Application of Critical Discourse Analysis in a Poetic Text

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Abstract

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has been one of the dominant research tools for textual analysis.It is mostly dealt through language and power relation in analysis as to how the surface of language embeds the power structural elements. In the beginning it was the part of Critical Linguistics and academic pursuits by Norman Flaircough (2010), Ruth Wodak (2006), Terry Lock (2004), Paul Gee (1999) and others expanded its horizons. As a result,several texts have been interpreted from the stand point of critical discourse analysis. Role of language, discourse, social interactions, ideology, power factors, and semiotic elements take account in the process of interpretation and explanation of a particular text. Based on the contextual premise, this article tries to explore how critical discourse analysis and how it is employed in the poetic text. For this purpose, this article analyzes a poem entitled " Shout" by Simon Armitage. Furthermore, the analytical approach consists of three dimensional components: The first is linguistic analysis, also known as textual analysis. The second is interpretative approach in which the text can be interpreted from social interactions as a form of discourse. And the third is explanatory in which the text can be interpreted from the perspective of power and ideology.

Keywords: discourse analysis**,** functional language

Introduction

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an interpretation of the text as part of social linguistics in which a written or spoken text is interpreted in terms of social, cultural, ideological and power structural premise. This being a wide ranging critical tool, it tries to look at language and how it is used pragmatically in real life situations immersed on social contexts in a discourse. This article tries to see some of the

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undercurrent trends of critical discourse analysis enumerating some of the prevalent ideas of the critics thereby applying critical discourse analysis tool in a poem entitled " Shout" by Simon Armitage. The article, in this sense, employs the technique of textual analysis.

Critical Discourse Analysis has gone through wide ranging coverage of textual analysis since its advent by various authors. Fair Clough (2010) states, "In my view, CDA has three basic properties: it is relational, it is dialectical, and it is transdisciplinary. It is a relational form of research in the sense that its primary focus in not on entities or individuals(in which I include both things and persons) but on social relations" (p. 9). Critical discourse analysis is the product of textual analysis which deals with the text through sense making practices. Mckee (2003) argues:

> Performing textual analysis, then, is an attempt to gather information about sense making practices--- not only in cultures radically different from our own, but also within our own nations. It allows us to see how similar or different the sense- making practices that different people use can be. And it is also possible that this can allow us to better understand the sense making cultures in which we ourselves live by seeing their limitations, and possible alternatives to them. (p.14)

Halliday(1978), the eminent functional linguist, is of the opinion that language use has a dialectic relationship with the society to which it represents and creates. In addition, language is not therefore sense making entities alone, but rather representation and creation of reality. That is, language not only emits social order but also modifies it. And the users of language try to embody some new possibilities of meanings and acting upon and shaping the social world. (cited in Catlano & Waugh, p. 18). The study of critical discourse analysis is burgeoning academic practice in textual interpretation increased over the years and many critics and scholars made exhaustive research pursuits. In this connection, Terry Locke (2004) discusses approach of critical discourse analysis as the following:

> People construct texts to achieve a desired result with a particular audience.

> Textual form follows functions.

> Texts are generated by contexts.

> Texts assume social complicity between maker and the reader.

> The expectations of the participants in such acts of complicity become formalized in the conventions of genre.

> These conventions relate to such language features as lay out, structure, punctuation, syntax and diction. (p. 20)

Critical Discourse Analysis is combination of both linguistic and non linguistic features. The linguistic features include, words , sentences, and the discourse. However, non linguisticfeatures include context, and different hexarchy of power relations. Furthermore, critical discourse analysis tries to examine micro and macro structures and their intrinsic relationship in words and contexts interlinked with larger discourse domain. Based on the text and purpose, the analysis can be descriptive, explanatory, interpretative, and argumentative supplemented with ideological rhetorical contexts, and discursive elements. Furthermore, it tries to disrobe intentional reality of the written or spoken texts. This becomes the focal point of critical discourse analysis. According to Wodak (2006):

> Critical Discourse Analysis is fundamentally interested in analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationship of dominance, discrimination, power and control when these are manifested in language. In other words, Critical Discourse Analysis aims to investigate critically social inequality as it is expressed, constituted, legitimized by language use. (p. 53)

Wodak makes a point that any text--- whether written or spoken-- has inherent elements in it. Some of these elements embody implied notions of the authors that connect with social and political milieu of life, reflecting structural relationship between text and powerrelation factors.

CDA is such a critical tool which does not only represent reality, but tries to create reality in a set of social and cultural contexts. In this sense, CDA is associated with texts that look ambiguous and vague, but laden with implicit contexts like social forms, class, political ideology, and power structure and semiotic components of the text. The language of critical discourse analysis is not commonin simplistic terms that everybody can easily understand and infer the meanings. Moreover, the layers of critical discourse analysis are interconnected from linguistic, rhetorical, social and ideological components. The approach and study of critical discourse analysis gradually became more diversified in the subsequent years. It took a wide ranging attention in the study of pragmatics, applied linguistics, and socio linguistic components as a tool to approach literary texts.

As the interest of study and academic potential of CDA expanded, there came several interpretative scopes of using CDA into several forms of language, ranging from simple prose to film, video, and news and media. That is, the scope of CDA encompassed linguistic, semiotic, iconographic texts as well. This further resulted in the of multi modal approach as a tool for comprehensive study of literary texts.

Research Questions

The article is based on two research questions:

What are basic tenets of critical discourse analysis for the textual analysis ?

How does critical discourse analysis get applied in the poem " Shout" by Simon Armitage?

Methods

The article makes use of qualitative data. It is based on analytical approach and it includes critical discourse analysis of a poem " Shout" by Simon Aarmitage. Furthermore, it consists of analysis based on discourse analysis of a poetic text in terms of power relations. Though a poem is a poetic text, it is linked with social, ideological, and power context underneath the rhetorical context.

Elements of Critical Discourse Analysis

Doing critical discourse analysis requires several factors like understanding the text, context, social circumstances, ideological elements, and power structures. But these elements are not clearly manifested because a text has only linguistic elements. Broadly to put, it is to connect micro and macro elements of the text to exert hidden or implied meanings. Sometimes, the process is not that clear, as it is based on immediacy of explanation and contextual references. However in some cases, there are apparent factors which can provide the analyst with some background information like schemata, preexisting knowledge, and generic understanding of the text. Nevertheless, some texts are quite complex, rich in semiotic and obscure elements.

Analyst therefore needs to observe textual construction, the cohesive devices, the implied tone of the speaker and writer, the words and sentences and the attitude and tone. "Discourse models are an important tool of inquiry because they mediate between the "micro" (small) level of interaction and the "macro" large level of institutions"(Gee, 1999, p.71).

Doing discourse analysis is contemplative and analytical process. The critical analyst has to undergo both methodological and theoretical process. As Rogers puts:

> CDA is both a theory and method. Researchers who are interested in the relationship between the language and society use CDA to help them describe, interpret, and explain such relationships. CDA is different from other discourse analysis methods because it includes not only a description and interpretation of discourse in context, but also offers an explanation of why and how discourse work. (p. 2)

Moreover, discourse analysis encompasses how linguistic sign and signification system can become chunk of spoken of written discourse form, thereby exhibiting specific meanings in certain contexts beyond linguistic references. There always remains a fundamental concept that language is not an independent entity; it has broad contexts and the meaningsof language is conditioned by discourse values. In some cases, the users of language cannot fathom the implied social and cultural hints of language being put into use.

In addition, language of poetry is not clear; it has full of ambiguities and vague expressions. This typical stylistic feature helps encompass several discourse elements. Furthermore, the words, sentences, order and repetitions, cohesion and coherence hint social, cultural, ideological and power structural roles of language being used. Language of poetry shits from connotation to denotation. The poles of denotations and connotation comprise several discourse segments interdependent on each other. Conscious and aware readers therefore try to connect many of these segments for effective meanings of the text. However, critical discourse analysis is not an absolute approach; it can be just a relative approach of gathering meaning through different micro and macro elements inherent in the texts.

Processing Critical Discourse Analysis

Any text has three basic elements: the linguistic component, the social component, and the factors that help define these components. These factors differ in situations because sometimes they are guided by ideologies and social and cultural contexts. In some case, however, there can be a role of conflicting social forces in dialectical propositions. These implicit factors backed up by ideologies and social and cultural stratification help in the analysis of any text. And the critical discourse analysts, then, try to sift each layer to find inherent meanings of the text. The way a text is constructed, it can invite

interpreter's approach, ranging from interdisciplinary, inter textual, and semiotic. Paul Gee (1999) contends:

> In regard to meaning, there are two different types of analyses in which discourse analysts can engage. One type of analysis is the study of rather general correlations between the forms (structure) and function(meaning) in language. Let's call this form –function analysis. The other type of analysis is the study of much more specific interactions between the language and the context. Let's call this language context analysis. (p. 54)

Depending upon the nature of the text, the analyst would use methods like comparison, contrast, justification,logical parlance and explanatory approach as far as objectively. According to Johnston (2002) discourse analysis is a heuristic linguistic activities constructed in discourse patterns. She specifically points out six basic elements as the following:

- Discourse is shaped by the world, and the discourse shapes the world.
- Discourse is shaped by language, and discourse shapes language.
- Discourse is shaped by the participants, and discourse shapes the participants.
- Discourse is shaped by prior discourse, and discourse shapes the possibilities for future discourse.
- Discourse is shaped by its medium, and the discourse shapes the possibilities of its medium
- Discourse is shaped by purpose, and discourse shapes possible purposes. (p. 9)

On this backdrop, the process of critical discourse analysis starts from critical thinking not as a homogenous process, but with integrative approach. Since a text, whether written or spoken, is an organic whole; it amalgamates hybrid and integrative elements of discourse. Let's take an example. If there is a word like "poor" in a text, it is a simple lexicon. Linguistically, it is an adjective referring to financial status of a person. However, the same word" poor" would be referring to less privileged class, and outclass in social and cultural context. Furthermore, in terms of ideology and power context, the word" poor" would mean neglected group of people from the state attention, being detached from the mainstream politics. Moreover, the meaning and context of the word "poor" may differ from one society to another. For example, poor

means one kind of social and economic context in Nepal. It might not be the same in American society and context.

Critical Discourse Analysis of the Poetic Text

Poetic language is rich in content and form which are interlinked in it. Furthermore, poetic language is full of literary elements where linguistic and rhetorical expressions abound as to reflect on connotative context of meanings beyond linguistic expressions. Poetic words and lines are compressed and constructed in ornate structures, including different layers of poetic discourse difficult to read and infer meanings. But poetic imagery are sometimes confusing and readers should catch different guises of poem. As Kirszner & Mandel (2000) discuss:

> Part of the problem is that poetry has many guises: a poem may be short or long , accessible or obscure; it may express a mood or tell a story; it may conform to familiar poetic form ---a sonnet , a couplet, a haiku---or follow no conventional pattern; it may or may not have a regular , identifiable meter or rhyme scheme; it may depend heavily on elaborate imagery, figures of speech, irony, complex allusions or symbols, or repeated sounds----or it may include non of these features conventionally associated with poetry. (p. 522)

Poetic texts contain several figurative remarks underneath the surface. It indicates that there need to be further exploration applicable through critical discourse analysis. Many poetic elements reflect hidden contexts of power relations and ideologies. By unearthing these elements, one can see how a poetic text embodies critical discourse analytical elements.

Sample Poem

The Shout
Simon Armitage

We went out
into the school yard, me and the boy
whose name and face

I don't remember. We were testing the range
of the human voice:
he had to shout for all he was worth,

I had to raise an arm
from across the divide to signal back
that the sound had carried.
He called from over the park—I lifted an arm .
Out of bounds,
he yelled from the end of the road,

from the foot of the hill,
from beyond the look-out post of Fretwell's Farm---
I lifted an arm.

He left town, went on to be twenty years dead
with a gunshot hole
in the roof of his mouth, in Western Australia.

Boy with the name and face I do not remember,
you can stop shouting now, I can still hear you. (2002)

Critical Discourse Analysis of the Poem

"Shout" is a modern poem with myriads of symbolical and ironical contexts written in experimental form. This narrative poem begins with a story, accounting an experiment in which two friendsget involved. The speaker goes on telling about the events at the schoolas he and his friendwere asked to experiment human voice and its intensity from the distance. The speaker used to raise his hand, whereas his friend would go in the distance and cry at the top of his voice.

Then, the speaker tells about the further incidence, indicating that his friend went to town in course of time, and then to Western Australia, and finally killing himself with a bullet. The poem seems to be narrated in a small plot and ends in death of the person whose name and face the speaker does not know.

This simple poetic form is filled with several elements of discourse elements like society, cultural, power, identity, and status. These elements are not directly present in the apparent texts, but are intermingled as an amalgamation between the micro and macro textual elements.

The critical discourse analysis of the poem includes linguistic, rhetorical, and ideological and power context connected in poetic discourse. We can put them

into three segments so as to they relate critical discourse perspective. The first is the linguistic reference, and the second is the rhetorical element in which words are used in literary contexts. And, the third is the context of power relation which is the objective of critical discourse analysis. Here,the language is related to figurative remark and then finally to the context of power relation.

Linguistic reference	Rhetorical reference	Ideological reference
shout	symbol and irony	the boy is asked to shout
the boy	irony/ paradox	socially inferior one
face	irony	unimportant reference
I don't remember	irony	not worthy to be remembered
he had to shout all he was worth	satiric	he only had this quality
across the divide to signal	metaphor	the two friends differ
twenty years dead	ironic	just a story of a person

These references indicate the clear picture how power relations work under the linguistic and rhetorical references. The linguistic elements of the poem areembedded in narrative structure. From critical discourse analysis, the outer narrative layer of the poem, just the actions and interactions with the two friends, gives us grounds of discourse segments. It does seem that the two friends come from two different social and cultural backgrounds. The speaker does not feel comfortable with his company, though they physically spend time at the school. There arise questions: Why does the speaker refrain mentioning his name and face? Is it possible for a person not to remember the name and face with whom he has spent some time?

Shout between the two friends dominates the whole poetic texture, and it also embeds domain of critical discourse analysis. The word" shout" therefore has two meanings: the linguistic meaning of shout is to make an outreach of sound for another person. However, the poem has worked contrarily because the two friends seem to be apart from each other because of the same shout. They remain in distance during school time which becomes an omen for the future life.

The poem is rich in ironic and paradoxical elements as well. These poetic elements help further imply discourse potential. Interestingly enough, being close with person but not interested to remember the name and face marks a grave ironic

exposition. The speaker uses rather intentional attitude in this expression because he has repeated this line" whose name and face I don't remember" in line (3, 4) and line 19. He wants to put the person in distance.

In addition, the poem consists of imagery like the school, the yard, park, road, hill and farm, country, and town. These visible images indicate the proximity and distance connected through shout. The speaker draws somewhat a line of distinction between him and the friend through these physical locations. Furthermore, they seem to be connected with temporal and spatial dimension hinting the motive of the poem. From the discourse analysis, the technique of distancing is conflated with the attitude of the speaker. When we enter the narrative texture of the poem, we find two narratives being worked out: one the school time event of the speaker with the person, the boy, and the other is the life of his friend far distance. But the narrative context of the poem brings us that the speaker gets information of his friend after a long time of gap as well. He may have been communicated by someone else about his friend. These elements put the reader into skepticism: he knows person's activities like going to town, going to Western Australia, and killing himself but not the name.

There is no sense of attachment and bond in the poem between the speaker and his friend. He just describes him as if he wanted to tell a story to other people, but not with sympathy and sense of filial attachment. This implicitly brings representation of two different ideological and socialparameters.

Identity crisis and loss of identity make the poem very phenomenal. The loss of identity is marked by the expression like "me and the boy" (line 2). "He had to shout all he was worth" (line 6). These two expressions manifest that the speaker has an intention to objectify the friend as if he were a commodity. Furthermore, the speaker seems to have assigned the boy difficult works like going in distance and crying, whereas he used to just raise his hand. What is the significance of this? The boy did all this by his will or by the speaker's privilege? Even the poem does not speak clearly it seems that the two friends exist in different realities of life.

In addition, the narrator and the person who makes shout represent two factors of power relation. The narrator is one of the influential groups who have privileges to define the conditionality of the person even from the school time until his the last

breath. However, we never get any perspective of the boy regarding the narrator on part of the boy. This is the scenario of power relation in which there is the perspective of power holder but not the weaker ones' who lack the power. There is another point to be noted in the poem. The power relationship is sometimes not that distinct as people can directly related to. In some case, those who have power influence can use tactful language employing metaphor, irony, and paradox in playful expression. However, the real intention is to imply the intrinsic elements of ideological and rhetorical strategy to show the power structure. In this sense, the poem is a beautiful example to be aptly described in critical discourse analysis.

Conclusion

Critical Discourse Analysis is considered as one of the dominant approaches of textual interpretations with innovative scholarly interests in the modern inter-textual and multidisciplinary understanding of the text. In addition, it helps analyze linguistic and non linguistic components in the formation of a text built in discourse segments like power, social forces, ideologies, and semiotic elements. The analysis of the poem" Shout" by Simon Armitage shows how roles of power can be reflected. The poem in its narrative texture depicts two persons representing two different social and cultural context. Apparently, the narrator represents the dominant class structure whose story about the boy is taken into account. However, the perspective of the boy is not considered who is projected an identified being. It is all due to the powerful play. From the ideological and power factors, the poem shows tangible ground for critical discourse analysis.

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