

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF CASE STUDIES OF ASTROLOGY- A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of discourse that views language as a form of social practice. Critical discourse analysis regards 'language as social practice' (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997) and takes consideration of the context of language use to be crucial. According to the science of astrology, planets represent certain energies, and, in fact, do emit certain magnetic and electric fields which influence the lives of a human beings. Astrology is a science which studies the combined influences of these stellar bodies on the human being. Objective of this paper is to study the domain of Astrology and its effects on social structure through use of language. And also how language contributes to understanding and brings about socio-cultural changes. Here, the researcher has analyzed the text by applying Fairclough's three dimensional model or method of CDA. Domain 'has to do with how language varies according to the activity in which it plays a part' (Leech, Deuchar and Hoogenraad 1993:9). Discourse varies according to the field in which it functions. Functions of language are different field or activity, which leads to construct different discourse. Researcher attempts to explore the linguistic importance and their interpretation, communication media and its effects on society.

Key words: *Astrology, Critical Discourse Analysis, Fairclough model*

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Introduction

Critical Discourse Analysis is a discipline that views discourse as constituting social practice and at the same time being constituted by it (Wodak 1999;7) It regards discourse as ‘a form of social practice’ (Fairclough and Wodak 1997, p.258), and considers the context of language use to be crucial to discourse (Wodak, 2001). It is generally agreed that CDA cannot be classified as a single method but is rather viewed as an approach consisting of different perspectives and various methods for studying the relationship between the use of language and social context as to how discursive power can be exercised in order to control the ‘mind’. As Fairclough (1989) calls it “...a particular form of social practice, in the centre of which power and ideology mutually influence and interact with one another”. (p.42)

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context.

Fairclough and Wodak (1997: 271-80) summarize the main tenets of CDA as follows:

1. CDA addresses social problems
2. Power relations are discursive
3. Discourse constitutes society and culture
4. Discourse does ideological work
5. Discourse is historical
6. The link between text and society is mediated
7. Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory
8. Discourse is a form of social action

The principal aim of CDA is to uncover opaqueness and power relationships. CDA is a socially committed scientific paradigm. It attempts to bring about change in communicative and socio-political practices. (Fairclough and Wodak 1997:265)

Methodology

The theoretical framework used for this study is based on Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework. It allows focusing more on the production and reception processes of the discourse than just examining the discursive text. In that way the discursive context can be viewed from different theoretical perspectives such as social or historical sciences.

Literature Review

Syam S K from Kowdiar, who works with Kerala Institute of Research, Training and Development Studies at Kozhikode, says in his article that that was the first time that a linguistic study on astrological terms in Kerala has been carried out. Mark Hamilton from the University of Connecticut, Studied a data set of 300 celebrities, he found that some personality traits are linked to the season of one's birth.

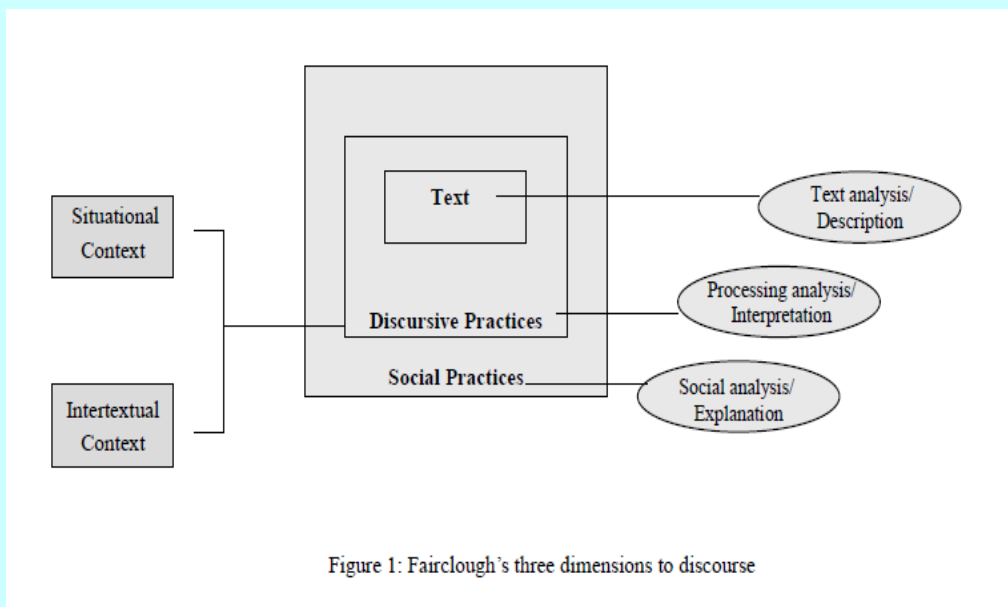
Fairclough's Three- Dimensional Model

This model is supposed to be interdisciplinary approach to the study of discourse for it views 'language as a form of social practice' (Fairclough 1989:20) and focuses on the ways social and political dominance is exercised in discourse by 'text and talk'. Moreover, the three dimensional model highlights processes of the production and reception of a 'discourse fragment' in a particular context.

The first dimension represents the discourse fragment, a "Text" that could be any object of analysis, including verbal, visual or verbal and visual texts. The second dimension of 'discursive practices' can be described in terms production and reception of a 'text' in a particular 'context'. The context is '*situational as well as intertextual*'. *Situational* context deals with the time and place of text production whereas *intertextual* context is related to the producers and receivers of the discourse. The third dimension of discourse could be described as 'power behind discourse'

or as ‘social practices’ functioning behind the entire process and governing the power relations in discourse.

According to Fairclough the first level of framework is textual-analysis which comprises “the study of different processes, or types of verbs, involved in the interaction; study on the meanings of the social relations established between participants in the interaction; study on the



meanings of the social relations established between participants in the interaction; analysis of the mood (whether a sentence is a statement, question, or declaration) and modality (the degree of assertiveness in the exchange). (Rogers, Berkes, Mosley, Hui, and Josep, 2005, p.371). Fairclough's second dimension, processing analysis, involves “analysis of the process of production, interpretation, distribution, and consumption. This aspect is concerned with how people interpret and reproduce or transform texts.” (Rogers, Berkes, Mosley, Hui, and Josep, 2005, p.371). The third dimension – social analysis “concerned with issues of power –power being a construct that is realized through interdiscursivity and hegemony. Analysis of this dimension includes exploration of the ways in which discourses operate in various domains of society.” In short, the analysis of the text involves the study of the language structures produced in a discursive event. An analysis of the discursive practice involves examining the production, consumption, and reproduction of the texts. The analysis of sociocultural practice includes an

exploration of what is happening in a particular sociocultural framework. The purpose why we have adopted Fairlough's approach to CDA is that it provides multiple points of analysis entries. It does not matter which kind of analysis one begins with, providing that they are all encompassed and are shown to be mutually explanatory. It is in the interconnections that the analyst catches remarkable patterns and disjunctions that need to be described, interpreted and explained.

Cohesion in discourse analysis is defined as the grammatical and lexical relationship between different elements of a text which hold it together. And Coherence is the way a text makes sense to readers and writer through the relevance and accessibility of its configuration of concepts and ideas and theories.

Selected Data

The researcher has selected texts regarding Astrological case studies solved by Shri Chitrabhanu K Poduval. He is a famous intuitionist and Planetary cause Investigator from Payannur, Kerala. Apart from horoscope analysis for marriage concerns, he also advises on an individual's health, behavior and educational and job issues, and other family matters.

Analysis of Case Study no. 1

Shrikala Raghuraman, is a researcher who has found a new medicine which is purely herbal based, but with stimulators which should make it work with human body within hours. But her company insisted to make it, in the way that it will give effect within minutes. According to her it will have bad effect on human body. The repetition of the word 'RARE' in the discourse reflects the character and intelligence of the protagonist Shrikala. She is found to be diligent and home loving, patriotic too. Shrikala as a researcher has too much responsibility about the project she has done. We see that the medicine is very beneficial for human life, thus has sociological concern. *She said, "hello, Mr. Poduval, I want to know the location of the file and documents which is missing", and checked it and said, its in New York for sure. Next, query was "Who is carrying it?". And I said, its with a woman with a cheek and sharp eyes."* From Linguistic point of view, language connectors make the discourse interpretative and explainable. The Pronoun '*its*' refers to the file lost. Again the same word is repeated '*it's in New York, it's with a woman with a cheek and sharp eyes.*' It can also include reference that is words that refer

back or forward to an earlier or later sentence. Cohesion in text can either include vocabulary connections between sentences- repetition or words or use of relative words. In the following sentence, number of people are mentioned and the sentence is bound by grammatical device of cohesion, which is responsible for the texture of the discourse. *Her team includes ten people under her control, in that three men are from France, Seven women members, of which four was from America itself, and three were from Austria and Poland. Along with her, all others too were granted holiday except the two who are from Pennsylvania itself.* The words *Police department, missing file, duplicate file, police record* refer to sociological discourse involving public at large. With cohesion reference in structure of language, coherence of sentences is possible making the whole discourse interpretative and explanatory. There are certain pronouns used instead of the particular names of characters in the text. For example- "*There was no other way to stop her, carrying and presenting a duplicate idea put in a duplicate file, and that was to save her from further, complications in her life and her future generations*". The word *her* is referred to two ladies, the first one refers to Miss. Linda and 2nd, 3rd and 4th one refers to Shrikala. The following utterance made by Shri Chitrabhanu, indicates interpretation to be out of context of the situation. Hence an *exophoric* relationship of cohesion exists in the text, which may tend to mislead the reader. The sentence- *Dr. viswanthan had a big problem previously related to his sons rare illhealth condition and I gave been to Villupuram, three years back for giving consultations for him.* Later, Shri. Poduval predicts the whereabouts of the lost file giving the correct information to Shrikala on time.

Thus, it is seen that through the method of astrological analysis, a great mishap is averted. The communicative event is only through telephonic calls and it is reproduced in form of written text or discourse. The social actors, astrologer and the scientist and the person referred to the scientist, all have a common socio-cultural background which made the communicative event possible. The beliefs and human values reflects social practice, which is makes it possible for people coming together. Astrology as usual is believed to be superstitious, but it is a science, dealing with influence of planets on human mind and body. Thus we see how language is used to communicate by different domains of society and achieve their goals.

Case Study no 2

The data for study and analysis is collected from case studies of Shri. Chitrabhanu K Poduval Astrologer. With persuasion and convincing manner, he has cleared the doubts of his stubborn and ignorant client. His client proved to be very ill-mannered throughout his interaction with Shri. Chitrabhanu. Shri Chitrabhanu was introduced to his client, Mr. Sajith, an advocate through his well-wisher Shri. Radhakrishnan who is also an advocate by profession. Both Shri Poduval and Shri. RadhaKrishnan shared the same background that is socio-cultural knowledge whereas Mr. Sajith did not believe in Astrology its related subjects. Through the interpretation and analysis of the text, we see the stubbornness and ill mannerism exhibited by Mr. Sajith. It can be seen in the following parts of the text. In second para of the text, the phrase or the word is repeated, while the client Sajith utters, "I hate astrologers, and astrology too". I smiled and said, 'you are carrying an astrologer with you now'. Turning to me, he said, 'I don't want your astrology'. The context of the communicative event is the area of tea plantation, away from urban crowd. Shri Chitrabhanu is taken to inspect twin houses related to his wife regarding Vaastu issues. He said, 'this is my wife house, and the another house to the east is their outhouse. The underlined word used as anaphoric reference refers to his family's out house where pet animals are looked after. Lexical cohesion is marked by synonyms and antonyms words like superstitious---unbelievable, ideas-subjects. Good, excellent-bad, sufferings- illness etc. In the succeeding paragraph, again the character of Mr. Sajith is made explicit in the following words, He, in a very strong voice said, 'hello, I don't he any sufferings, I am very happy and doing good'. Many rhetoric sentences are marked throughout the text indicating Sajith a non-believer of astrology and an atheist too. At the same time, those sentences uttered by Chitrabhanu indicates his strong attitude about his own subject. For example when he utters, I asked him, 'so why did you carry me?, to serve a tea and say good bye?, take your individual horoscopes, let's see, at least why you are so stubborn and adamant like this'. We see the repetition of certain phrases in the conversation like When asked him, " shall I cover health". Shall I cover the health issues of your wife?", he said, why you are so specific about my wife's health, convey mine. I added, "shall I see the health issues of your son?", and he said, "why not mine?", and I answered, " because you are 100% healthy and they are the people who are suffering with health." May be the writer intends to emphasize the subject of health matters to Sajith and also to readers, that he uses the repetition of the certain words in his text. There are group of words similar or nearly similar indicating the same subject of health like suffocations,

belly, stomach pain, asthma etc etc. It is further predicted by Shri. Chitrabhanu that Sajith's wife was haunted by Sajith's wife's relative who expired by burns and it was also a murder case.

Findings

The researcher has purposely selected two case studies in which the protagonists who are from different situations or areas and different professions. One of client is a scientist while another is an advocate. Shrikala who is appointed abroad and is famous scientist, yet has a deep-rooted cultural background. This makes her to believe the ancient Vedic astrology. Whereas in 2nd case study, we find a client who is a famous advocate in district court, has modern thinking and do not believe or rather refuse to believe in Vedic astrology. The discourses should be more refined by using linguistic devices in order to be interpreted by a common man who may or may not have any common cultural background.

Conclusion

CDA is not merely the study of the structures of language and text but is the study of people, institutions and organizations. The main idea in this approach is that the relation between form and content is not arbitrary; this relation is recognized by cultural, social and political constraints. Thus it is a multidisciplinary approach of Discourse Analysis. It is also seen how language is used to bring about the socio-cultural changes in a society and contribute to domination of some people by others.

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Astrological case studies

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