

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS (CDA): A PATHWAY TO SHED LIGHT ON IDEOLOGY

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Abstract: Critical discourse analysts believe that language is not a neutral medium given that it might serve as an ideological purpose. As believed by Fairclough, ideology could be won by meaning construction. Choice of words matters in this case. This is because one might create meaning through his choice of words. A precise choice of words might have a great impact. Even, it is believed that the meaning of discourse may function as a generator machine that could shape realities or even change the world. Some cases in point indicate that choice of words contributes a lot to the process of shaping realities. In addition to meaning, sentence structure contributes a lot in meaning construction. Studying the discourse practice and sociocultural practice are another components of discourse which could be made use of the medium to uncover the ideology of the discourse producer. *Indonesian Idol*, a title attributed to the winner of a singing contest broadcast on RCTI, is a concrete example which gives credence to the notion that our choice of words is able to shape realities or even change the world. The meaning created by a discourse producer through his choice of words might sound natural for the public if it is intensively repeated and massively spread. This article explores how Critical Discourse Analysis touches upon the linkage between language and social practice.

Key words: Critical Discourse Analysis, language, ideology.

Power is traditionally associated with the ability to control others through physical forces. As such, muscles, arrows, guns, and swords are the media to fight land, wealth, or crown. At present, however, the concept of power in some ways gets to be different from the above illustration. The battle for the ground as in traditional concept is replaced with the battle for the mind. As the consequence, the physical forces are put aside. Instead of using traditional media, power in modern concept uses language as its medium to control others. Backed up with the media dominance, language has showed its power in shaping realities or even changing the world. Through language, the ruling class could create meaning as they wish and massively spread the meaning by using media, so it gradually gets naturalized. This is the new concept of power. The question is: how does power work in linguistic practice as in mass media? This short writing tries to highlight Critical Discourse Analysis as an approach in discourse

analysis by which the connection between the text properties and social processes and social relations (ideologies and social relations) could be visible.

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

To distinguish between discourse analysis (henceforth DA) and critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA), this writing proceeds from the concept of discourse. As already known, the term *discourse*, originated from French (*discours*), is getting more and more fashionable lately. This term is used in wide range of academic disciplines, such as linguistics, sociology, economics, medicine, etc. The concept of it varies across those disciplines. To limit the discussion, this writing focuses on how the mainstream linguists and critical linguists mean it. Mainstream linguists put the concept of discourse in various ways. Brown and Yule (1983) mean discourse as language in use. Cook (1989:6) views discourse as language used for communication. Meanwhile, McHoul (1998:226) considers that discourse is a connected speech or writing occurring at supra-sentential levels (at levels higher than single sentences). Despite the different ways in touching upon the concepts of discourse, they have something in common: discourse refers to a coherent language of which the level is higher than sentence. Given the concepts of discourse cited above, DA could then be defined as an academic discipline concerned with how the coherent language used in communication is patterned. In it, one could learn how a discourse is cohesively and coherently connected, sequenced, and patterned.

By contrast, critical linguists take discourse into account as a central vehicle in the process whereby people are constituted as individuals and social subjects (Mills: 1997: 131). In a more vivid way, Fairclough defines discourse as use of language seen as a form of social practice (1995:5). The concepts of discourse cited above imply that discourse is an instrument to act out social practices, such as how majority group controls minority ones, how men dominate women, how a ruling group of people set up the criteria of success, etc.

Critical Discourse Analysis (commonly abbreviated to CDA), then could be understood as the theories and methods for the empirical study of the relations between discourse and social and cultural developments in different social domains (Jørgensen *et al*, 2002: 60). In their further explanation, Jørgensen *et al* state that the main aim of CDA is to explore the links between language use and social practice. Fairclough, the founder of CDA, explains that CDA is a theory of language in relation to power and ideology (1995:1). This is a theory enabling us to discover how the ruling class rules the society through their linguistic practices. Simply put, CDA is an interdisciplinary study combining linguistic theory and social theories, such as politics, economics, religion, culture, communication, etc. in order to shed light on how the social and power domination are acted out in linguistic practice.

All in all, DA and CDA are similar and different in some ways. Both are similar in the sense that they are concerned with linguistic analysis, but they view the linguistic analysis differently. Given its lack of alliance to political perspectives, linguistic analysis in DA is for studying the patterns of language

production. On the other hand, linguistic analysis in CDA constitutes as the basis to cast some light on the political agenda behind a discourse. Furthermore, the way of viewing language is another point of difference between DA and CDA. To discourse analysts, language is studied as language alone, but critical discourse analysts take language into account as social practice.

KEY TERMS IN CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The following is the three terms which commonly and frequently occur in CDA.

Discursive Practice or Discourse Practice

Discursive practice or discourse practice refers to the analysis on how a text is produced and consumed/interpreted. In line with this, Fairclough (1995: 97-98) mentions that discourse practice is related to discourse conventions. Thus, one of the activities in CDA is analysing what discourse conventions are produced by speakers or writers. In other words, seeking the discourse and genre is the activity which is commonly done by critical discourse analysts. As such, in CDA we might find counselling genre, consultation genre, or advertisement genre. Moreover, CDA also tries to point out how the hearers/readers interpret a certain discourse.

Discourse is Constitutive and Constituted

Critical discourse analysts believe that discourse constitutes the social world and is constituted by social processes. Discourse is able to constitute the world means that how we view the world could be influenced by discourse. The example of this is what happened in Indonesia several months ago, when swine flu spread very fast. Given this flu is originated from Mexico, some people called it *Mexican flu*. This invited some protests among Mexicans in Indonesia because *Mexican flu* implies that it is the Mexican who should be accused of spreading the virus. The above illustration shows us that language is able to shape the social world.

IDEOLOGY

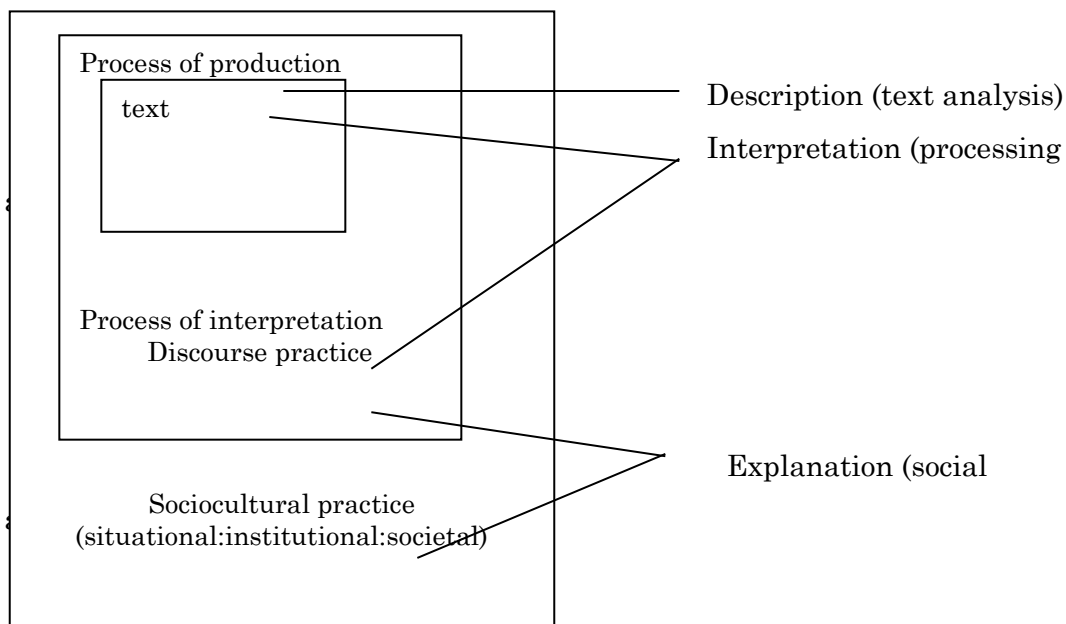
“No discourse is neutral.” That is one of the discourse analysts’ tenets. That is, the ideology of the discourse producers is necessarily invested in the discourse. In line with this, Fairclough (1995: 75) says that language is a material form of ideology. Furthermore, he says that ideology is constructions of meaning that contribute to the production, reproduction, and transformation of relations of domination (in Jørgensen, 2002: 75). In common with Fairclough, Foucault (in Mills 1997: 43) accounts that language is the thing for which and by which there is struggle. In another citation, Mills cites Foucault’s idea saying that discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines it and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it (1997: 45). From this point, it could be understood that Fairclough’s understanding of ideology is concerned with meaning construction in everyday life. It contrasts with the concept of ideology in many approaches viewing that ideology is basically an abstract system or the set of beliefs on which the activities of an individual or a group of individuals are based. On the basis of those concepts, it could be underlined that language is a very effective

instrument to win our consent and to set up our ideas into others through which a new reality could be shaped. How people in fashion construct the meaning of *beauty* is one case in point. For these group of people, *beauty* is associated with slim body, bright skin, proportional height, sparkling hair, etc. Being mobilised intensively, the meaning of *beauty* eventually gets naturalized. That is, people finally accept the idea saying that beauty is equal to slimness, bright skin, proportional height, and sparkling hair.

FAIRCLOUGH'S MODEL OF CDA

Fairclough (1995: 98) sees discourse as a complex item consisting of three elements: text, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice. Through the model, Fairclough would like to foreground the links between language and social practice. This model integrates between the language product (text), analysis on language production and language interpretation, and language use in social practice, including the impacts of discourse practice towards the society. Below is a brief description of the model with illustrative examples.

Fairclough's dimensions of discourse (fairclough, 1995: 98)



TEXT ANALYSIS

Text analysis refers to the analysis the internal elements of a text. It encompasses the analysis on the vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and sentence coherence by which the messages are linguistically realized. This writing, however, focuses on the vocabulary choice only. This is under the consideration that words we choose for communication evoke mental pictures in the minds of the speaker and hearer. The discussion on vocabulary proceeds from the concept

and the classification of meaning. The rationale of highlighting meaning is that vocabulary and meaning are inseparable. In addition to meaning, structure analysis, especially paradigmatic analysis is also the concern of this writing.

Meaning

Language is one of the signs in the world, so any unit in language belongs to sign. The question is: how does the sign get its meaning? Does the meaning of its sign come into being by itself? In the attempt to answer the above questions, I rely on the semiotics theory.

Semiotics theory holds that humans are basically *homo significans* or meaning-makers, and meaning emerges because of human's creation and interpretation of signs (Chandler, 2002:17). Any sign, including linguistic sign is nothing, unless human interprets it and invests a meaning in it. The sequence of triplets of letters *D-O-G* is meaningless until human interprets or means it as the four-legged animal of a particular species. The same thing happens to the string of letters *F-L-O-W-E-R*. The combination of those six letters count as linguistic sign if human invests a meaning in it; otherwise they are just random letters like the penmanship of elementary school students. In the context of language and communication, meaning does not exist unless there are people who make it happen, in a process where the text receivers might produce their own meanings (Hodge and Kress, 1993: 174-175). The theory implies that both text producers and text receivers might create a different meaning when they are encountered with the same sign. In other words, anything becomes a sign if someone interprets it as *signifying* or standing for something else.

Concerning the human's creation resulted meanings of sign, Chandler (2002) says further that it encompasses denotative and connotative meanings, both of which operate at the level of signified (concept). Denotative meaning is what the dictionary attempts to provide: literal, obvious, or common-sense meaning of a sign. By contrast, connotative meaning refers to the socio cultural and personal association of a sign (Chandler: 2002). It suggests that connotative meaning is the meaning created by individuals or groups of individuals. As such, the social background of the individuals comes into play in the meaning they create. For example, some people in the world might mean the term *Indonesia* as *hospitality, kindness, etc.*, but others might have different meaning when they are encountered with the term *Indonesia*. Thus, connotative meaning does not purely exist in the linguistic unit, but it lies in the language users' mind.

Structure Analysis

Any text is believed to have its own structure. Semiotically, the structure of a text could be analyzed from syntagmatic or paradigmatic analyses. Syntagmatic analysis is the structuralist technique to find out the "surface structure" of a text and the relationship between its parts. It encompasses the analysis on the combination of interacting signifiers which forms a meaningful whole (Chandler, 2000: 244). A sentence is an example of a syntagm consisting of several words which are structurely related each other. In other words, syntagmatic analysis is the one concerned with the combination of "this-and-this-and-this" (as in the sentence *the coffee is hot*). Syntagmatically, the sentence

consists of the combination between *the* and *coffee* and *is* and *hot*. Paradigmatic analysis, on the other hand, is an analysis dealt with the selection of “this-or-this-or-this.” The last word of the sentence *the coffee is hot* is replaced with, let’s say, *cold* or *icy* is the example of the paradigmatic analysis. Both combinations—“this-and-this” and “this-or-this”—have its own implication in meaning.

Discursive Practice or Discourse Practice

Discursive or discourse practice is concerned with text production and text interpretation (Fairclough, 1995: 97). Text production refers to what discourse conventions are produced by the speakers or writers. As stated in the earlier part, this is the step whereby the discourse conventions are uncovered. At the consumption end, a discourse analyst ideally investigates how readers/listeners interpret the given text. In the context of this writing, however, I do not go through this phase.

Sociocultural Practice

This is the phase whereby the analysis on how discourse practices operate at a number of levels; in the immediate situation, in the wider situation or organization, and at a societal level is discussed. Besides, the implication of discourse practices towards society is also touched upon in this step.

ONE CASE IN POINT

Using the three-dimension model proposed by Fairclough, this writing tries to analyse one phrase and two utterances. The phrase is the name of a very popular TV program broadcast on RCTI, *Indonesian Idol*, and the two utterances are the ones commonly produced by the hosts of the program: (1) “*Indonesia, Anda yang memilih dan Anda yang menentukan*” and (2) “*Dan,.....Indonesia memilih.....*” The following is the analysis of the data on the basis of Fairclough’s model.

Text

Indonesian Idol

Indonesia, Anda yang memilih dan Anda yang menentukan.

Dan,...Indonesia memilih.....

To analyze the data, I begin with my comments on the vocabulary items used in those data, then move on structure analysis.

The national identity is very strongly projected in those data. Instead of christening the program RCTI Idol, the organizing committee uses Indonesian Idol. It has a very great implication because the signifier *Indonesia* signifies the territory covering Banda to Papua. The implication of the word choice is that the winner of this singing contest count as the one who is idolized by most Indonesian citizens. As a matter of fact, the winner of this contest is the one who could accumulate the highest number of short-message services (SMS-*es*), and each SMS sender is likely to send unlimited number of messages. One-man-one-vote regulation as in general election does not work in this case, so the high number of messages is not necessarily equal to the number of senders. As such,

the winner of this contest actually could not be claimed as the idol of most Indonesians because she/he is not the appointee of most Indonesians.

Moving to structure analysis, particularly paradigmatic analysis, those data might have different impressions if the combination of the words is not arranged in that way. If, for example, the words *Indonesian* (data 1) and *Indonesia* (data 2 and 3) are replaced with *RCTI* and *pemirsa RCTI*, respectively, the national identity is not projected at all. Focusing on data (2) and (3), personalising the TV viewers by using the word *Indonesia* and *Anda* (you) suggests that someone's appointment to be the winner of the contest is the responsibility of this nation and its citizens as what happens in presidential election. If the combination of data (2) is replaced with "*Pemirsa RCTI, Anda yang memilih, Anda yang menentukan,...*" it would impress that the winner of the contest is merely the idol of RCTI viewers, not Indonesian as a whole.

On the basis of the analysis, it could be underlined that meaning construction or ideology construction as believed by Fairclough takes place. RCTI wishes that the winner of their program could be acknowledged as a national asset. Attributing the winner as an Indonesian Idol, instead of RCTI Idol, and personalizing and addressing the TV viewers with *Indonesia*, instead of *Pemirsa RCTI*, are their attempts to win the consent and ideology.

Discourse Practice

The data above articulate advertising or promotional genre. The promotional element could be seen from the "catchy" name of the program: *Indonesian Idol*. It is catchy in the sense that it impresses that the winner of the contest is the one appointed by most Indonesian citizens. Another promotional element is the personalisation of the TV viewers: *Indonesia* and *Anda*. The personalizations propagates the viewers to send SMS-es as frequently as possible because data (2) implies that it is the Indonesian people who has the responsibility to appoint winner. Likewise, data (3) promotes the program and also the winner as the asset of the nation given that the winner is the Indonesian appointee. All in all, the data in this writing talks a lot about promotional genre.

Social Practice

Viewed from social practice, it could be underlined that there is a shift in policing the promotional discourse from local institution—RCTI TV station—to national level: Indonesia. The change also underlies in the discourse practice. Conventional or traditional advertising or promoting practice is changed into a new one. The data do not persuade people to buy a certain product as in common advertisement, but they urge people to support someone for idol.

The changes in discourse practices illustrated above has implications for social identity of the winner and social relations between the winner and Indonesian citizens. The title Indonesian Idol attributed to the winner is the legitimacy of his/her identity as a winner of a singing contest idolized by most Indonesian people. The seemingly legitimate identity leads him/her to get closer with the Indonesian people. The implication of this is that she/he could get a lot of privileges in the society, such as the open access to mass media, a great

opportunity to join a recording company, and an official pass to get in touch with government officials.

CLOSING REMARKS

In order to study how language is used more comprehensively, critical discourse analysis is a good approach to study. It, however, requires the analysis not to study merely the language, but it urges them to integrate between language theories and social theories. Understanding how language is used as a social practice enables the analysts uncover the ideology behind a discourse and its implication towards the society.

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