

Multimodality in Literary Text
Lecture 5
Critical Discourse Analysis
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Learning objective

At the end of this meeting, you are expected to understand:

1. CDA Model of Norman Fairclough
2. CDA Model of Teun A. Van Dijk
3. Research in CDA

A. CDA Model of Norman Fairclough

Fairclough, N. in his CDA book discussed about the critical study of language. One of the focuses is about language, ideology and power. He argues that CDA has three basics: “it is **relational**, it is **dialectical**, and it is **transdisciplinary**” (Fairclough, 2013, 3).

The **relational** primarily focuses on social relations rather than individual ones. The social relations is in a complex form. It is not just about one entity or individual but more the inter-relations between them. For example, in the scope of discourse, the relation is very broad from people to people and from people to things or text or vice versa. Discourse relations among people is about who communicates what to whom in what way in spoken or written communication. Discourse relations from people to things or text or vice versa is about the real communicative products such as articles, newspaper, dialogues, podcast, and speech. These products of communication produces languages, discourse and genres (Fairclough, 2013, 3).

The **dialectical** is related to the above relations which makes discourse inseparable. Dialectical relations are the relations between objects which are different from one to another but somehow, they cannot be separated (Fairclough, 2013, 4). This sounds strange but this relation works on “power and discourse.” The power is held and controlled by people to other people through communication or discourses which is intended to maintain the legitimacy of someone or something. However, power also includes the use of physical force and violence. So, it is not just about communication or discourses. Not as simple as that. Therefore, even though power and discourse are two different elements in the social process, they are interconnected. They influence each other. The complexities of power relationships are simplified in the way people talk about them.

So, **what is CDA?** Fairclough argues that CDA is not the analysis of discourse as an independent entity but the dialectical relations between discourse and the other objects as mentioned above. The analysis

could be done in interdisciplinary studies such as linguistics, cultural studies, politics, sociology, etc. Therefore, **CDA is a transdisciplinary form** (Fairclough, 2013, 4) which means it is important to also utilize the other related theories, methodologies, and frameworks in the analysis process of CDA.

Everyone has their own understanding in interpreting something through language as the world is constructed and represented in many different ways through language. These various interpretations are based on various factors including power dynamics and the nature of what is being understood. There are things in this world we can change by how we talk about it, but not all, there are also unchangeable ones. So, CDA falls into the basis of social constructivism, by realizing that not all interpretations would have the same impacts to the society.

In research, CDA can work as theory as well as methodology. However, it cannot work by itself. As forementioned, CDA is a transdisciplinary form meaning that it is important to add as much theories and methodologies as possible that, of course, related to the object and subject of the research. For example, my thesis student is currently writing a research paper about King Charles Coronation news articles in the online newspapers with the nominalization concept of CDA. Then, it is important for her to add huge number of reliable resources and references related to the coronation event and the news articles analysis such as media studies to be collaborated with the CDA concept. I realize that it is going to challenging to bring different theories and frameworks together in research because we have to know how to connect them. At the end of the day, as English Literature student, she will analyze the news article from the point of view of our discipline.

In CDA, the analysis includes the text which have been developed in many methods of textual analysis. As researcher, we can choose any of them that would be suitable with CDA's principles and objectives. Fairclough emphasizes that the CDA he works with has general method of textual analysis which discourses, genres and styles are drawn upon text to examine how they are communicated and presented.

It is the turn to ask what is '**critical**' in CDA? **Critique** looks at what is not working in a society, how could it be not working, and considers how to fix or improve these issues based on particular standpoint. Critique relies on values and ideas about what makes a 'good society' and 'good people' as it evaluates the current societies and potential ways to change them (Fairclough, 2015, 7). As an example, I will discuss the case of Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) in Indonesia. This MBKM program has been developed since 2017 and is still developing until this 2023. One of the programs is to set the students free from thesis or *skripsi* which has been the graduation requirement to obtain the Bachelor's degree. It is stated directly by the Nadiem Makarim, the minister of education, and streamed in the official YouTube channel of ministry of education (KEMDIKBUD RI, 2023). This news was going viral in the cyberspace in Indonesia, many people talk about this: lecturers, students, university foundations and leaders, practitioners, etc. People express their own perspective based on their background knowledge. They criticize this regulation, some are in the pro side, some other are in the contra side, and there is also the ones in the between. This issue has been debatable even until now. According to Fairclough (2013, 7), the crucial point about critique is that "it assesses what exist,

what might exist, and what should exist on the basis of coherent set of values. In certain extent, it also highlights the gaps between what particularly societies claim to be what they are.” In the case of thesis dismissal in MBKM, those who have relation to this regulation, feel like they have the authority or freedom to express their thought and define what it is, whether it is wrong or right, how the regulation is supposed to be or not supposed to be. As part of society, they impose their opinions and will regarding MBKM as it should be from their standpoint. From all the opinions and critiques, we can see in the internet that there are two: negative critiques and positive critiques. **Negative critiques focus on the problem while the positive critiques focus on the solution.** Negative critiques tend to examine how society creates and continue social problems, while positive critiques try to analyze how the individuals or certain group of people can solve the issues and suggest potential options to address them (Fairclough, 2013, 7).

At the beginning it was mentioned that CDA focuses on the dialectical relations between language, power, and ideology. Mainly, it is about how power can create inequalities which leads to social injustices and particularly studying how language and discourse play a role in this power dynamics. This includes exploring the relationship between discourse and power and how it influences various aspects of society, including ideology. Thompson stated that **ideology** is seen as a tool used to serve and maintain power by shaping how people perceive the world, act, interact, and form their identities which often contributes to the unequal power relations (Fairclough, 2013, 8). Critical analysis in CDA aims to create and develop interpretations in the social life. The interpretations can give positive or negative impacts to the society which also give spaces to fix those negative impacts. Critiques are required in fixing the negative interpretations in the society. As part of the social life, critiques can transform the society in many ways and can be done in various ways, one of them is through discourses. Therefore, critical analysis produces discourses. **There is big power in a discourse.** Discourse has the potential to justify something or something to finally create certain interpretation or representation in the society. Interpretations affect the social life on how they emerge, are accepted, become dominant and are implemented in the society. This is where the ideology comes up as interpretations can be said to be ideological in maintaining the power relations. The ideology is questioning what events exist, how people act or react, what the effects of their actions, and etc.

Here is the summary of CDA’s advantages:

1. It emphasizes the importance of interconnection between discourse and various elements in social interaction.
2. It asserts that analyzing discourse critically is an essential component of any critical examination of the society.
3. It offers a framework to identify which discourses (interpretation and explanations) carry ideological elements.
4. It portrays critical analysis as a form of discourse itself which is related with other elements of social life.

Fairclough (2013, 12) suggested the following three **characteristics of research** which includes the critical discourse analysis approach:

1. The research is not only about analyzing discourse or text; it is also part of transdisciplinary analysis system between discourse and other elements of the social process.
2. The research is not only giving general 'comments' to the discourse or text, the research should also cover specific and systematic analysis of the text.
3. The research is not only descriptively elaborated, but also normatively. It should address the social wrongs from the discursive perspective and then suggest the potential problem solving or at least to minimize the issues.

B. CDA Model of Teun A. Van Dijk

There is also one researcher who has written a lot of works about CDA and other discourse analysis approaches. His name is Teun A. Van Dijk and we will discuss his CDA model as he wrote in 2015. Van Dijk (2015) argues that CDA is a form of discourse analytical research that primarily investigates how text and speech in social and political context can contribute and continue social power abuse and inequality. The ones who are interested to conduct CDA research should be able to comprehend, uncover, and ultimately confront the social inequality and injustice. For that purpose, CDA is seen as a social movement of discourse analysts with a certain political statement. As Fairclough mentioned earlier about trans disciplinarity of CDA, Van Dijk has the same thought about it. CDA cannot stand as a single independent method of a research. It should be also supported by other relevant methods and theories to the object of the research.

Furthermore, Van Dijk summarized the Fairclough and Wodak ideas of **main principles of CDA** (2015, 467):

1. CDA deals with societal issues
2. Power dynamics are exposed through language and text
3. Language shapes and forms society and culture
4. Language serves the ideology work
5. Language consists of historical context
6. There is a connection between text and society
7. Analyzing language involves interpretation and explanation
8. Language serves as a type of social action

Regarding the conceptual and theoretical frameworks of CDA, Van Dijk defined two key aspects. First is about the **micro and macro societal gap** and the second is about the **social power as control**.

Social micro level consists of "language use, discourse, verbal interaction, and communication." Meanwhile, social macro level analysis refers to the analysis of "power, dominance, and inequality between social groups" (van Dijk, 2015, 468). There is a potential gap between these two social micro-macro levels which CDA should address it. In order to bridge the gap, Van Dijk elaborated four key aspects:

1. **Members and Groups:** people engage in discourse or they communicate each other as part of social groups, institutions, or organization. These groups can influence them and act through them.
2. **Actions and Processes:** individual social actions are the connected components of larger group actions and societal processes. The examples can be found in the policymaking, news making, or reproduction of racism.
3. **Context and Social Structure:** Discursive interactions occur within specific social situations, which are connected with broader social structures. For example: a press conference can be both a local practice and a reflection of larger organizational and media structures.
4. **Personal and Social Cognition:** language users have personal thoughts and social beliefs based on their background knowledge they experienced from their group or culture. So, even though as individuals, they are independent, but at the same time they are also represent their social and cultural groups.

In essence, these four aspects provide a framework to understand how discourse connects the micro level of individual actions and the macro level of societal structures.

One of the focal points in criticizing discourse is the social power of certain groups or organizations (van Dijk, 2015, 468). He defines the **social power as tool to control**. Individuals or groups with more power are able to have more control to the acts and minds of the other groups with less power or powerless. On the other hand, the individuals and groups who has less power cannot take control of the more powerful ones because they do not have the authority to do so. In analyzing the relations between discourse and power, we have to see from the discourse production itself as the source of power, such as: media, education, politics, cultures, science, etc. In these discourses, we will also see the actors of the power and their power actions in or through these discourses. The easiest example can be found in the media studies in which the media can produce certain angle of story based on their media agenda. Their story angle can unconsciously control the minds, knowledge, attitude, perceptions, and ideologies of the readers or viewers. This finally means that those who take control of influential discourse also have the access to indirectly control the minds and actions of others.

In summary, various aspects of context, **text and speech can be influenced or even manipulated by individuals who have power**. This power can be used to interfere other individuals, groups, or society as a whole. However, it is important to note that speech and text do not always immediately reflect the power relations between groups. The specific context can either enhance, reinforce, or alter these relationships.

C. Research in CDA

Research in CDA can cover various topics, such as: **gender inequality, racism, media studies, political discourse, professional and institutional power** (Van Dijk, 2015, 475).

Gender inequality has always been an interesting topic to discuss, especially from the CDA perspective (Van Dijk, 2015, 476). As a woman, I have noticed how the media portrays certain stereotype when publishing news about men and women. Many news about cases of rape and sexual harassment in Indonesia focus on women who are the victims compared to men who are the perpetrators. Even the women's identities are revealed while the males are concealed. The news reports that frequently emerge often emphasize that the crime occurs because of women's mistakes, not men's. Women are blamed for wearing revealing clothes, being in vulnerable places, or being out at the wrong time, in essence, women become the focal point of these sexual crimes, while men, who are the perpetrators, often end up in a more neutral position.

It is matter of terminologies and choice of words in that the media uses in which CDA can be a suitable framework to analyze this issue. Let us take a look at the examples of the following news headline:

“The woman on tank top was raped by a stranger in the middle of the night.”

“A middle-aged man who raped a woman in Bekasi was once arrested for a similar case.”

I believe we can see an obvious discursive difference between these two headlines. The first headline focuses to the woman, her clothes, and the time setting. These focuses blame the woman for wearing such clothes and she is not supposed to go out in the middle of the night. The perpetrator is just mentioned as stranger. The second headline shows the opposite side. It emphasizes the man, his age, and his criminal history. Unfortunately, many real headlines in media with the similar cases are written like the first example.

Numerous studies on **racial inequality** have shown the same degree of similarities in stereotypes, prejudices, verbal derogations across various types of discourse, media coverage, and happen in many countries (Van Dijk, 2015, 476). The main finding these researches is that racism is a complex system of social control produced by everyday discriminatory practices, including the way people communicate through discourses. This system is rooted in and also influences biased personal beliefs and shared social prejudices and ideologies related to racial issue. Symbolization and the parties who have control over public discourses, play an important role in the discursive reproduction of racism in the society (Van Dijk, 2015, 477).

Another research topic that is also related to racial inequality is **media discourse**. Since long time ago, there has been a significant increase in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) studies focusing on the media. These investigations have not just explored the social and communicative aspects of news and various media genres, which is typical in critical media studies, but have also connected these aspects with a systematic examination of the components that make up media discourse. This includes elements like vocabulary, sentence structure, subject matter, figurative language, logical flow, character portrayal, social roles, types of content, expression of certainty, underlying assumptions, persuasive techniques, reader engagement, common story frameworks, and the analysis of images using multiple modes, among many other structural aspects (Van Dijk, 2015, 477).

My thesis student is currently writing a research paper with the topic of racism portrayal of black person in the media. This is an intertextual analysis of two news articles in which they write the same criminal incident from different perspectives. This research analyzes an incident of a fatal shooting by a white policeman over a black man that happened in 2022. The incident is covered in “white” media but they did not uncover the white policeman identity as the perpetrator of the incident. Meanwhile, the “black” media encountered by revealing the white suspect of the incident. Therefore, the exposure of this incident in mass media article becomes a clear proof that racial issue gap still occurs.

The next topic of research that CDA can cover is related to **political discourse**. Michel Foucault once wrote a book chapter entitled “The Subject and Power” in 1982 besides the other writings of him. His writings become the references of the other researchers even until now. Another researcher is Norman Fairclough who wrote a book entitled “Language and Power” in 1989. There is also Teun. A. Van Dijk who also wrote many books and articles about CDA. One of topics in his writings is about how political is portrayed and framed di discourses. Fairclough and van Dijk’ books in CDA become the main references of this course, especially this chapter. The next researcher is Ruth Wodak. She is also one of the pioneers in the CDA approach. She is well known from her writings in books art articles related to racism, nationalism, and political discourse. It is always interesting to see the politicians speak in front of public, examining their political attitudes in their verbal and non-verbal language, especially in a certain occasion such as national election period. MDA and CDA or even MCDA can be the suitable approach to dive into their attitudes and analyze their political discourses.

The last topic of research that CDA can cover is related to **professional and institutional power**. It emphasizes on how the power dynamics work and play a role in the institutions and organizations in the society (van Dijk, 2015, 478). This topic can cover the area of politic, education, and the communication within diverse communities and social groups. However, it is important to note that CDA has also been applied to various other social context where issues related to professional and institutional power, as well as their misuse, have been critically examined from the perspective of discourse analysis (Van Dijk, 2015, 478).

Marcoes L. in September 2023, wrote an article in Jakarta Post online entitled “Power Relations and The Hijab Discipline.” The article is criticizing the punishment imposed for not wearing the hijab at state junior high school in Lamongan, East Java, Indonesia. 19 female students were shaved and cut of the hair because they do not wear hijab as regulated by the school. The journalist stated that this case brings power relations between the school and the students in which she refers to theory of power relations by Michel Foucault. There is an obvious inequality between the teachers and the students’ relations at this school. Particularly, between the teachers who enforces discipline and the students who are forced to be discipline, between regional education institution and the school, and between the school and the victims’ parents. This article shows a clear example of how professional and institutional power works in discourses.

Summary and Conclusion

CDA can be one of the theories or methodologies in conducting research in specific area. However, as stated earlier, CDA cannot stand by itself, it cannot be an independent reference to analyze. It requires other related theories, approaches, or frameworks to produce a comprehensive research result. That is why the learning outcome of this course at JIU is writing a mini research paper. Students might find it difficult at the beginning as this is going to be their first experience make a scientific writing. But it is going to be a good starting point if they have interest in this course and plan to continue writing their thesis with the same scope. Object of research can be taken from one of the examples I have given earlier. It could be about gender inequality, racism, media studies, political discourse, professional and institutional power. Analyzing these issues from CDA point of view would focus more on the linguistic resources or the language, including the choice of words, punctuations, type of fonts whether it is **bold**, *italic*, or underline. This is different from MDA we discussed previously as it focuses more on the multimodal resources. CDA can work on monomodal. Even if we analyze in multimodal resources, the images would be used to support the linguistic resources. Therefore, in the next lectures, we will dive deeper to the practical use of CDA by referring to the Machin and Mayr book entitled “How To Do Critical Discourse Analysis.

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