Teaching Critical Discourse Analysis in English and French
İngilizce ve Fransızca Eleştirel Söylem Çözümlemesi Öğretimi

Alexandra Moraru
"Dimitrie Cantemir" Christian University, Romania

Abstract

The present paper studies the importance of teaching Critical Discourse Analysis, and the challenges of teaching the same subject both in English and in French. Following the proposal of a comparative analysis of the US President's, Donald Trump, as well as the French President's, Emmanuel Macron, inauguration speeches, the need to find a common critical approach is compulsory. As discourse analysis draws students to the investigation of socially-situated texts, the research focuses on the students' engagement in the study of social interaction, context dependency, meaning in context and manipulation which derives from the comparative analysis of the two speeches. The present paper observes the students' implication in the investigation of different types of manipulation, according to Van Dijk's theories, as well as their understanding of the symbolic function of language in social life so as to acquire practical skills in the construction and interpretation of social relationships.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, self-presentation, other-presentation, audience perception.

Öz

Bu makalede, Eleştirel Söylem Analizi eğitiminin önemi ve aynı konuyu hem İngilizce hem de Fransızca olarak ele almanın zorlukları incelenmektedir. ABD Başkanı Donald Trump'ın ve Fransa Cumhurbaşkanı Emmanuel Macron'un açılış konuşmalarının karşılaştırmalı bir incelemesinin ardından, ortak bir eleştirel yaklaşım bulma gerekliliği doğmuştur. Söylem analizi, öğrencileri sosyal açıdan önemi bulunan metinlerin incelenmesine yönlendirirken; bu araştırma öğrencilerin iki konuşmanın karşılaştırmalı analizinden ortaya çıkan sosyal etkileşim, bağlam bağlılığı, bağlamsal anlam ve manipülasyon çalışmaları ile ilgilenir. Bu makalede, öğrencilerin Van Dijk'in teorilerine göre farklı manipülasyon türlerinin araştırmasında kullandıkları imalar ve sosyal ilişkilerin kurulmasında ve yorumlanmasında pratik becerilerin kazanılması için sosyal hayatta dilin sembolik işlevini nasıl anladıkları incelenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Eleştirel Söylem çözümlemesi, temsil, ben ve öteki, hedef kitle algısı.

Introduction

The research concentrates on the importance of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as subject as well as the challenges of teaching CDA in order to raise awareness concerning the practice of manipulation through language use. The study observes the students' critical thinking as well as the application of CDA theories on the inauguration speeches of US President, Donald Trump and French President, Emmanuel Macron. Therefore, the analysis assesses both English and French discourses, which implies a double specialization, but it only focuses on the English language theories regarding Discourse Analysis. The paper concentrates on applying Teun Van Dijk's overall strategy of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation in his article "Discourse and Manipulation" to the two inauguration speeches.

The Qualitative Analysis

The paper proceeds with a quantitative analysis based on a survey which was conceived according to Van Dijk's framework and was completed by the students participating at the CDA lecture. Following a close reading of the scripts and after watching the corresponding videos of both presidential speeches the outcome resulted in the following data:

1.   Overall interaction strategies

In the case of President Trump, the students argued for an evident negative presentation of the other, while the speaker presents himself in a positive manner.

- Positive self-presentation: 10 students counted 4 sentences starting with "I," 6 students marked 3 sentences stating with "I," 4 students wrote 2-3 sentences starting with "I".
- Negative other-presentation: 11 students counted 15 sentences, 4 students said 16 sentences and 5 students only counted 5 sentences of negative aspects of the other.

2.   Macro speech act implying Our "good" acts and Their "bad" acts

All the 20 students marked the future tense for "our good acts" and simple past/present perfect for "their bad acts".

3.   Semantic macrostructures: topic selection

- (De-)emphasize negative/positive topics about Us/Them: 7 students marked 50% negative topics and 50% positive topics judging the overall impression at the end of the speech.

9 students argued for 40% negative vs. 60% positive topics after counting the negative words as opposed to the positive words and after having decided that

the negative words have a stronger impact and add to the percentage; and 4 students counted 30% negative vs. 70% positive words.

4. Lexicon

- Select positive words for Us, negative words for Them: 16 students focused only on nouns and adjectives, and they found 41 positive phrases vs. 25 negative phrases.

The other 4 students counted the adjectives, the nouns, the verbs and the structures that convey a positive or a negative meaning. They have found 71 positive phrases vs. 47 negative phrases.

The Critical Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis represents a cross-discipline domain that includes a variety of social science subjects, among which linguistics, sociology, anthropology, social work, cognitive psychology, international relations, human geography, communication studies as well as translation studies. The study of discourse spread in most of the humanities and social sciences, also the more critical approaches to language, discourse and interaction can now be found in many disciplines. The awareness has grown that with the increasingly powerful methods of the explicit and systematic description of talk and text, and the more sophisticated theories of cognition and interaction in their social and institutional contexts, discourse and conversation analysts are well prepared to tackle more complex and socially relevant issues.

Therefore, following the theories and views of Teun Van Dijk and Norman Fairclough, the analysis is applied to all levels of speech, including syntax and semantics, while the interpretation is conducted by the use of cognitive semantics. Thus, starting at the syntactic level, one of the interesting forms of manipulation is the choice of subject-pronoun throughout the speech.

Trump begins his speech by using the first person plural:

> "**We**, the citizens of America […]"
> "Together, **we** will determine the course of America … **We** will face challenges. **We** will confront hardships. But **we** will get the job done […]"[1]

Then, there is a change of perspective in President Trump's speech, and the focus is the second person pronoun.

> "That all changes starting right here and right now, because this moment is **your** moment."
> "It belongs to **you.**"

> "This is **your** day."
> "This is **your** celebration."
> "And this, the United States of America, is **your** country."

Then, the discourse carries on in the third person plural, but only to come back to self-inclusion and change form *they* to *we* again:

> "**We** are one nation, and their pain is **our** pain."

Further on, the speaker's choice for the inclusive first person plural is exercised as subject of future positive action:

> "**We** will follow two simple rules: Buy American and hire American."
> "**We** will seek friendship and goodwill with the nations of the world […]"
> "**We** do not seek to impose **our** way of life on anyone, but rather to let it shine as an example […]"
> "**We** will shine for everyone to follow […]"

Unlike President Trump, President Macron chooses to begin with the importance of the French people in Europe, as well as in their own country. The French President starts his speech in the third pesron plural, thus emphasising the positive qualities and the active presence of the French people:

> "**Les Français** ont choisi […]," "Le monde et l'Europe ont aujourd'hui plus que jamais besoin de **la France**," etc.[2]

It is only in the third and fourth paragraphs that he shifts the focus of his attention and starts using the first person singular:

> "[…] **je** vous rassure, **je** n'ai pas pensé une seule seconde qu'elle [la confiance] se restaurait comme par magie," "**Je** convaincrai nos compatriotes que la puissance de la France n'est pas déclinante,"; "**je** ne céderai sur rien des engagements pris vis-à-vis des Français".

The fifth paragraph involves a change of perspective. Macron redirects the discourse to the third person plural but starts using the inclusive first person plural possessive "notre/nos" and the personal pronoun "nous," assuming the role of the team-worker:

> "Tout ce qui forge **notre** solidarité nationale sera refondé, réinventé, fortifié […]"
> "L'Europe dont **nous** avons besoin sera refondée et relancée car elle **nous** protège et **nous** permet de porter dans le monde **nos** valeurs."
> "**nos** forces de l'ordre, **notre** renseignement, **nos** armées réconfortées, **nos** institutions."

Until the end of the speech, President Macron swaps form *je* to *nous*, but focusing on togetherness.

---

[2] Emmanuel Macron's Inauguration speech on 15 May 2017 can be reached at https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2018/01/09/discours-d-investiture-du-president-de-la-republique. Accessed 22 December 2018.

The last paragraph takes a turn and focuses on direct self-representation by the President's use of the first person singular pronoun "je" as well as strong self-assurance with the verb "savoir"/"être conscient" and the noun "confiance":

> "**Je** sais que les Françaises et les Français en cette heure attendent beaucoup de moi [...]"
> "**J'**en suis pleinement conscient"
> "La confiance que les Françaises et les Français **m'**ont témoignée [...]"
> "**Je** sais pouvoir compter sur tous nos compatriotes [...]"

Representing the other: Donald Trump

The force of the critique against former politicians and their policies resides at the lexical-semantic level, where the former administration is portrayed as a totalitarian, selfish body:

> "a small group… has reaped the rewards …"

Later, the speaker disseminates the same anti-establishment message by enumerating a number of anti-American political and economic measures:

> "enriched foreign industries", "subsidized the armies of other counties", "defended other nations borders", "spent trillions and trillions of dollars overseas"

On the other hand, the citizens are presented as the oppressed-taxpayers who are hopelessly forgotten by their government:

> "the people have borne the costs", "the forgotten men and women", "mothers and children trapped in poverty", "students deprived of all knowledge"

The anti-establishment mapping is mainly conveyed by the syntactic choice of opposing main sentences in a sequence of positive experience on the part of the government, and negative experience on the part of the citizens:

> "[the government] protected itself but not the citizens", "their victories have not been your victories. Their triumphs have not been your triumphs."

The symmetrical pairs of sentences have the function to emphasize the gap between the politicians and the people, as well as attracting the audience in order to pay attention to the speaker and engage in the manipulation process.

Representing the other: Emmanuel Macron

As opposed to President Trump, President Macron does not appeal to negative other-presentation (i.e. the opposition), which is to say that manipulation is out of the question in his case. On the contrary, he makes a eulogy to his predecessors:

> "Les efforts de mes prédécesseurs en ce sens ont été remarquables et je veux ici les saluer. Je songe au général de Gaulle …, je songe à Georges

> Pompidou ..., à François Mitterrand ..., à Jacques Chirac ..., à Nicolas Sarkozy ..., et je songe bien sûr à François Hollande ... "

While representing the other, the French President refers to the world, as well as to Europe as being a weak, sensitive world in need, searching for the supreme values propelled by the French Revolution:

> "Le monde et l'Europe ont aujourd'hui plus que jamais besoin de la France", "Le monde a besoin de ce que les Françaises et les Français lui ont toujours enseigné : l'audace de la liberté, l'exigence de l'égalité, la volonté de la fraternité", "le monde entier sera attentif à la parole de la France", "La mission de la France dans le monde est éminente"

Findings and Conclusion

The positive nature of the turn which is to come is given by sematic features [+WORK, +HOPE, +AMERICAN] in: "rebuild our country", "restore its promise", determine the course of America", "buy American and hire American", "make America great / strong / wealthy / proud / safe again". And, consequently [+FRENCH, +HOPE, +POWER] in the case of President Macron: "une France forte et sûre de son destin", "une France qui porte haut la voix de la liberté et de la solidarité", "pour figurer au premier rang des nations", "Nos institutions [...] doivent retrouver aux yeux des Français l'efficacité qui en a garanti la pérennité." "la France n'est un modèle pour le monde que si elle est exemplaire.", "le monde entier sera attentif à la parole de la France".

With President Trump, self-representation is rather indirect and short but very powerful in his political discourse. However, Trump reveals himself in three contradictory positions: the team worker (proactive), the mediator (passive, outsourcing responsibility) and the savior (superhero). On the other hand, with President Macron, self-representation is direct as well as self-included. The roles that permeate his discourse are: the team worker (proactive) and the savior (superhero).

In the research process, the main applied features of CDA taught students to read, listen or view a particular speech with a different attitude. The use of a survey, CDA theories and cognitive semantics has led us to conclude that Critical Discourse Analysis draws students to the investigation of socially-situated texts and talk. Students engage with the study of how, in social interaction, human beings convey their meaning. Students gain knowledge and understanding of the symbolic function of language in social life, and the role that language plays in the construction and shaping of social relationships. Students also explore how power relations support the construction and meaning of discourse, and learn about the ways in which control, dominance and inequality may be asserted as well as resisted in discourse.

Works Cited

Dijk, Teun A., van. "Discourse and Manipulation." *Discourse & Society*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2006, pp. 359-383.

——. *Discourse as Structure and Process*, edited by Teun A. Van Dijk, SAGE Publications, 1997.

Fairclough, Norman. *Discourse and Social Change.* Polity Press, 1992.

——. *Language and Power.* Longman, 1996.