CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS (CDA) AS AN APPROACH TO THE ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE

[1]Nor Fatin Abdul Jabar and [*2]Kamariah Yunus

The information on which people interpret the world comes from many sources. It comes from personal interactions with others, from their knowledge and experience, and cultural conventions and practices in their social world. The information also comes from people's exposure to institutional and non-institutional learning environments, as well as from subsequent reflections, theories and practices based on these environments, such as television, radio, newspaper and magazines, the internet and many other sources. The sources carry different values in term of status, so the information received from these sources can be interpreted as having different degrees of validity. The main mode through which most of the sources give information is the language. Most of these sources can be interpreted and analysed using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), an approach that indicates other modes of meaning making including gestures, intonation, image and gaze. This paper aims to review the theoretical and practical aspects of CDA in the analysis of language use in social context. The multifaceted analyses using CDA can bring to light the social and cultural discourses to the fore.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), CDA approach, modes of meaning making, language analysis

1. INTRODUCTION

Every interaction that happens every day is considered as discourse. It is the way people interpret the information that comes from a wide range of sources. It comes from personal interactions with others, from their knowledge and experience, cultural conventions, and social practices. The interactions also include institutional and non-institutional learning environments, as well as from subsequent reflections, theories, and practices. They range from daily informal conversations and interactions from public media, such as television, radio, newspaper and magazines, the internet and many others to formal discourses, such as political and academic lectures. At various times and in various contexts, the interactions carry different statuses and degrees of validity. According to Van Dijk (2008), every interaction that provides information is language, and this interaction indicates other modes of meaning making including gesture, intonation, image and gaze (multimodal signs). These signs can be interpreted by using CDA. This paper aims to review CDA as an approach by exploring its theoretical and practical perspectives.

[1,2] Faculty of languages and Communication, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Kuala Nerus, 21300, Terengganu, Malaysia

[*] Corresponding author *E-mail: kamariah@unisza.edu.my*

2. CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Widdowson (2007) defines CDA as an approach that is concerned with the use (and abuse) of language for the exercise of socio political power, ideology and social belief. According to Rahimi and Riasati (2011), as cited in Fairclough (1995), CDA is fundamentally concerned with analysing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language. CDA aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between discursive practices, events and texts, wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes. The function of CDA is to uncover the relationship between language, society, power, ideology, values and opinions (Van Dijk, 2008).

Amerian and Fateme (2014) define CDA as a discipline that uncovers both the hidden and transparent social as well as political norms and values. CDA explores social and political context in order to liberate ideologies, hegemony, dominance and social powers. Meanwhile, Elhami (2012) defines CDA as an interdisciplinary form of analysis that deals with the investigation of dialectical relations between discourse and other objects, elements, or moments as well as the analysis of the internal relations of discourse.

On a different note, Rahimi and Riasati (2011) define CDA as an approach that allows researchers, learners, and teachers to look at the elements of texts, both at the micro and macro linguistic levels. At the micro linguistic level, it analyses the grammatical structures of texts. On the other hand, at the macro linguistic level, CDA analyses linguistic properties beyond grammatical structures such as the denotation and connotation meaning of words and their metaphorical functions, authors' stances, hedges, and other related elements.

The definitions from the analysts and researchers are not enough to explain CDA. It needs to be explained and understood as both a theory and a method. CDA offers not only a description and interpretations of discourses in social context but also explains why and how discourses work (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). Before CDA can be understood as an approach, the concepts of critical, discourse and analysis has to be made clear. This is because these terms have been interpreted in differing and contested ways.

In CDA, the notion of 'critical' is applied to the engagement with power relations (Calkin, 2014). Besides the role to uncloak the hidden power relations, the word is largely constructed through language, which demonstrates and challenges social inequities that are reinforced and reproduced.

The word 'discourse' is contested and contestable. According to Gee (1990), discourse with a small 'd' is about language in use, or the way language is applied in a social context. It is a way to discuss language beyond the sentence level, which allows analysts to consider some of the things that are happening in the language. This is observable if every sentence is analysed in depth. For example,

the word 'this' can be used as the start of a discussion to foreground the topic under discussion, whereas the word 'that' can be used to background a topic and place as a subordinate position, from the speaker's point of view.

Gee (1990) adds that the word 'Discourse' with a big 'D' is a non-language element. It occurs between people, in particular places and circumstances, at particular times, and accompanied by particular semiotic signs (gesture, dress, and symbols). It is influenced by a range of values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions and ideologies. Discourses (D) are characteristics that are socially and culturally formed but historically changed. They are the ways of talking and writing about people and things. The characteristics occur within various texts, artefacts, images, social practices, institutions, as well as in social interactions.

Therefore, 'it can be claimed that 'discourse' is an authoritative way of describing. For example, we can talk about medical, legal, and media discourses. Discourse is used to describe the way that language operates to produce meanings, in the forms of representations, codes, conventions and habits of language that produce specific fields of culturally and historically located meanings. According to Gee (1990), these discourses are hierarchically arranged and have different degrees of power and influence.

For the term 'analysis', CDA takes the view that texts need to be considered not only in terms of what they include but also what they omit. It is an alternative way of constructing and defining the world. The critical discourse analyst's job is not to simply read political and social ideologies onto a text but to consider the myriad ways in which a text could have been written and what these alternatives imply for ways of representing and understand the world, and the social actions that are determined by these ways of thinking and beings.

In order to analyse the discourses critically, authors have to adopt several analytical traits. They have to be reflective (e.g. thinking deeply about what is said and the context of its production, including time, circumstances, and policy context, etc.), reflexive (i.e., considering how one's positionality impacts upon what one does and how one interprets things), questioning (i.e., not taking anything for granted and exploring what the language presupposes), dialogic (i.e., collaboratively constructing understandings), and comparative (i.e., comparing articles on the same topic, with attention to their similarities, differences, and the implications).

It can be concluded therefore that CDA is a contemporary approach to the study of language and discourses in social institutions. It is an approach to the study of language use and textual practices focusing closely on the inter-relationship between language and power. It focuses on how social relations, identity, knowledge and power are constructed through written and spoken texts n communities, education, or politics environments.

3. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

According to Van Dijk (2008), since CDA is not a specific direction of research, it does not have a unitary theoretical framework. Fairclough and Wodak (1997) claim that CDA focuses on many aspects related with social activities. It addresses issues such as social problems, power relations, society and culture, ideological work, historical background, the link between text and society, interpretative and explanatory analyses, and a form of social action.

Within the principles mentioned above, CDA is theoretically and analytically diverse. CDA approach differs based on contexts. CDA of conversation is very different from an analysis of news report in the press and with people daily's conversations. According to Widdowson (2007), CDA will ask questions about the way specific discourse structures are deployed in the reproduction of social dominance, whether they are part of a conversation or a news report or other genres and contexts.

The features of notions that are analysed by many scholars are power, dominance, hegemony, ideology, class, gender, race, discrimination, interests, reproduction, institutions, social structure and social order, beside the more familiar discourse analytical notions.

CDA constructs and regulates social relations and knowledge. This explains that discourses have a disciplining effect that limits the boundaries of field and enquiry and determine what is acceptable in terms of beliefs and actions within those fields and how to express these beliefs. CDA also can be considered as a cultural framework (Van Dijk, 2008) because it focuses on habitual thought and social actions that may govern and regulate mental processes without being consciously apprehended or controlled.

CDA views text as artefacts that do not occur in isolation (Fairclough, 2010). It can be clearly seen that socio-political and socio-historic contexts contribute to
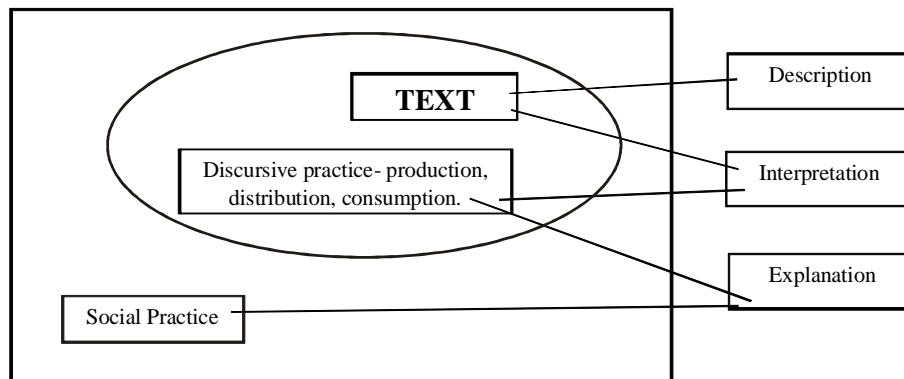
Figure 1: Levels of Analysis in CDA

production and interpretation of text and are crucial aspects of the analysis. CDA operates on three levels of analysis; engaging with the text, the discursive practices (process of production/reception/interpretation), and the wider social practice contexts.

From the concepts and frameworks, CDA takes an ethical stance on social issues with the aim of transforming society. According to Huckin (1997), CDA is an approach or attitude rather than a step by step method. Huckin (1997) claims that CDA is founded on the idea that there is unequal access to linguistic and social resource, which concern with institutional discourses, such as media, policy, gender, labelling and others. Fairclough (2010) contends that CDA is common sense because CDA implicit assumptions, not questions or facts.

4.   THE PRACTICAL PERSPECTIVE OF CDA

In the analysis of texts, genres, and discourses, there are several criteria that are important to be applied. They are outlined in Table 1 below:

TABLE 1: CRITICAL LITERACY FRAME CRITERIA

Criterion 1	Pronouns
Criterion 2	Passive/Active forms
Criterion 3	Time
Criterion 4	Adjectives, Adverbs, Nouns and Verbal processes
Criterion 5	Metaphor
Criterion 6	Presupposition/Implication
Criterion 7	Medium
Criterion 8	Audience
Criterion 9	Visual Images
Criterion 10	Age, Class, Disability, Gender and Race
Criterion 11	Reference to other texts, Genres, Discourses and Individuals

The above criteria have been ordered for pedagogical purposes, and these allow future discourse analysts to analyse from the micro elements to the macro elements. This also allows the mapping of texts onto the notions of language, and the extra-linguistic levels of context and ideology. Analysts should add-on these criteria according to their contexts of the texts that are under examination and the needs of the analysis.

Under criteria 1, it considers the way in which pronouns may be used in the text, whether they are inclusive (our, us, we or others), or exclusive (they, their, them, he, she, it, you, your or others). It also considers how the reader and other participants are positioned as allies or in group-members with the author, thus assuming shared knowledge, beliefs and values, or how readers and other participants are marginalised as 'outsiders' with different beliefs and agendas. Pronouns are the way individuals and groups are named and so are always political in the ways they include power relations.

Transformations of active sentences into passive forms can be motivated by the desire to elide agency and therefore systematically background responsibility for actions in some instances or to foreground responsibility in others. The manipulation of agency transparency serves to construct a world of various responsibilities, and power, for example 'The present perfect is used to …'. By removing the agent, the use of a particular grammatical form is given an unquestionable, universal function, in spite of its context of use and the political dimensions raised here. The analysis is almost always absent from textbooks and grammar reference books using such definitions. It is important to note that to assume such a basic transitivity shift as passive voice or active voice would lead to a complete shift in the understanding of the reader would be an over-simplification and patronising to the reader. However, as noted earlier, the construction is effected through a layering of layers of representations and the claim for relevance of this aspect of the Frame is as one of these countless layers.

Tenses are the important elements that are used to construct understanding about events. For example, the use of the simple present tense constructs events as reality and facts, while the use of the simple past tense can present events that happened in the past. It is important to use a correct tense as it can be demonstrated to note the different semantic effects. It is important to understand that choices made in terms of tense and aspect are not merely concerned with the time frame of an action or process but also impact clearly on the representation of that action or process as true, relevant or significant.

The use of those criteria is central to the construction of an event or a person, whether it is used positively or not. They are used to overgeneralise and overstate the subjects (events or people). Furthermore, analysts can detect the authors' stance, viewpoint, or feelings about the entities or propositions that they are talking about.

Metaphors play a fundamental part in the way people represent social reality. The use of metaphor is central in the way it positions what is described and the readers' relationship to this. This is bluntly seen in the description of individuals, for example "The leader is a **monster**" or "The businesswoman is an **iron lady**". It is important to realise that metaphors do not express exactly the same meaning, as the purpose of using metaphors is functional and serves to interpret a differently foregrounded meaning than its alternatives. They are neither better nor worse than their similar counterparts as they are simply performing different functions.

Presupposition helps to represent constructions as convincing realities, and there are a number of lexico-grammatical means by which this can be achieved, either through the use of negative questions and tags which presuppose a certain answer, or the use of factive verbs, adjectives and adverbs that presuppose their grammatical complements, adjectives and adverbs that describe entities and processes they presuppose, and therefore represent them as facts.

The content of a text is a form of interdiscursivity, which goes beyond the ways in which texts borrow from, plagiarize from and interpenetrate with each other, to the ways in which genres and discourses do this. Interdiscursivity is the aspect of a discourse that relates it to other discourses. According to Fairclough (2010), interdiscursivity is an analytic concept, which has close affinity to re-contextualisation because texts often imply the elements that are derived from other discourses.

Language is a social semiotic, which is the idea that language is utilised for some form of communication, and therefore a party or parties at whom communication is aimed, or the audience. Any analysis would therefore be inadequate if it does not focus some attention on the audience, and how they are projected in terms of social distance, like the relationship to and familiarity with the text producer and status. Even though there is no way that the author can know exactly who the audience is, the notion of audience can be read as an idealised, projected construction (Hoff, 2014). In this idealisation and projection, clues can be found as to the ideological presuppositions of the text producers.

According to Jones (2012), discourses are seen as socially constructed knowledge of reality, which use semiotic resources to realise discourses. Images convey messages and signs that can be assumed as communication too. The production of the images refers to the organisation of the expression, to the actual material articulation of the semiotic event and distribution as the facilitation of the pragmatic functions of preservation and distribution.

Images associate with truth and objectivity, and they have impacted on the way visual images are read (Khan, 2012). Besides the potential for the manipulation of images and the potential for displaying an image with a constructed impression of its contextual setting, visual images do play a powerful role in the construction of truth and reality. The use of images has clear relationships with notions of hegemony in presenting a picture of 'this is how it is'. As Fairclough (2010) notes, images have primacy over words.

CDA approach is used to analyse the biasness that occur in discourses. Here, age, class, disability, gender, race or ethnicity, and sexual issues will be exposed and disclosed. However, the result of different analysts may be different because they might infer the discourses according to their stances, beliefs and cultures. Even though an analyst may not have any biasness or his or her own point of view, but still, his or her knowledge and beliefs that are derived from own culture and beliefs will influence the data obtained.

Texts from all genres are derived through reference from other texts, genres, discourses, and individuals (Kamariah Yunus, Mahani Mohamad, & Bordin Waelateh, 2016). It is called as interdiscursivity or intertextuality. It is the wider appropriation of styles, genres and the ideological assumptions underpinning discursive practice (Fairclough, 2010). Interdiscursivity operates on a more macro

level and refers to the diverse ways, in which genres and discourses interpenetrate each other. For example, movies that are based on novels or novels that are written based on true stories and incidents.

Intertextuality focuses more on micro level. It is viewed as the identifiable borrowing from other texts. The examples are quotation, citations, and references to other texts, whereas the use of phrasing, style and metaphor are originating from other texts may be more opaque, yet equally revealing.

5. CONCLUSION

CDA is an approach that is widely used to analyse and investigate the social and politics elements in a society. This approach is used to encourage awareness, through the investigation of powerful discourses, of the ways in which systems of power affect people by the meanings they construct and represent. The purpose of CDA is to investigate the texts, in which textual practices should be seen as social practices, taking place within social, historical, and political contexts.

The analysis seeks to suggest ways in which questions can be raised regarding textual practices and the issues of power that underlie them, and how such question-raising can be related to concerns for critical thinking, a commitment to social justice and an orientation to social action to achieve this. This paper shows that CDA represents one step along such a pathway in encouraging the critical decoding and analysis of powerful texts and discourses that can facilitate critical social agency, and also the notions of critical pedagogy.

References

Amerian, M. & Esmaili, F. (2015). Language and gender: a critical discourse analysis on gender representation in a series of international ELT textbooks. *International Journal of Research Studies in Education,* 4(2), 126-136.

Alexander, J. C. (1987). *The micro-macro link.* University of California Press: Berkeley.

Calkin, S.A. (2014). The political economy of empowerability: a critical discourse analysis of the "gender equality as smart economics": policy agenda. *Saber and Scroll Journals, 2*(2), 23-38.

Chouliaraki, L. & Fairclough, N. (1999). *Discourse in late modernity: rethinking critical discourse analysis.* Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh.

Elhami, A. (2012). A critical discourse analysis on gender representation in the Iranian English books 2,3 and top notch 2A,2B: a critical discourse analysis perspective. *International Journal of Research Studies in Education, 1*(2), 13-22.

Fairclough, N. (2010). *Critical discourse analysis: the critical study of language.* Routledge: London.

Fairclough, N. and Wodak, R. (1997). *'Critical discourse analysis'. In T. A. van Dijk (ed.), discourse studies: a multidisciplinary introduction* (Vol. 2). Sage: London.

Fairclough, N. (1992). *Critical language awareness.* Longman: London.

Gee, P. (1990). *Social linguistics and literacies (2nd edition 1996).* Falmer Press: London.

Gramsci, A. (1971). *Prison notebooks.* International Publishers: New York.

Hoff, E (2014). *Language development.* Sage Publishing Co: United States of America.

Huckin, T. (1997). 'Critical discourse analysis' in functional approaches to written text: classroom applications. Retrieved from *http://exchanges.state.gov/education/engteaching//pubs/BR/functionalsec3_6.htm*

Jones, R.H. (2012). *Discourse analysis.* Routledge: New York.

Kamariah Yunus, Mahani Mohamad, & Bordin Waelateh (2016). The breadth of receptive vocabulary knowledge among English major university students. *Journal of Nusantara Studies, 1(*1), 7-17.

Khan, H.I. (2012). English teachers' perceptions about creativity and teaching creative writing in Pakistan. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 2(3), 57-67.

Rahimi, F. & Riasati, M.J. (2011). Critical discourse analysis: scrutinizing ideologically-driven discourse. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science,* 16(1), 23-50.

Van Dijk, T.A. (2008). *Discourse and context: A sociocognitive approach.* Cambridge University Press: Barcelona.

Widdowson, H.G. (2007). *Discourse analysis.* Oxford University Press: New York.

Wodak, R. (1984). Determination of guilt: Discourses in the courtroom. Sage: Beverly Hills.