A SYNOPSIS OF THE THREE MOST INFLUENTIAL APPROACHES OF CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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Abstract: The objective of this paper is to investigate and summarize the primary and most influential methods used in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The paper provides an overview of CDA and its core principles then delves into the three major approaches devised by the three prominent practitioners in the field: Fairclough, Wodak, and Van Dijk. The critical approach by Fairclough, the discourse-historical approach by Wodak, and the socio-cognitive approach by Van Dijk are discussed in a sequential manner. The study also explores the strengths and limitations of each approach and proposes the contexts in which their methodologies might be applied. In conclusion, the paper suggests that a combination of these three approaches is valuable for conducting critical analysis of texts.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, Socio-cognitive approach, Discourse-historical approach, language and power, power and ideology

1. Introduction

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a multidisciplinary field of study that examines the intricate relationship between language, power, and society. Rooted in linguistic analysis but CDA offers a profound exploration of how language both reflects and shapes our social world. Over the years, a large number of scholars have contributed significantly to the development of CDA, each offering their unique insights, methodologies, and perspectives on the analysis of discourse. This paper endeavors to assess and compare the three most influential CDA approaches of Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, and Teun A. Van Dijk. The selection of these three approaches is underpinned by their profound influence and widespread recognition within the field. Their contributions have not only expanded our understanding of the role of language in constructing social reality but also have paved the way for critical inquiry into issues of power, ideology, and social change.

Along with uncovering the fundamental principles of the respective approaches, the research also explores the strengths and limitations of each approach and proposes the contexts in which their methodologies might be applied. Ultimately, the paper underscores the value of combining these prominent approaches in the critical analysis of discourse.

2. An Overview of CDA and its Principles

CDA is an interdisciplinary approach to analyzing language and text that emerged in the late 20th century. It involves the analysis of language as discourse, recognizing that

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language is interconnected with social processes (Fairclough & Graham, 2002). Its aim is to uncover the ideological aspects embedded in specific language usage and the underlying power relations (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). By analyzing real instances of social interaction, whether fully or partially expressed through language, CDA seeks to bring to light the ways in which power relations are manifested.

This approach focuses on the linguistic and discursive nature of social power relations, and how they are employed and discussed in discourse. The analysis of texts using CDA aims to identify the structures, strategies, or other properties of language, conversation, verbal interaction, or communicative events that contribute to the production or perpetuation of unequal power relations (Van Dijk, 1993a).

CDA originated from the field of critical linguistics, which was influenced by Halliday's systemic functional linguistics and theories of ideologies. Critical linguistics emphasizes power and ideology and seeks to uncover the social meanings expressed in discourse by analyzing linguistic structures within their broader social context. (Fowler et al, 1979). Fairclough and Wodak (1997, p. 261) view "ideologies not as a nebulous realm of 'ideas' but as tied to material practices embedded in social institutions (how teaching is organized in classrooms, for instance". That means ideologies are not merely abstract ideas but intertwined with material practices embedded in social institutions.

The CDA approach is characterized as critical because it involves maintaining distance from the data, situating the data within the social context, making explicit political stances, and engaging in self-reflection as researchers (Martin & Wodak, 2003). Similarly, Fairclough emphasizes the critical nature of his discourse analysis approach which aims "to make visible through analysis, and to criticize, connections between properties of texts and social processes and relations (ideologies, power relations) which are generally not obvious to people who produce and interpret those texts, and whose effectiveness depends upon this opacity" (Fairclough, 1995b, p. 97).

The focus of CDA lies in exploring the relationships between discourse and social power, seeking to describe and explain how power abuse is enacted, reproduced, or legitimized through the text and speech of dominant groups or institutions (Van Dijk, 1996). Similarly, CDA aims to uncover unequal power relations and reveal the role of discourse in perpetuating or challenging socio-political dominance.

The principles of CDA presented by Fairclough and Wodak's (1997) can be summarized as follows:

CDA extends beyond traditional language analysis to address social issues, emphasizing the examination of linguistic aspects within social and cultural processes. It emphasizes the pivotal role of language and discourse in shaping power dynamics, recognizing the discursive nature of power relations. CDA asserts a dialectical relationship between discourse, society, and culture, where discourse both shapes and is shaped by these elements. It contends that discourse serves ideological functions, reflecting and promoting specific societal representations and often perpetuating unequal power dynamics. Furthermore, CDA underscores the historical context of discourse, emphasizing the importance of situational aspects. These principles collectively underpin CDA's approach, highlighting its nuanced understanding of language's influence on society and culture.

3. Three Most Influential Approaches of CDA

3.1. Fairclough's Critical Approach

Fairclough's (2001a) theoretical goals have been influenced by linguistics and sociolinguistics, which examine the relationship between language and its social context, as well as language and power. However, from a critical perspective, these approaches have significant weaknesses:

Linguistics primarily focuses on language as a potential system or abstract competence, rather than describing actual language use. It places more emphasis on *langue* (language) rather than *parole* (speaking). Linguistics assumes that the language of a community remains largely unchanged over time, treating *langue* as a static system at a particular point in time, rather than considering its dynamic historical development. Fairclough criticizes this viewpoint for failing to recognize that language is socially shaped.

In contrast, sociolinguistics acknowledges that "language use is shaped socially and not individually" (Fairclough, 1993, p. 63). It explores the systematic relationships between variations in linguistic form (phonological, morphological, syntactic) and social variables (such as social relationships between participants, differences in social settings, or topics). While sociolinguistics is effective at describing variation, Fairclough argues that it falls short in explaining how these variations are produced by power relations and struggles.

Fairclough's approach views discourse as "a form of social practice", highlighting that it is a mode of action (Fairclough, 2001a). In this perspective, spoken or written utterances are seen as performing speech acts such as promising, asking, asserting, or warning. Furthermore, Fairclough considers language as an integral part of society, emphasizing the dialectical relationship between language and society; therefore, discourse involves the production and interpretation of texts. Furthermore, he sees language as socially conditioned, with discourse being influenced by various levels of social organization: "the level of the social situation, or the immediate social environment in which the discourse occurs; the level of the social institution which constitutes a wider matrix for the discourse and the level of the society as a whole" (Fairclough, 2001a, pp. 20-21).

Fairclough also highlights the importance of intertextual analysis as a complement to linguistic analysis. Intertextual analysis focuses on the intersection between "text and discourse practice" (Fairclough, 1995a, p. 61), serving as a bridge between language and social contexts or between texts and discourse contexts within Fairclough's three-dimensional analytical framework (*Description, Interpretation and Explanation*) (Fairclough, 2003). The three dimensions of the framework can be summarized as follows:

1. *Textual Analysis (Description):* This dimension focuses on examining the linguistic features of the discourse, including grammar, vocabulary, and rhetorical devices. By analyzing the text, researchers can identify patterns, metaphors, and other linguistic strategies used to convey specific meanings and ideologies.

2. *Discursive Practice (Interpretation)*: This dimension explores the social practices and processes surrounding the production, distribution, and consumption of discourse. It examines the ways in which language is used in different contexts and how power relations are manifested in these interactions.

3. *Social Practice (Explanation):* This dimension delves into the broader societal and institutional factors that influence and are influenced by discourse. It examines how language

contributes to shaping and maintaining social structures, ideologies, and power dynamics.

By examining these three dimensions in tandem, the CDA framework seeks to uncover how language is used to uphold or challenge power structures, reinforce dominant ideologies, and influence social practices and norms. It provides a comprehensive approach to understanding the complex relationship between language and society and enables researchers to critically analyze the role of discourse in shaping social reality.

The relationship between discourse, power, and ideology is also emphasized by Fairclough (1993), in which he combines the notions of discursive practice inspired by Bakhtin's concept of intertextuality (1986) and Gramsci's theory of hegemony (1971). Fairclough perceives hegemony as a way to theorize change in relation to the evolution of power relations and as contributing to and being shaped by broader processes of change (Fairclough, 1993). Hegemony is seen as domination across different societal domains, including economic, political, and ideological realms, exerted by one economically-defined class in alliance with other social forces. Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999, p. 24)) define hegemony as "relations of domination based upon consent rather than coercion, involving the naturalization of practices and their social relations as well as relations between practices, as matters of common sense – hence the concept of hegemony emphasizes the importance of ideology in achieving and maintaining relations of domination".

The analysis of dominance and hegemony is utilized to examine orders of discourse, as discussed by Fairclough (2001b). According to him, a social order is constituted by a network of interconnected social practices, particularly in its linguistic aspect. In the context of orders of discourse, the elements involved are not linguistic structures like nouns and sentences, but rather discourses, genres, and styles. These elements select certain linguistic possibilities while excluding others, thereby regulating linguistic variability in specific areas of social life. Over time, orders of discourse can undergo changes that are influenced by shifts in power relations during social interactions.

Fairclough also explores the relationships between orders of discourse, which he terms "interdiscursivity". He also notes that the interdiscursivity of a text is a part of its intertextuality, involving considerations of the genres, discourses, and styles it draws upon and how it incorporates them into specific articulations.

When evaluating the appropriateness of Fairclough's approach in different research contexts, it is necessary to consider the strong points and weak points of this approach. Fairclough's approach offers a holistic perspective by examining discourse through three dimensions: textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice. This allows for a comprehensive understanding of how language operates within its socio-political context. Moreover, the approach draws from linguistics, sociology, and critical theory, making it interdisciplinary in nature. This enables researchers to integrate insights from various fields, enriching the analysis. Nevertheless, the approach emphasizes more on linguistic analysis, which may lead to a narrower focus on language structures and broader socio-political contexts. Its multi-dimensional framework can also challenge novice researchers.

Considering the mentioned strong points and weak points, researchers can apply Fairclough's critical approach in research contexts where a comprehensive analysis of discourse in relation to power and ideology is required. It is particularly suitable for studies that involve in-depth linguistic analysis and examination of the three dimensions (textual, discursive, and social practice) of discourse. Researchers who aim to explore how language contributes to the enactment and reproduction of power relations and ideologies in various

socio-political contexts may find Fairclough's approach valuable. However, it is crucial to consider the research questions, objectives, and available resources when determining the suitability of this approach.

2. Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach

Wodak's viewpoint in his discourse-historical approach is based on Fairclough's critical perspective, which regards discourse as a form of social practice (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Wodak, 2001). Wodak (2001) proposes a dialectical relationship between discursive practices and fields of action, such as situations, institutions, and social structures, in which they are situated. In that sense, discourses, as linguistic social practices, both constitute and are constituted by non-discursive and discursive social practices.

According to Wodak (2001, p. 66), discourse is "a complex combination of simultaneous and sequential interconnected linguistic acts that manifest themselves within specific social fields of action, often taking the form of "texts". The characteristics of discourse are described by Reisigl and Wodak (2009, p. 89) as follows:

- a cluster of context-dependent semiotic practices that are situated within specific fields of social action;

- socially constituted and socially constitutive;

- related to a macro-topic;

- linked to the argumentation about validity claims such as truth and normative validity involving several social actors who have different points of view.

Also hinging upon Fairclough's viewpoint, Wodak (2001) regards texts as the outcomes of discourse and defines them as "durable products of linguistic actions" (p. 66). The discourse-historical approach considers intertextual and interdiscursive relationships among texts, genres, and discourses, as well as sociological variables and situational frameworks. Intertextuality in this approach refers to the connections between texts, while interdiscursivity refers to the connections between discourses. The approach emphasizes exploring how discourses, genres, and texts change in response to socio-political transformations.

A triangulation principle that integrates various interdisciplinary approaches is applied by Wodak to analyze the correlation between discursive and other social practices and structures. For instance, when examining the discursive construction of collective groups such as races, nations, and ethnicities, an interdisciplinary approach combines historical, socio-political, and linguistic perspectives. The principle of triangulation involves using different data collection methods and analyzing diverse corpora and genres. Wodak's (2001) triangulatory approach is context-based and four dimensions are examined: (1) the immediate language or text internal co-text, (2) the intertextual and interdiscursive relationships between utterances, texts, genres, and discourses, (3) the social and sociological variables and institutional frames within a specific situational context, and (4) the broader socio-political and historical context in which the discursive practices are situated and connected.

In analyzing texts related to races, ethnicities, nations, or national identities, Reisigl and Wodak (2009, p. xiii) propose five questions to guide the examination of discursive strategies:

- How are persons named and referred to linguistically? (referential strategies)

- What traits, characteristics, qualities, and features are attributed to them?

(predicational strategies)

- By means of what arguments and argumentation schemes do specific persons or social groups try to justify and legitimate the exclusion, discrimination, suppression, and exploitation of others? (argumentation strategies, including fallacies)

- From what perspective or points of view are these namings, attributions, and arguments expressed? (perspectivation and framing strategies)

- Are the respective discriminating utterances articulated overtly, are they even intensified or are they mitigated? (mitigation and intensification strategies)

Furthermore, Wodak et al. (2009) provide an illustration of the discourse-historical framework through their study on the discursive construction of national identity in Austria. They analyze interviews, focus-group discussions, and media products, including newspapers, posters, and politicians' speeches. The analysis involves *three levels:* content analysis, strategy analysis, and analysis of means and forms of realization. At the content level, the authors focus on the linguistic construction of homo Austriacus, a shared culture, a shared political present and future, a 'national body'. Then the strategies employed to achieve specific goals, such as political and psychological objectives, are included in the second level of the analytical framework. Accordingly, four macro-strategies are identified: *constructive strategies* that aim to construct and establish a particular national identity by promoting unity, identification, solidarity, and differentiation; *perpetuating strategies* that seek to maintain and reproduce a threatened national identity by preserving, supporting, and protecting it; *transformational strategies* that intend to transform an established national identity and its components into a different conceptualized identity; and *destructive strategies* that aim to dismantle or criticize existing parts of a national identity construct (p. 33). The third level of Wodak's analytical framework focuses on the linguistic means used in the discursive construction of national identity, particularly lexical items and syntactic devices that serve to establish concepts such as unification, unity, sameness, difference, uniqueness, origin, continuity, and change. The key linguistic means they highlight include *personal reference* (generic terms for people, personal pronouns, quantifiers), *spatial reference* (place names, adverbs of place, spatial reference through personal reference or prepositional phrases like 'with us' or 'with them') and *temporal reference* (temporal prepositions, adverbs of time, temporal conjunctions, temporal references using nouns or prefixes with temporal meaning) (p. 35).

In addition to the above mentioned, other linguistic and rhetorical devices including euphemisms, allusions, rhetorical questions, the use of passive or active voice, agency personification, and others are also examined by the authors.

Wodak et al.'s (2009) study operates on the assumption that national identities are constructed and perpetuated through discourse. However, the study also acknowledges that the construction of national identities is not solely reliant on discourse; institutional and material social structures play a significant role in shaping national identities. The study emphasizes the importance of intertextual connections, including the literal repetition of passages from speeches, texts from historians, political scientists, and essayists, and the transfer of clichéd formulations from politics and the media to semi-public and quasi-private domains through recontextualization.

Wodak's discourse-historical approach has its own strengths and weaknesses. The first advantage of this approach is that it places a strong emphasis on historical and socio-political contexts. It is particularly applicable for analyzing discursive changes over time, making it

effective in examining how discourse is shaped by and shapes historical events and social developments. Additionally, Wodak's approach highlights intertextual and interdiscursive relationships among texts, genres, and discourses, which enables researchers to explore how discourses are interconnected and how elements from one discourse are recontextualized in another. Furthermore, researchers can analyze linguistic features, socio-political contexts, and historical developments, providing a more comprehensive view of the discursive phenomena under investigation. However, this approach can be complex and time-consuming for researchers. While its emphasis on history is a strength, it may not be the most appropriate approach for studying contemporary discourses where historical data may be limited or less relevant.

Considering these advantages and disadvantages, Wodak's discourse-historical approach is most appropriate for studying discourses that are closely tied to historical events and socio-political transformations. It may be less suitable for contemporary discourses with limited access to historical data.

3. Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Approach

Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach, similar to Fairclough's approach, aims to establish a connection between the micro-structure of language and the macro-structure of society. However, while Fairclough focuses on discursive practice, Van Dijk emphasizes social cognition as the intermediary between text and society.

According to Van Dijk (1993a), social cognitions encompass socially shared representations of societal arrangements, groups, and relations, as well as mental operations such as interpretation, thinking, arguing, inference, and learning. In distinguishing between the micro-structure and macro-structure of texts, Van Dijk's work aligns with that of Kintsch and Van Dijk (1978). The macro-level pertains to power, dominance, and inequality among social groups, while the micro-level encompasses language use, discourse, verbal interaction, and communication. Van Dijk posits that societal structures are linked to discourse structures through the actors involved and their cognitive processes (Van Dijk, 2001b).

Van Dijk has applied his discourse analysis approach to the examination of media texts, particularly focusing on the role of discourse in the reproduction of inequality in race and ethnic relations. His studies on discourse and racism have contributed to a comprehensive theory that identifies discourse as a complex system that perpetuates social and political inequality. Van Dijk's analysis of news discourse and ethnic minorities in his work "Racism and the Press" (1991) reveals how the media reinforces racism and unequal power relations by marginalizing and negatively portraying minority groups.

In his critical discourse analysis, Van Dijk (2000a) explores ideological structures and the social relations of power inherent in discourse. He argues that news texts are controlled by dominant powers, and ideologies can shape all aspects of discourse, whether explicitly or implicitly (Van Dijk, 2000a). Van Dijk (2001, p. 355) distinguishes two main types of power: "coercive power", based on force, and "persuasive power", based on knowledge, information, or authority.

The author proposes an "ideological square" (4 principles) as a framework for analyzing ideology, which involves:

1. Emphasize positive things about Us;
2. Emphasize negative things about Them;

3. De-emphasize negative things about Us;

4. De-emphasize positive things about Them. (Van Dijk, 2000a, p. 44)

Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach to discourse focuses on the interplay between discourse, cognition, and society. Discourse encompasses various forms of communication, while cognition refers to the mental structures and processes involved in discourse and interaction. Society encompasses both micro-level interactions and broader societal and political structures. Van Dijk (2001a) highlights the significance of understanding the cognitive and social dimensions of discourse in its relevant local and global contexts.

From the above analysis, it can be seen that Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach provides a unique perspective by focusing on cognitive processes involved in discourse comprehension and production. It helps researchers understand how language users interpret, evaluate, and construct meaning from discourse, shedding light on the role of cognition in shaping discourse. While emphasizing cognition, Van Dijk's approach does not neglect the critical examination of power, ideology, and social structures. It offers insights into how power relations are reflected in cognitive processes, making it suitable for studying how dominant ideologies are reinforced or challenged through discourse. Therefore, this approach can be applied to a wide range of discourses, including media discourse, political discourse, and everyday communication.

Nevertheless, Van Dijk's approach places less emphasis on historical context compared to approaches like Wodak's discourse-historical approach. This limitation may make it less suitable for studying discourses deeply rooted in historical events.

In summary, critical discourse analysis encompasses multiple theoretical and methodological approaches. Fairclough's socio-critical approach, Wodak's discourse-historical approach, and Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach are prominent within the field. Fairclough's and Wodak's approaches share a focus on discourse as a form of social practice, while Wodak's approach is closely related to Van Dijk's socio-cognitive theory, which views discourse as a form of knowledge and memory. These approaches all emphasize the interconnections between language, ideology, and power relations. For experienced researchers aiming at a more holistic understanding of the discourse, combining these approaches in critical analysis can enhance the depth and breadth of understanding in various ways:

First of all, each scholar brings unique insights and perspectives to critical analysis. Fairclough's framework emphasizes the linguistic aspects of discourse, Wodak's approach focuses on the socio-political context and power relations, while Van Dijk's work delves into cognitive and social aspects of discourse processing. Researchers have the flexibility to combine two approaches, not necessarily integrating all the three simultaneously, allowing them to complement each other effectively.

Secondly, integrating different approaches allows researchers to explore how language, power, ideology interact and influence each other, especially in political discourses. This integrated perspective can lead to more profound insights into the underlying mechanisms shaping communication and discourse practices.

Thirdly, each scholar's approach comes with its own set of methods and techniques for analysis. By combining these approaches, researchers have access to a broader range of methodological tools. This diversity allows them to triangulate findings, validate interpretations, and strengthen the overall rigor of their analysis.

Last but not least, Fairclough, Wodak, and Van Dijk's approaches are interdisciplinary in nature, drawing from linguistics, sociology, psychology, and other fields. Combining these approaches facilitates the integration of insights from different disciplines, enriching the analysis and offering a more holistic understanding of discourses.

Overall, the combination of Fairclough, Wodak, and Van Dijk's approaches in critical analysis brings together diverse perspectives, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks. This integration strengthens the analytical process and provides a more comprehensive and rigorous examination of discourses (especially political ones) and their implications in society.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the examination of the most influential CDA approaches by Fairclough, Wodak, and Van Dijk illuminates the rich and multifaceted nature of this field. Each of these scholars has made significant contributions that have deepened our understanding of how language operates within the socio-political context. By combining these approaches, experienced researchers can engage in nuanced examinations of language, ideology, and society, ultimately advancing our grasp of how discourse shapes our world.

Due to the size of the paper, only three approaches of Fairclough, Wodak and Van Dijk are examined and discussed. To further benefit from CDA, future researches can explore approaches by other CDA practitioners for more comprehensive insights or more extensive empirical studies can be conducted to test and validate the methodologies proposed by Fairclough, Wodak and Van Dijk in various real-world contexts.

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TÓM TẮT BA PHƯƠNG PHÁP PHÂN TÍCH DIỄN NGÔN PHÊ PHÁN CÓ ẢNH HƯỞNG NHẤT

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Tóm tắt: Mục tiêu của bài viết này là nghiên cứu và tóm tắt các phương pháp cơ bản và có ảnh hưởng nhất trong Phân tích diễn ngôn phê phán (CDA). Bài viết giới thiệu tổng quan và các nguyên tắc cơ bản của Phân tích diễn ngôn phê phán, sau đó tìm hiểu ba cách tiếp cận chính được phát triển bởi ba nhà nghiên cứu nổi bật trong lĩnh vực này là: Fairclough, Wodak và Van Dijk. Cách tiếp cận phê phán của Fairclough, cách tiếp cận diễn ngôn - lịch sử của Wodak và cách tiếp cận nhận thức xã hội của Van Dijk lần lượt được thảo luận. Nghiên cứu cũng chỉ ra các ưu điểm và hạn chế của mỗi phương pháp, đề xuất các ngữ cảnh có thể áp dụng các phương pháp này. Cuối cùng, bài viết gợi ý rằng việc kết hợp ba cách tiếp cận này rất có giá trị khi tiến hành phân tích diễn ngôn phê phán trong các văn bản.

Từ khóa: phân tích diễn ngôn phê phán, phương pháp nhận thức xã hội, phương pháp diễn ngôn - lịch sử, ngôn ngữ và quyền lực, quyền lực và hệ tư tưởng