

Critical Discourse Analysis

What is Critical Discourse Analysis?

Critical Discourse Analysis is an approach to doing Discourse Analysis that emphasizes the study of language and discourses in social institutions. It draws on poststructuralist discourse theory and critical linguistics to focus on how social relations, identity, knowledge and power

are constructed through written and spoken texts in different linguistic contexts. CDA is founded on the idea that there is unequal access to linguistic and social resources.

Discourse in Use

Discourse and Education

Apart from language being the tool for instruction in schools, different languages are also studied as school subjects at various levels of education. Language plays a very important role in education. The use of the appropriate language at different levels of education will determine the success of learning. For instance, the mother tongue has been recognized as the most appropriate medium of instruction in the early childhood education, ie, the primary school (Afolayan, 1976; Fafunwa, 1977). One other aspect of relationship of discourse to education is in the area of classroom discourse. Classroom discourse has been studied by scholars and according to Sinclair and Coulthard (1975), it is well structured in such a way that the scholars proposed a rank scale that can be used to describe what is happening in classroom discourse. Teachers and pupils obey some basic rules of interaction in their discourse, for instance, in a typical classroom exchange there is an initiation by the teacher, a response from the students and a follow-up by the teacher. There are also different classes of act used by the teacher and the pupils in the course of classroom discourse.

Discourse and Medicine

The use of language in medical practice is one area that discourse analysts have investigated extensively. Medical interactions as they take place between doctors and patients during consultation period have been studied by various scholars (Coulthard and Ashby, 1976; Taiwo and Salami, 2007; Odebunmi, 2005) and so forth. Some other scholars have presented their observations on the broad topic discourse and medicine (Ainsworth-Vaughn, 2003; Fleischman, 2003). Since medical practice involves a lot of interaction between the

practitioners, who are the experts and the non-practitioners, the non-experts, such interactions have relevance for discourse analysts. Discursive practices, such as turn taking, turn allocation, elicitation techniques in clinical interviews have revealed a lot about the nature of medical discourse when compared with other forms of discourse. For instance, medical practitioners by virtue of their [+HIGHER] role will dominate any encounter with non- medical people.

Discourse and Politics

Politics is strongly associated with language. Language plays a central role in politics. Politicians interact with the people in various ways before they are elected and when they have taken up political post. According to Schaffner (1996), “any political action is prepared,

accompanied, controlled and influenced by language” (p. 210). Aspects of political communication include (but is not limited to) statements made by politicians, writings of politicians, political speeches, election campaigns, parliamentary debates, and political interviews. One aspect of political language use that scholars have studied is the use of deixis in political speeches. Deixis are reference items used in speech and writing. How politicians refer to themselves and others in their speeches is very important. It goes a long way to show how they enact power in discourse.

In politics, words are very powerful and politics is concerned with power – the power to control other people’s behaviour, influence their thought and determine their values. Discourse analysts study how politicians produce, and maintain social power in discursive practices. For instance, how effectively a politician can persuade the electorate, to large extent, determines how successful he/she will be in controlling or keeping power. Politicians also use discourse to coerce their opposition and legitimize their positions. Politicians explore the creativity nature of language by making use of metaphors, and specific lexis that will drive home their points.

Media and Discourse (newspapers)

Newspaper discourse covers a wide range of issues that are connected with newspaper. It includes such aspects of newspapers as headlines, news reports, editorials, advertisements, announcements, features and so forth. Any of these aspects can be subjected to a critical analysis with the view to knowing how much they reflect the use of social power and the ideologies that underlie their construction.