On Doing Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA) is a recent multidisciplinary and multidimensional approach to the study of discourse. More than one discipline can be found to be involved in this approach, psychology, sociology, mass communication, law, literature, political sciences, and social psychology. All dimensions of language are getting involved in this trend, syntax, semantics, pragmatics … etc.

CDA manipulates the process of the dramatization of the opposition between in – group members and out-group members crystallized in a set of discursive strategies cognitively and culturally constrained These strategies include lexicalization, framing, presupposition, figurative language , hedging postures etc., Throughout CDA, it becomes possible to trace realizations of personality and speaker's ability to control others cognitively via maneuvers of language.

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CDA is applied here to male – abuse of power. This paper, thus, is supposed to offer a simple contribution to the studies of language and sex. It is supposed to account for male-dominance and abuse of power through the perspective of CDA in a literary text.

1. Introduction

Discourse, as a social activity, is socially influenced and it give rise to radical aspects of power. It may declare some assumptions as common sense and hide some others for special purposes. Ideological loading of words and wording is not clear to people; neither is the relation of this to power. These veiled discursive aspects can be uncovered by CDA.

CDA is an attempt to study the effective means of controlling others mind and actions. It can reveal what is there behind controlling others mind and actions. It can reveal what is there behind the scene. This rather complex process takes place in accordance with specific discursive strategies which can be unveiled when necessary.

2. Defining CDA

CDA is an approach to the study of discourse as a social activity. It is not a linguistic theory which maintains at describing the grammar of a particular language or dialect. CDA is "the analysis of linguistic and semiotic aspects of social processes and problems. The focus is not upon language or the use of language in

and for themselves but upon the partially linguistic character of social and structural processes and structure" (Fairclouh et al 1997: 271). CDA examines "patterns of access and control over contexts, genres, text and talk, their properties as well as the discursive strategies of mind control" (Van Dijk 1995a : 24).

CDA is called critical because it has an ethical stance; "CDA practitioners typically take an ethical stance, one that draws attention to power imbalance, social inequalities, non-democratic practices, and other injustices in hopes of spurring readers to corrective action --- CDA not only describes unfair social --- practices but it is explicitly critical of them" (Huckin 1995: 96 and also see Van Dijk 1995d: 12).

3. Tools for Doing CDA

One main task of CDA is to uncover the hidden ideologies behind a message, and to determine the strategies utilized for such a purpose. Throughout these strategies, the dominant group has access to others' mind and mental models (cf Van Dijk 1995d). Attitudes, beliefs, opinions and then communicative acts could be affected negatively as a consequence of this exercise. Persuasion is maintained illegally, or to use Eemeren and Grootendorst;s words, it has been achieved via "fallacies" rather than "rational argumentation" (Eemeren and Grootendorst 1994a, 1994b, and Eemeren 1994). In an attempt to do CDA, Huckin (1995) proposed

a list of these strategies. The overall strategy is that of positive – self and negative – other presentation (cf Van Dijk 1994: 20 & 1995a: 23). Such a strategy can be maintained through a set of tactics of different lexical, syntactic, semantic…etc., representation determined by a specific choice from a set of representations available for the speaker (cf Verschueren 1999). These strategies are not universal; they are rather cultural and language specific. As stated by Huckin (1995), these strategies include :

1. *Lexicalization*

To describe others', different labels, some lexical items with unavoidable negative connotations are used in opposition to self-description. Nothing can be said neutrally if it is supposed to be natural the language user usually uses this strategy to get rid of responsible strong statements since bad connotations can be denied and cancelled altogether (cf Huckin 1995; 101).

2. *Framing*

Framing a discourse refers to the way the content of that discourse is represented, including information of the discourse, the speaker's perspective, others' point of view etc. (Huckin 1995: 99). At the propositional level and at the discursive level, the overall organization of the discourse has a great role to play. At the propositional level, the notion of topicalization is radical since almost the most important element in the proposition is topicalized.

Furthermore, the semantic roles of the agent, patient, object etc., are assigned ideologically. It is the in-group who are supposed to have high rates in the agent postion (Van Dijk 1995a: 258). A study of the frequency of these rates can reveal a lot. With negative actions (being performed by in-group), in-group are given less de-emphasized roles as those who are enforced to do something . At the discourse level, specific topics/themes are chosen to talk about and others are left or even neglected (see point 6). Such a constraint on the choice of the topic has great role to limit the recipient's perspective (see Huckin 1995: 104).

3. *Presupposition*

Presupposed information is never stated in the discourse. Things presupposed are taken for granted by the recipients. They are never questioned because they are always true. In-group's speech is mostly taken as a presupposition that never needs questioning (Huckin 1995: 100, and also see Van Dijk 1995b: 275).

4. *Figurative Language*

By using figurative language like metephor, innuendo, insinuation, irony and sarcasm things can be covered so easily. A speaker, thus, can manage impression in order to avoid any explicit conflict with his recipients. To understand a figurative usage of language, readers usually rely on contextual information, general social and cultural knowledge, ideological position of the writer, as

well as the explicit statements of the text (see Van Dijk 1995 b: 273).

5. *Hedging Postures*

Hedging postures are signs of uncertainty, doubt and skepticism. They can be considered as the interactional elements which serve as a bridge between the propositional information in the text and the writer's factual interpretation (Salager-Meyer 1995: 127-128). They are linguistic cues of bias which avoid personal accountability for statements (Ibid: 129, see also Yule 1996: 38). For these specific characteristics of the hedgings, it is possible to use them as a tool in CDA. Hedging postures can be expressed verbally (by the modal verbs which carry a sense of possibility of the action-occurrence, e.g., may, can, could …), or adverbially (by adverbs, perhaps, probably…). One of the main functions of the hedgings is to minimize threat by avoiding absolute and responsible statements. Such a function is radical with regard to CDA. Such a tool could be used for impression management to avoid reflecting bad impression on the recipients. It is, thus, a strategy of euphemism

6. *Degrees of Completeness*

Some elements are described exhaustively and others are left incomplete. Out-group's actions when negative are described thoroughly and when positive are neglected and omitted. Places, persons and actions, thus, have different interpretations at each

level. A full description of a person may be needed in a specific text but not in others. As stated by Van Dijk (1995b: 275), "relevance, and hence levels and specificity of description are genre-and-situation-specific" .

7. *Polyphony, the Use of Other's Voices*

Instead of holding the responsibility of a strong statement, the speaker may rely on others' voices, "x said that ---".When the voices are those of the out-group, they are taken mostly to be manipulated to reverse their effects and to be used then against their speakers (for the term polyphony, see Roulet 1996, and Verschueren 1999: 79).

8. *Disclaimers (Local Semantic Moves)*

A disclaimer can be defined as a type of contradictory statements where a denial (or an affirmation) of the first part of the sentence contradicts its second part, (e.g. we have nothing against you, but ---) (Van Dijk 1994: 9 & 1995b: 279). The dangerous or the threatening part of the statement either is stated explicitly (but politely) or omitted altogether (but is still understood). Such a strategy is used for impression management when the speaker tries to be recognized as a decent citizen. Van Dijk (1994 & 1995b) identifies the following types of disclaimers :

1. The Concession : There are two clauses joined by 'but'. The content of the second clause after 'but' usually contradicts with that of the first.

2. Apparent Altruism : On the surface, the speaker shows concern and respect to the hearer, however, his intention is something different. A manager, one day, decided to fire one of his female worker, so he said:

3. Apparent Concession : A sense of admitting something is marked and then a sudden denial is noticed.

4. The Data

Muta'a Safadi's novel (1960) "Jeel Al-Qadar" (The Generation of Destiny) is analysed here according to the theoretical assumptions stated so far.

Implicitly, Safadi identifies two groups. The women – group and the men – group with a clear bias towards the latter as we are going to see.

(Dr. Rafeeq : Gentlemen, we are not in the state of a theoretical study of the legitimacy or illegitimacy of killing and unless we are convinced of the necessity of killing, we would not have this meeting. Then he turns round firmly and goes on : we are now six men except the ladies …(p.247)

In this stretch, identification of the groups is very clear. At the very beginning, the speaker, Dr. Rafeeq decided to identify the group of "male" (Gentlemen) though the people around include both males and females. He is not directing his speech to all the participants but just to the men instead he would say (Ladies and Gentlemen). The use of the pronoun "ن " in , "نكن", "اننا" , " سعينا ", further, refers to this male-group. Such an identification is also crystalized when Dr. Rafeeq makes the distinction between his group (male-group) and the girl-group clearly (we are now six…). The girls around feel of such a distinction, so they revolt and declare that they should be involved in the operation. In the same way, the identification of the female – group is marked by the use of the (suffix) pronoun "ن" in "اتينا" , "نفعل" , "نشهد" … etc., and the pronoun "نحن" as well. Although it is the girls who prepare the meeting, men find that this mission should be restricted to men only, keeping the girls outside. Their job is just to prepare the situation for men and it is supposed that men should do the great things. The girls realize this, so they announce that they should be involved. The use of the word "رجعي" (obscurant) explains everything ; the men around have a specific point of view about women that they should be outside this circle. Hayfa'a clarifies her partners' ideological standpoint and accuses them of prejudice publically.

A sense of disclaimer can be recognized here since both positive and negative views can be represented, "Although we accept your participation, it is we who are going to assign you some roles". It is somehow close to the kind of "apparent altruism" .

(Nabeel : Whenever I answered your voice on the phone I feel just like a prisoner who suddenly sees the doors of freedom open in front of him (209-210)

Nabeel considers Layla important not because she is so in the society, or for her good qualities, but because she is important and necessary for him, to let him feel freedom.

Another strategic use of language is reflected in Safadi's selection of his lexical items. Safadi's use of the word (نساء = women) on the side of the female – characters is ideologically determined and thus deserves a special reference. These two words are not only a matter of an evaluative categorization and identification of the term :woman", they are rather ideological descriptions relying on the auther's prejudice and bias against women. The two words enter into a scale of words including the following :

(فتيات , فتاة , امرأة , نسوة , نساء , نسوان , حريم , جواري)
(women-slaves-harim-women-women-women-women- a girl-girls).

The heaviest – ideologically loaded word is "جواري" and the scale goes down to the nmost positive word (فتيات). The words "جواري" and "حريم"have a somehow unavoidable connotative meaning, the woman referred to by such a term is characterized by holding the single responsibility or quality of being able to entertain men and to give birth to children. Long ago, women were taken to have this function. The word "harim" used now a days still keeps this offensive connotation (though in the collequal variety it has a somehow positive connotation). The word "نسوان" has the unavoidable bad connotative meaning of weakness. Nowadays, the use of such words clearly reflects such a standpoint. So, to hide things carefully, Safadi gets little down the scale to select نساء to carry these connotative meanings referred to above according to the (con-) text determined in contrast to some other words (like امرأة) which are positively oriented.

(Hayfa'a: The women can get involved in this operation)

 (Layla : Even if the women commit the most horrible sins…)

(p. 341)

Such a usage is a natural consequence of the connotative meaning both "امرأة" and "نساء" contain. When Safadi is aware that "امرأة" is a positive term, it is natural to be used by the female-group and not by the male-group and the same is true with the lexical item نساء . When the context needs no specific reference to

such an ideological representation, the word "فتاة" or "فتيات" girls is usually used.

Depending on these examples (which are not the only ones to be found in this novel), it seems that Safadi is a conservative sexist. He is trying to exercie woman-discrimination by his literary power. He is so powerful and sure of himself that he is able to exercise a kind of control over his characters and readers. He plays the game successfully and covers himself by building a positive impression. Accordingly there seems to be a list of presuppositions Safadi intends to show implicitly.

1. Males usually have power over females.

2. Women could be gained so easily, they are something like money, furniture etc.

3. Maturity of men could create heroes even if they are corrupted and maturity of women is restricted to their role, i.e., how successful they are in satisfying men's needs.

5. Conclusion

The genre and the length of the text analysed seem to have some effect on the findings of doing CDA. Some common strategies are found like lexicalization, framing, and disclaimers still, strategies take different crystalization since they work differently. Framing, for instance, is not restricted to the notions of topicalization, foregrounding and backgrounding, it is related to the

whole structure of discourse and specifically to the development of the actions in the text. Furthermore, a new type of disclaimers can be found, the non-apparent concession which is a type of apparent concession. Still, the strategies used take the form of speech maneuveing among the participants reflecting, thus, the author's different phases of personality, ideologies, perspective, attitudes and social prejudice.

In this paper, an attempt of proposing a kind of marriage between literature and linguistics via CDA is established. Such an attempt attracted scholars attention long ago and Leech is among those who have tried to bridge that gap between literature and linguistics. Still, such a kind of studies needs extensive research to establish its own field of work.

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ملخص

نحو القيام بتحليل نصي نقدي

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يعتبر تحليل النص النقدي نهجا حديثا شاملا متعدد الأبعاد في دراسة النص . حيث يوجد أكثر من لون واحد من العلوم في هذا النهج كعلم النفس وعلم الاجتماع والاتصال الإعلامي والقانون والأدب والعلوم السياسية فضلا عن علم النفس الاجتماعي . بالإضافة إلى ذلك يضم هذا النهج من الدراسة جميع مستويات اللغة من نحو وعلم دلالة وذرائعية ...الخ

تضم دراسة النص النقدي عملية تجسيد التضاد بين أعضاء المجموعة الداخلية وأعضاء المجموعة الخارجية ممثلة بمجموعة من التقنيات الثابتة المحددة ادراكيا وثقافيا. وتشمل هذه التقنيات مفردات خاصة والتاطير والحدس المسبق واللغة الكلائشية ...الخ

ومن خلال دراسة تحليل النص النقدي أصبح جليا إمكانية تتبع ملامح الشخصية وقدرة المتكلمين على السيطرة على الآخرين عن طريق المناورات اللغوية.

تطبق دراسة تحليل النص النقدي هنا على سوء استخدام الذكور للسلطة . وهكذا يفترض إن تقدم هذه الدراسة إسهاما متواضعا في الدراسات اللغوية والجنس. كما يفترض إن تعد تفسيرا لهيمنة الذكر وسوء استخدام السلطة عن طريق منظور تحليل النص النقدي في النص الأدبي .