Critical Discourse Analysis: A Retrospective Approach to Examining Social Issues and Challenges

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Abstract

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a valuable research methodology that determines how social issues operate across societies and howCDA uncovers these hidden issues and challenges that exist in multiple contexts. As a result, the study aimed to review the existing literature on CDA and its advancement in order to provide possible answers to the questions of how CDA is used to express various social issues and challenges that are prevalent in modern societies, such as gender discrimination, power dominance, social inequality, policies, conflicts, violence, and child victimization. By amalgamating the keywords, a logical review methodology was adopted for globally recognised databases such as Elsevier, Google Scholar, Springer, Sage, JSTOR, and Google. These were explored for this study. A thematic analysis procedure was advocated to develop themes in the context of multiple social issues and challenges. Therefore, the systematic review revealed that CDA offers a worthwhile methodology, technique, and approach that struggle against inequality, gender discrimination, power abuse, racism, hegemony, and marginalisation through the medium of language.

Keywords: Reflections, Critical Discourse Analysis, Challenges, Extremism, Social Issues

Introduction

Social issues and challenges have an enormous negative impact on our society, and we are all affected. To address these issues, we need a research approach and critical discourse analysis is one of the best to address these challenges. Mostly, it probes murky relationships systematically. Fairclough (1995) builds on this by asserting that Critical Discourse Analysis is a multidisciplinary research methodology that is used for the analysis of discourse that regards language as a medium for social action and reflects how political and social dominance are perpetuated through talk and text. Therefore, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a rich era of research methodology that can be used in different contexts to analyze spoken and written literature to uncover hidden sources of power, inequality, prejudice, hegemony, and disparity. Social practice, according to Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) refers to an alleviated form of social interaction (illustrations like classroom teaching, medical consultation, power processes, television news, family meals). Therefore, each practice is indeed the crystallization of different social forces inside a relatively stable structure, having discourse always present. Van Dijik (1985) demonstrates the usage of spoken or written language to examine the role of texts through language and its impact on society through communication media, language and content of journalism, news reports, criticism, the language of war, advertisement, political speech, or some other uses of language in a society that sprays under the scope of critical discourse analysis and remains enormously useful and influential technique in understanding various aspects of society.

Discourse analysis, particularly critical discourse analysis, as defined by Breeze (2011), assists in "understanding ideology and its functions through the discourse," trying to bridge the gap between "actual phenomena of language and the mechanics of power in society" (Breeze, 2011, p. 520). It is more engrossed with the analysis of transcripts or utterances within a certain socio-cultural context and signifies a data analysis method that might notify researchers about a phenomenon's discursive structure (Willig, 2008). Foucault investigated "regimes of truth" in a variety of sociocultural areas, including political, social, sexual, psychological, and criminal dimensions, and interpreted discourse analysis as a form of knowledge archaeology (1977; 1980, p. 112). Thus, thestudyintends to review the existing literature to analyse several social issues, discriminations, and inequalities by using critical discourse analysis as a research methodology.

Review of Literature Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA is a research methodology that looks at both spoken and written texts to find hidden sources of power, hegemony, prejudice, and inequality. It looks at how these discursive sources are reproduced and maintained in different political, historical, and social contexts (Van Djik, 1998). However, CDA is intimately linked with a critique because it assists in the exploration and study of various parts of society through the use of language and has become one of the domains of research in discourse studies at the end of the 1970s (Fairclough, 2013). It is an approach that is based on the consolidation of linguistics and social theory

(Fairclough, 1992). Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis is entitled "the critical study of language" (Breeze, 2011, p. 496). That is why Critical discourse analysis is used to examine and understand various social issues as they are portrayed through language or symbols. Critical Discourse Analysis is a problem-oriented, multidisciplinary research approach that encompasses a wide range of techniques, with its own set of theoretical models, and agendas to reflect various social challenges (Wodak, 2014). Therefore, critical discourse analysis, is an excellent critical tool for gaining a clear view of any political and social-cultural phenomenon (Ayllon, &Walkerdine, 2008).

Nonhoff, (2017) identified two types of relationships between discourse analysis and critique: external and integrated. The external bond between discourse analysis and critique is represented by key positions (Nonhoff, 2017). This method relies on linguistic discourse analysis to examine social, political, and other issues from a critical perspective, with a focus on real or serious issues. As a result, it can be used in the critique of certain socio-economic troubles, which could be transformed into discourse analysis for the processof evaluation. Although "critique precedes analysis, discourse analysis has an external association with critique" (Nonhoff, 2017, p. 9). Critical discourse analysis aids in the identification of human miseries, the 'discursive formation of realities,' and the identification of civic responsibility to endorse a social change in society (Herzog, 2016, p. 288).

Secondly, Critical discourse analysis offers a critique in its integrated form. As stated by (Nonhoff, 2017, p. 1), "We could well talk of an integrated linkage and no longer speak of discourse analysis and critique, but discourse analysis itself a critique" because critique comes from discourse analysis itself". Mostly, CDA aims to expose the connections of discourse practices that a layman can understand. Moreover, critical discourse analysis examines a variety of socio-cultural areas, including social, political, and criminal dimensions that are predominant in the existing circumstances. Therefore, CDA is strongly concerned with social issues and aims to address them through analysis of social and political action (Roger, 2004).

Research Questions

This paper seeks to address the following research questions.

- ➤ What are the different social issues and challenges in society?
- > How critical discourse analysis uncover different social issues and challenges that operate in multiple contexts?

Methodology

This research took a qualitative approach in nature, which is convenient for studying a social phenomenon in-depth (Kavoura&Bitsani, 2014; Chenail, 2011) and a systematic review process of previous studies, research reports, and scholarly articles that isbuilt on understanding how critical discourse analysis methodology addresses different social issues in society. In total, 17 research papers that seem fit for this study were selected, using the purposive sampling technique, demonstrating that critical discourse analysis has progressed into a significant tool for critique. Therefore, the literature for this study was carefully chosen by using specified keywords on the Google search engine and Google Scholar to obtain reliable and authentic resources same as Research Gate, Elsevier, Sage, Springer, Taylor & Francis, and other sources. Thematic analyses were utilised to analyse the data in order to answer the potential research questions.

In the context of literature, 'Critical discourse analysis addresses how sources are rendered meaningful through these processes, as well as the function they play in the formation of social reality via making meaning' (Onwuegbuzie&Frels, 2014, p. 57). However, CDA was conducted through a cross-sectional examination rather than a longitudinal study. "Discourse Analysis-Based Research Synthesis (DARS) method incorporates knowledge of the significance of transparency, accuracy, and the qualitative examination process as core components to reflect when presenting a set of research articles as per the literature review," (Onwuegbuzie&Frels, 2014. p. 61). (Onwuegbuzie&Frels, 2014) recommended that practitioners and researchers should use discourse analysis-based research synthesis (DARS) to address "important areas such as social, economic, political, and other sign systems that are inherent in research and research reporting" (p. 61). So, in this context, researchers encompassed peer-reviewed journal articles, books, book chapters, and grey literature about CDA. However, this investigation covered almost all grey literature that was virtually available.

Strategy for Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

The researcher found 30 papers however, only 17 were included because they were considered appropriate for this study.

Data Extraction

The researcher extracted the data that seems to be relevant to CDA and its advancement to answer the question of how CDA is used to reflect various issues that are prominent in modern societies, like gender discrimination, power dominance, social inequality, and child victimization, and poverty.

Findings

In this study, 17papers were included that matched the criteria for inclusion and were able to achieve the research goals. The papers that were reviewed are summarized using a purposive sampling technique, indicating

that critical discourse analysis has developed into a substantial tool for critique. The researcher employed thematic analysis technique and discovered five main themes.

Table1. Represents discovered Themes

CDA and Gender Inequality in Education CDA and Power Domination in society CDA and Racial Inequality Exercise CDA and Poverty reduction analysis CDA and child victimization

Theme 1

Critical Discourse Analysis and Gender Inequality in Education: The proverb "women are from Venus, men are from Mars" is most openly used to express the differences in how men and women feel, reflect, and act." It hints inevitability of difference by stating that women and men came from opposite poles of the same planet. (Ellemers, 2018;Barreto&Ellemers, 2005). This viewpoint on male and female variances has resulted in gender inequity, which has exacerbated gender discrimination (Alba, 2018).

Gender inequality in education has been widely noticed and recognized (European Commission, 2016; Islam &Asadullah, 2018; Kemp, 1977; Kobia, 2009; Francisco, 2007; Clark Blickenstaff, 2005). Furthermore, there is an elongated history of stereotypical representations in school textbooks of women and men(Leo & Cartagena, 1999; Mirza, 2004; Bazzul Sykes, 2011; Ullah Haque, 2016; Ullah Skelton, 2013).

With pervasive imbalance in male-female representation in textbooks, this inequality particularly in EFL textbooks has been an invisible impediment to educational equalityin education system. This disparity in representation between men and women may lead to misconceptions about women's responsibilities in society, as well as fewer opportunities for female learners to practise their target language (TL) than male learners (Nofal&Qawar, 2015; Nagatomo, 2010; Siren, 2018). As a result, it is clear, from the findings of gender studies, such as (Kobia (2009),Shteiwi (2003), Samadikhan&Shahrokhi (2014), that even this gap in EFL/ESL textbooks has yet to be effectively filled (Foroutan, 2012;Nofal&Qawar, 2015).

It's worth noting that critical discourse analysis as an immense research methodology that can support scholars and researchers to evaluate textbooks from multiple perspectives. Furthermore, CDA is an effective research approach to deal with social challenges that are both hidden and visible in differentsocio-political norms andvalues. It is, really a holistic approach that examines both political and social contexts to disclose ideologies, abusing social power, imperialism, and hegemony (Fairclough, 1989, 2001). As a result, critical discourse analysis, as a multi-functional technique, has a wide range of applications in a variety of areas, including education. Therefore, it is the reflection of CDA to examine textbooks from different dimensions to unveil gender inequality in education (Amerian&Esmaili, 2015).

Theme 2

Critical Discourse Analysis and Power Domination in society: The concept of power domination has been the fundamental signifier in CDA. Van Dijk (1997) asserted that "the actual ethical dilemma we need to focus on in critical discourse research is the illicit exercise of power, that is, dominanceor power abuse," (p. 24). Fairclough supports this viewpoint, by arguing that "critical analysis of discourse is a pointless exercise if it is not a resource to struggle against power domination" (Fairclough, 2001, p. 216). The concept of power dominance alludes is an oppressive force in society that is intended to suppress opposition to the processes that maintains the status quo infavour of ruling elites. They are roughly described a coalition of governments, capitalists, and other capital stakeholders that together form the dominant bloc within capitalist societies and global capitalism (Fairclough, 1999, 2001; Meyer, 2001; Wodak, 2001). In this paradigm, power is strongly connected to ideology and the formation of consent, as revealed by Althusser's (1971) study of ideological power structures and Gramsci's (1971, 1988) study of ideological hegemony and the production of consent.

The power of dominant groups can be enshrined in laws, rules, traditions, habits, and even broad consensus, resulting in hegemony, as Gramsci articulated it (Gramsci 1971). As a result, groups have more or less power depending on their ability to dominate the actions and thoughts of other members. Such ability is premised on having privileged access to limited social resources like power, prestige, information, fame, expertise, money, culture, or even diverse kinds of public dialogue (Mayr, 2008). Thus, according to Van Dijk

(1999), CDA is primarily concerned with examining how hegemony, disparity, marginalization and misuse of power are perpetuated, performed, and resisted in a variety of social and political contexts.

Theme 3

Critical Discourse Analysis and Racial Inequality Exercise: Racism is still predominant in contemporary societies. Racism analysts (e.g., Essed, 1991; Forman, 2000) argue that most of modern racism is concealed. Discourses are not only produced by social, but also inherent of it as per CDA. "Exploring the opaque, transparent, and structural linkages of discrimination, supremacy, and control as expressed through language" (Wodak, 1995, p. 204). The critical nature of research is helpful in two ways. First, hidden beneath the surface of nature are revealed the assumptions that have become accepted. They perceive these beliefs and shape them in terms of bigger social actions that shape discourses. Individuals are usually unaware of how their linguistic conventions contribute to societal inequality (Fairclough, 2001b). Second, the critical analysis goes beyond explanation and transformation in society (Fairclough&Wodak, 1997; Fairclough, 1992, 2001a). Therefore, CDA as a reflective methodology exposes how discursive actions on racism are practiced in modern societies. According to Van Dijk (1993), discourse acts as a crucial role in the perpetuation of racial practices in different societies. People's beliefs are influenced by public discourse, which is dominated by elite groups and espouses mainstream political sentiments toward minority groups. Teo (2000), for example, shows how racism against Vietnamese migrants was constructed in Australian newspapers by disproportionate citing in favour of the white majority's perspective, generalising the crimes of a few Vietnamese individuals to the entire Vietnamese community, and using words like "animal-like" to separate them from the mainstream. Furthermore, educators are increasingly considering racial status as a factor in teaching. For example, a study conducted on African-American mathematics teachers found that they frequently encountered challenges of credibility in a field dominated by white men (Brown, et al., 2000).

Theme 4

Critical Discourse Analysis and Poverty reduction analysis:CDA is concerned with social issues, recognises the "discursive nature of power relations, which looks at discourse by way of social actions engages in ideological discourse, demonstrates how discourse forms culture in society, acknowledges that discourse is interpretative, historical, and descriptive" (Wodak, &Fairclough 2004, p. 297). Researchers that employ CDA are particularly interested in characteristics of "naturally occurring" language and the dynamic interpersonal communication approaches that go with it. Researchers are trying to comprehend wider elements of analysis (i.e., communicative acts, written texts, and discourses) although taking into accountlarger context of language use (Wodak& Meyer, 2009). Language is a social exercise that indicates a dialectical relationship between a discourse occurrence and the institutions, situations, and structure of society that frame it (Fairclough et al., 2011). CDA, which is strongly influenced by the Frankfurt School's work, is interested in criticising and changing society rather than simply analysing and understanding it. This critique aims to comprehend the function of ideology and power, as well as how social actors use language to produce social dominance. As a result, the goal of CDA is to unveil the nature of power in social transactions and how it is reflected in texts, verbal encounters, and communication events, both silently and openly.

Theme 5

Critical discourse analysis and child victimization: Child victimisation is studied through a CDA that emphasis on a variety of social factors that are associated toeconomic, cultural, social, political, and other societal aspects of child labour exploitation. Depending on the circumstances, different discourses use different techniques to describe child labour and victimisation (Mazhar, 2008; Khan, 2014). According to studies on child labour victimisation, the problem appears in both covert and overt forms (Naz et al., 2014). In Pakistan, Brazil, China, India, and other nations, child labour can range from creating a football to charcoal, diamond, fireworks, footwear, work in Cote d'Ivoire, while hawking/street trade appears to be the most common kind of child labour in Sub Saharan Africa (Psacharopoulosv&Woodhall, 1993). Studies employed CDA, indicated that 20% of children between the age group of 10 to 14 remain engaged in child labour and street vending (Mazhar, 2008). Therefore, 17% of children in Africa are approximately involved in labour market.

Furthermore, children hawkers in the South-East zone and Nigeria are engaged in a wide range of labour, selling a variety of low-cost articles, goods, and edibles like bread, vegetables, biscuits, fruits, ugba, sachet water, newspapers, okra, plantain chips, wears specifically at deteriorated roads where motorists and other road users are forced to slow down (Nwokoro&Burchi, 2011). Furthermore, bondage labour is a widespread practice that refers to contexts in which jobs are offered in consideration for payment of debt (Genicot, 2000), and it ensues a childfor some period. Therefore, child labour and victimisation are alliedto various socio cultural, economic, and other issues.

Therefore, critical discourses analysis highlights these issues and asserts that it is one of the leading alarms and considers one of the global issues nowadays (ILO, 2006&Mazhar, 2008,). This issue has received much interest from organisations as a comprehensive and multidimensional phenomenon, and the necessity for annihilation has been recognized all over the world (ILO, 2008). However, the issue is more acute in

marginalized communities, where child labour and involving children and women in other forms of work is more prevalent (Khan, 2014). They become more vulnerable to financial troubles, when they try to help the family. Such children are more likely to engage in dangerous occupations, employment, or labour in terms of their social, cultural, and educational development (Mazhar, 2008). Moreover, critical discourse analysis examines the ideologies, assumptions, power relations, and ideas that are being used to maintain discrimination and prejudice between elites and non-elites, and crusades against them (Widdowson, 2007).

Discussion

Through the reflections of critical discourse analysis, this study has explored several social issues that are prevalent in the societies like Gender Inequality in Education, Power Domination in society, Racism, poverty child victimization, are some of the issues that were investigated in this study. In education, gender inequality has been widely observed and recognized (European Commission, 2016; Islam &Asadullah, 2018; Kemp, 1977; Kobia, 2009; Kemp, 1977; Francisco, 2007; Clark Blickenstaff, 2005). This study has revealed that depiction of gender inequalities issue in school textbooks hurts learners' potentialities, as a result, neither the suppressed nor the dominant sexes can realize their full potential. This finding is linked with previous a study (e.g., Leo & Cartagena, 1999; Mirza, 2004; Bazzul& Sykes, 2011; Ullah&Haque, 2016; Ullah& Skelton, 2013) who claims unequal gender representation in textbooks may create an imperceptible barricade to equality in Education. Similarly, this study reveals power dominance issues in society that are reflected in different political and social contexts. This finding is similar to the existing literature (e.g., Wodak& Meyer, 2001; Fairclough&Wodak, 1997; in addition to critiques (Blommaert, 2005; Luke, 2004; McKenna, 2004; Maingueneau, 2006 Pennycook, 2001&Slembrouck, 2001) who believes power as dominance which is used as an oppressive force through which status quo is sustained for the sake of power holders in society. The study also showed that child labour abuse is a serious issue that not curtails only the development of human resources but also harms a child's cognitive proficiency and the growth of his life style. This finding is substantiated by (Lavy, 1996; Rosenzweig, M. 1982; Grootaert, 1998; Nielsen, 1998; & Khan, 2014) who asserts that children who are forced into child labour at an early age lose not just their way of learning and talents, but also their life expectancy and abilities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Critical Discourse Analysis has contributed abundant to discourse analysis, by way of those who criticize it acknowledge (Widdowson, 1996, 2004; Toolan, 1997). It is an accomplishment in itself that discourse analysis has become relevant to the present circumstances and a strong weapon for exposing various forms of social issues like domination, gender discrimination, racism, Islamic phobia, hegemony, and marginalisation. CDA practitioners who explored current media discourse and world leaders' discourse have effectively shown the role of discourse in moulding global opinion, endorsing the on-going war on terror, and concealing its terrible impacts. The numerous ways in which unfavourable stereotypical representations of ethnic and other disadvantaged minorities are generated and perpetuated have been unveiled through analysis of media discourse in Europe and the discourse of some elites. Through numerous action programs, the findings of this study act as a guideline for policies and agendas to eradicate the negative effects of various forms of discrimination against gender inequalities, power relations, racism, child victimization, poverty, and hegemony. Therefore, CDA is a qualitative research methodology, approach for critically explaining, understanding, and describing, how discourses legitimize, construct, and perpetuate the status quo of social inequality. As a result, the study also recommends more in-depth research on other social challenges that are prevalent, particularly in the developing nations, by using CDA research methodology because the main objective of CDA is to uncover different hidden realities, make things transparent, and raise the voices of those people who have been marginalised by the dominant people.

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