a variety of discursive analysis, whose believers solve research problems based on certain ethical and political stances. In this context, it continues traditions of unity between research of social reality and its criticism, laid down by the Marxists and the Frankfurt school. The ideas of M. Foucault represent another theoretical source of critical discourse analysis. Foucault considered the discourses to be typical methods or types of speech practices consistent with the role and function of social institutions and social groups in society. Norman Fairclough defines critical discourse analysis as an approach that systematically examines even weekly expressed cause-effect relationships between discursive practices, texts, events, social structures, relationships, and socio-cultural processes. Fairclough emphasizes the importance of text quality level in the discourse analysis and considers critical discourse analysis to be one of the methodological strategies in analysis of social structures and relations (along with the institutional analysis and ethnographic approaches) (*Fairclough, 2003*).

According to Teun A. van Dijk, the adherent of the Dutch school of critical discourse analysis, the research traditions of verbal communication, speech acts and texts were laid as far back as by supporters of ancient rhetoric. Further, decisive contribution to the development of this problem was made by the introduction of structuralism, semiotics, sociolinguistics, and ethnography that gave rise to promising research directions and methods such as the theory of speech acts, pragmatics, narrative analysis, as well as contributed to the development of text processing, given the advances in psychology and artificial intelligence theory (*Teun A. Van Dijk, 1989*). In 1970, Michael Halliday stressed the influence of linguistic system on the social and personal needs, which are implemented through the language (*Wodak, 2011*).

Critical discourse analysis as an interdisciplinary area of social cognition theory was developed after the release of the book "Language and Control" (*Fowler et. al., 1979*). As a research method, it has found wide application in psychology, anthropology, sociology, and linguistics. Its main feature consists in rejection of

value-based neutrality of social knowledge and focus of research on ethical and political attitudes, expressing the interests of certain social groups. Scientists, practicing critical discourse analysis believe that the political indifference of the researcher does not provide identification of hidden ideological structures of power, authoritative control and domination, expressed in the language and used for discriminatory purposes, and therefore contributes to the maintenance of an unfair status quo. Rethinking of the discourse notion transforms critical discourse analysis into interdisciplinary project involving the law (legal documents and legal relations), mass media (media texts), psychology (psychotherapeutic discourse), and public relations (social communication). Thus, critical discourse analysis unites researchers in an interdisciplinary subject-thematic and methodological field.

The discourse analysis practice aims at identifying ways of abusive exercise of power in the society through discourse. The criticism to which discourse analysts subject specific structures of discourse that support and construct social inequality, serves the method of exposing the hidden ideological effects of discursive acts on the mass consciousness to support and reproduce existing system of power. Revealing elements of manipulation and discrimination such as nationalism, sexism, racism, etc. in the hidden public written and spoken texts, is expressed in the form of criticism of social reality, aiming at description and explanation of a discursive order of reproduction of domination and subordination relations in society (*Rusakova, Ishmenev, 2006*). The idea of combining research and criticism of social reality is considered in the book of Z.Yeger "Great regulator. Analysis of BILD reports about racially motivated terror in the summer of 1993", where the author argues that familiarity with the outcomes of a study of racist utterances in Germany in 1993 will help readers to escape from the "web" of undemocratic discourses. A similar approach is used in Bochum Discourse School (Germany), whose research findings are presented in the journal "KultuR Revolution" published by the school.

METHODS

To determine the specificity of critical discourse analysis as social knowledge area, we highlighted its general subject area, i.e. discursive acts as a kind of social practice, relying on the theoretical analysis method. By combining the reflective and the abstraction methods we selected grounds and the basic assumptions of critical discourse analysis: the thesis consisting in the necessity to combine the research process with criticism of social reality, and the thesis consisting in the need to address theoretical problems from the standpoint of the ethical and political stances, reflecting the interests of the suppressed social groups. In the framework of the interpretation method in the light of the constructive nature of discursive acts underlying oral and written text, critical discourse analysis

is presented as an analytical intervention in social practice. When comparing different alternate versions of critical discourse analysis, critical linguistics, social semiotics, and sociocultural discourse analysis, we used the comparative method. A reflexive method in combination with the interpretation of the comparison results allowed revealing the interdisciplinary nature of the studied area. It also allowed demonstrating the limitation of criticism of the influence of power structures on the discourse, constructed in social communication, mass media, political and ethical spheres, and making a conclusion about necessity to supplement critical discourse analysis by the development of critical thinking as a means of protecting the mass consciousness against the manipulative influence.

RESULTS

A comparative analysis of research conducted in specific areas of critical discourse analysis, such as *critical linguistics*, which deals with the ideological component of the categorization processes in language, and *social semiotics*, which studies the influence on the discourse of place, time, and socio-cultural context, suggests that elite discourse and media discourse are the main sources of power imbalances. This requires considering how texts and other linguistic products influence people's actions and social environment. Linguistic and social research into the mechanism of implementation into daily life and the media of racially structured discourse concerning immigrants and refugees, held at Duisburg University (Germany) serves a particular example (*Jäger, 1996; Jäger, 1993.; Link, 1978*).

The study suggests a high heuristic significance of another research area, namely *sociocultural discourse analysis*, which is based on the statement concerning the interrelation between discourse, society, and culture. Any language based action automatically affects the culture and society reproduction and transformation processes, including power relations. Individuals believing themselves to be sources of discourse are under the illusion, because as discourse subjects they are the products of ideological positioning along with the discourse itself. The subject of the discourse is produced in the course of discursive practices as "inner without outer": "appeal to the individual as the subject of his speech is carried out through identification (of the subject) with the discursive formation, which dominates over him (in other words, in which he is formed as a subject)" (*Pecheux, 1999*).

Discursive formations, which Michel Pecheuxdefines using the term "interdiscourse", are above the discursive constructs that serve a framework for the ideological positioning of individuals.

Unlike other types of discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis does not pretend to be objective, combining the advantages of the research method and a full-fledged ideology, deliberately designed and implemented to expose social inequality and political struggle against it (*Wodak et. al., 1999*). Proponents of critical discourse analysis believe that such an ideological preconception not only

does not reduce the value of analysis, but also gives it a pragmatic nature, allows seeing it as a socially useful practice. Consistent application of critical discourse analysis models, including models of Michel Pecheux, Michael Halliday, Norman Fairclough, and Teun A. Van Dijk allows developing an algorithm that would increase the level of critical perception of social practices and social processes.

Proponents of critical discourse analysis believe that forms of social disparity associated with gender, class, and racial differences are constructed, fixed and legitimized through various types of public discourse, and therefore are controlled by the symbolic elites in the person of politicians, journalists, scientists, writers, and civil servants. However, it remains unclear how critical discourse analysis, as a research method, can change the situation and influence the prevailing social practice of the language functioning and consequences of its use for different communities. Pecheux explains this as follows: since words flexibly change their meanings depending on the class positions in political struggle, criticism of actual discourse necessarily leads to a change in the existing relations of inequality and subordination, eliminating related ideological contradictions and the class struggle (*Pecheux*, *1999*). According to Lilie Chouliaraki, the society is in a constant struggle of discourses to establish «Policy of Truth».Therefore, critical discourse analysis can affect balance between the use of linguistic and visual resources of the text (*Rusakova, Ishmenev, 2006*).

Claims of critical discourse analysis regarding the formation of social practice in accordance with certain ethical and political positions are due to its inherent constructivist nature. The hypotheses regarding the properties of social reality are put forward not in the framework of existing theories, but in the capacity of text constructs, which serve the basis for creation of both new theories and actuality. At that, the power relations should be analyzed critically, that is, from the perspective of subordinated (deprived or discriminated) group and to the benefit of this group, calling into question the legitimacy of authoritative (dominant) discourse and offering an alternative. As a consequence, the constructed theory appears to be more a tool of criticism of social reality, rather than the result of its cognition.

However, this type of criticism has restrictions: it is not available to the mass consciousness because is a research, whose comprehension requires special training. Mass consciousness is focused on the discourse elements, understandable to everybody that solves the problem of mutual understanding in society. Mass discourse is a syncretic unity of special discourses, specifically legal, economic, medical, etc., however its base consists of common vocabulary words functioning in the empirical discourse, such as speechification, printed texts, television and radio broadcasts, etc. Such interdiscourse compensates for the specialization of human knowledge due to its stereotypes, repetition, and functional relation to the subject's attitudes and position; though on its own it is ill-suited to implement critical thinking skills.

In this regard, the restriction of critical discourse analysis, as a method of social practices transformation, can be overcome through the development of critical thinking in members of civil society that leads to increased level of awareness and purposefulness of thinking processes, improves the logical culture of thinking, quality of argumentation, and independence in drawing conclusions.

Among critical thinking researchers, at this time there is no unified approach,when determining abilities and skills that constitute its specificity (*Ennis, 1996; Fisher, 2001*).Most of them indicate the intellectual knowledge and skills that are associated with: (1) information perception and processing: assessing the reliability of information sources, searching for relevant information and its subsequent analysis; (2) logical skills used in communication and decision-making: analyzing and evaluating the persuasiveness of arguments and the logical correctness of the conclusions, practicing question-and-answer procedures in order to clarify information and identify possible mistakes, accuracy and clarity in presenting their own viewpoints and suitable choice of linguistic resources, making decisions on a rational basis and justifying own choice; (3) overcoming business-as-usual thinking: the ability of perceiving an alternative standpoint on the concerned problem, and considering different approaches to its analysis. Researcher Michael Scriven emphasizes that critical thinking skills should be developed because their educational value in a contemporary society is equal to "ability to read and write" (*Halpern, 2003*). Michael Scriven and Richard Paul give the following definition of critical thinking: "Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action. In its exemplary form, it is based on universal intellectual values that transcend subject matter divisions: clarity, accuracy, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, depth, breadth, and fairness (*Scriven, Paul, 1987*).

Critical thinking increases resistance against manipulations due to the high-level mindfulness of intellectual actions and systematically applied reflection;ability to independently comprehend and select information; overcome stereotypes of thinking, including conformism as a personal attitude. Wide-sweeping mastering of knowledge and critical thinking skills by social action agents will significantly reduce the impact of destructive manipulative practices, which form a distorted picture of social reality. This will allow predicting social risks and maintain stable operation of the social system.

Supplementing critical discourse analysis by critical thinking can be useful in a two-fold respect: firstly, it opens access for mass consciousness to mastering the results of social research and raises the level of criticism regarding social practices and discourses; secondly, it allows maintaining criticality in relation to emotional situations that accompany the detected facts of influence on discourse. The point is

that not only ideology or politics have a distorting impact on social perception. The facts of social disparity, identified by critical discourse analysis, may cause protest sentiment in social groups subjected to discrimination, while the accompanying emotional background may also distort the perception of social reality. In this case, one distorting factor is simply replaced by another emotionally-affected factor, so that the social reality picture does not become closer to the true picture anyway.

In this situation, the application of critical thinking skills attributable to *affective experiences* (*Paul et. al. 1995*) is quite productive. They concern the ability to distinguish between egocentrism and sociocentrism as the action attitudes and motives; the ability to identify and understand the relationship of beliefs and emotions; a willingness to restrain hasty judgments and conclusions that are made under the influence of emotions and moods; the ability to cope with fear of the unknown; as well as the ability to exhibit thoroughness and persistence in solving intellectual tasks and overcoming intellectual difficulties.

Besides the manipulative techniques associated with the use of discourse, the socio-political environment and the mass media use direct distortion of information and forgery, which are called fakes (*Ilchenko, 2016; Ilchenko, 2013*). Intellectual filters, through which a person can identify and weed out fakes, are associated with the critical thinking skills at *macrocognition level*. This includes the ability of a person to see similar situations and apply existing knowledge in a new context; availability of panoramic skills, i.e. the ability to evaluate the problem from different perspectives; the accuracy in language, when expressing the judgments and conclusions; the ability to develop assessment criteria based on the underlying values and norms, evaluate the reliability of information, separate the important from the secondary, think deeply, analyze the relevance of arguments, make decisions and evaluate them,assess human actions and selected behavior patterns; the ability to be critical of the text and highlight the main idea, listen critically, see relationships between objects, have the skills of "Socratic dialogue"; the ability to identify interlocutor's values and beliefs, formulate new views and hypotheses in the course of the dialogue; the ability to reason dialectically, capturing the contradictions and seeing ways of resolving them. Critical thinking can form the so-called media competence that allows perceiving media texts through the prism of critical analysis rather than directly.

Finally, critical thinking involves *microcognition skills* to go beyond the boundaries of specific discourses, using common logical thinking culture. This involves working with abstract forms, relating and contrasting concepts and reality; speaking accurately and critically; analyzing and evaluating the statements; assessing implications; identifying information associated with a particular issue; giving logical explanations, inferences, and predictions; assessing the degree of evidence of the statements; seeing the contradictions in implications and judgments, and analyzing the direct and indirect consequences of a particular phenomenon.

DISCUSSION

The results obtained can be interpreted in the context of critical thinking development, information and communicative culture of personality and his information-psychological security. In the conditions, where information becomes the core value, it is extremely important to be able to work with the information correctly, to analyze, evaluate, and make proper conclusions that in turn require appropriate cognitive skills. When implementing critical thinking mode, we evaluate both thinking processes and its content, cast doubt on established views and opinions. This allows us, to some extent, overcoming the fragmentarity of our consciousness and withstanding various manipulative influences, whose number increases many times in connection with the employment of contemporary information technologies. Information and psychological pressure through social networks, media, etc. is exposed to both individual and mass social consciousness to encourage the social action subjects acting openly or latently against their own interests, implementing the interests of those social groups or organizations, which practice such impacts.

Critical discourse analysis reveals the domination principles of certain social groups over others, enshrined in language, transmitted and reproduced through the language that allows breaking from imposed thinking stereotypes, and discover the hidden meaning of manipulative ideological practices. In case, where social groups discriminated by the ruling elite discourse, will be able to impose their discourse on society, this will only lead to the replacement of one discourse by another, and will have a destructive impact on the interests of the majority that may lead to destabilization of the social system. In particular, the application of the "automatic discourse analysis" model of Pecheux allows cultivating the principle of doubt, which underlies critical thinking, because "automatic discourse analysis" suggests that the origin of the discourse, as well as mechanisms of ideological positioning, are camouflaged, and in order to discover them, it is necessary to abandon the idea that the subject himself is exactly the author of discourse, and to recognize that ideological positioning is determined by ideological formations. Grammatical model of Halliday interprets each language element with reference to its function in the total linguistic system, and from this viewpoint functional grammar combines all the elements of the language as certain function configurations. This model helps to develop the ability to analyze and assess the truth of statements, conclusions, and assumptions at the language level. The model of Fairclough can be used to develop critical thinking skills such as the examination of problem from different perspectives, their comparative analysis, and the ability to formulate own viewpoint. The socio-cognitive approach of Van Dijk and his version of building strategy can be used to a greater extent to develop reflection skills with regard to own cognitive processes.

CONCLUSIONS

In consequence of the conducted study we made the following conclusions. Since critical discourse analysis carries ideological and axiological burden and is not neutral with respect to its object, it cannot be considered as an effective method to neutralize the manipulative influences, which are impacted on social majority within the existing "authoritative discourse". In the indicated context, the development of critical thinking among members of civil society can be the primary method of going beyond the "cycle" of authoritative discourses. Critical perception of information in the mass consciousness will allow identifying different levels of manipulative influences, often used in public discourses, including the mass media. This will complicate their mass application to the benefit of power holders and contribute to their overcoming.

In consequence of the study we may conclude that critical discourse analysis, as analytical method of intervention in social and political practice, should be complemented by critical thinking, whereby the experiences of discourse analysis will be available to the mass consciousness and allow the wider society to be involved in the transformation of the authoritative discourse. Besides, experiences gained in critical discourse analysis can be used to enhance the critical thinking methodology.

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