

EXPLORING IDENTITY: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS ON “NEPALI WOMEN IN POLITICS: SUCCESS AND CHALLENGES”

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Abstract

The research paper explores the idea placed in the article “Nepali Women in Politics: Success and Challenges” by Bishnu Raj Upreti, Drishti Upreti and Yamuna Ghale published in the ‘Journal of International Women’s Studies’ on April 2020 from the perspectives of CDA, a relatively recent approach to analyzing discourse. The paper provides the definitions and overview of some CDA models mainly of Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, T.A. Van Dijk and so on. Language, ideology and discourse are inseparable notions as we talk about media, translation and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). We get information from many sources which we use to interpret the world. Personal interactions with others provide us the insight with their knowledge and experience, cultural conventions and practices in their social world. On the other hand, television, radio, newspaper and magazines, the internet and many other sources with their different values provide us information. Language is the main mood through which most of the sources give information and most of these sources can be interpreted and analyzed using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The paper will discuss how the discourse used by the three authors in the article shows women’s struggle for equality in Nepal for the establishment of their identity in the society by exposing themselves in politics.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), CDA approach, modes of meaning making, language analysis, identity politics, representation, power relation, gender, hegemony

Introduction

The main purpose of this paper is to analyze the article in social context. CDA is very crucial to analyze both written and spoken language. The fundamental purpose of this study is to examine the article and also

understand the hidden meanings. Critical Discourse Analysis means how language works, how meanings are created in different social context. Language is the main tool to interact and explore all possibilities. CDA can be applied to all varieties of discourses like spoken, written, spoken, verbal and

non-verbal communication. CDA not only focuses on language use but also on the social aspects and the ways people use to achieve specific effects as to establish trust, to evoke emotions, to manage psychological pain and so on. Brown and Yule (1983, p.1) state, “The analysis of discourse is, necessarily, the analysis of language in use. As such it cannot be restricted to the description of linguistic form independent of the purposes or functions which these forms are designed to serve in human affairs”. Brown and Yule highlighted discourse analysis not only focuses on the structural and semiotic analysis but also on the higher levels of components such as themes, coherence, rhetorical dimensions, creation of social networking and so on. The research paper explores how the discourse of the article is an effective tool to argue the struggle and the challenges faced by Nepali women in politics to create their identity in the male dominated political sphere which later strengthen their presence in all aspects of the social affairs. To examine the issues the analysis puts forward the approaches, theories and different terms uttered by the prominent CDA theorists Fairclough, Van Dijk, Wodak, Foucault and the like.

Research Questions

The study will specifically seek to answer the following research questions.

1. Using CDA, how does the discourse of the article strategically maintain, negotiate, and contest the female leaders’ relationship with power making them social actors in news

report and different articles?

2. How does the article represent the presence of the women in Nepali politics?
3. How does the discourse play a crucial role to depict the realities and motivate all for creating better identity of the women?
4. In what ways the discourse is capable to address the political issues regarding the participation of the women in the main stream politics?

Literature Review

The fundamental goal of discourse analysis is study language. Language should be studied in relation to power and society. Great scholar Norman Fairclough has articulated how language and power are related. The study about power and language cannot be departed to the theory of society. Another prominent scholar Foucault argues that the knowledge should be categorized as the form of history analysis which report on the constitution of the subject that met the relationship between discourse, knowledge fields of object that occupy the criteria of acceptable knowledge among people. We can find a large number of studies done on different types of discourse analysis ranging from novels to speeches, news headlines to articles, classroom teaching to medical discourses and so on. Kamalu and Tamunobelega (2013) explore the ideologies and identities constructed in genres of literary texts. They used the mood analysis technique of SFL while this paper focuses on the dimensions

of SFL with respect to Fairclough's model in critical discourse analysis. Similarly, Ye (2011) studies Barak Obama's speech that he has delivered on the occasion of victory, in the light of SFL that is a basic criterion in Fairclough's Model at first stage analysis. Zahoor (2015) studies the emotional, psychological, political and social changes in different situations from dropping of atomic bomb on Nagasaki to the incident of 9/11 (World Trade Center). To add more, Indah Ayu Widuna (2018) studies reviewing ten journal articles for checking the ways and methods used CDA to invent the social phenomenon. Most of these research papers argue the issues implementing one aspect of SFL and Fairclough's, Wodak's, and Van Dijk's models on other types of discourses. The research paper attempts to analyze the discourse of a journal article focused on the issue of involvement of Nepali women in politics which has got no or little space in the research areas.

Research Methodology

The research in this research paper has been carried out by using qualitative method. The data for qualitative research is rather flexible. This study mainly focuses on linguistics subject. The sources for data are basically two types: primary, and secondary. The primary one is the article published in the journal "Journal of International Women's Studies". The utterance, phrases, clauses, sentences of the article have helped for the critical discourse analysis. The data sources in this research are the study of discursive practice which

focus on power struggle as the authors of the article have shown the involvement of the Nepali women in politics. The collected data has been analyzed by using the CDA theories. Similarly, the secondary data have been taken from research paper, thesis, books, journals, articles from internet and any other source that can support this research. Technique of the data analysis is carried out by applying the CDA theories of Norman Fairclough, T. A. Van Dijk, Ruth Wodak and few more considering the contents, power, power struggle, power relation, presence mainly in politics as politics covers all areas.

Theory and Approaches

As mentioned above the research paper mainly uses the CDA models of Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, Van Dijk and few more. Fairclough one of the most important scholars in the field of CDA has discussed the link between power, language and ideology in his research in 1989. He has developed a model, a theoretical framework for CDA for text interpretation. Fairclough's model consists of three-step process of analysis which is tied to three inter-related dimensions of discourse. Talking about discourse analysis Fairclough (1989) argues analyzing the relationship between text and society is necessary as in his book *Language and Power*:

So, in seeing language as discourse and as social practice, one is committing Oneself not just to analyzing texts, nor just to

analyzing processes of production and interpretation, but to analyzing the relationship between texts, processes, and their social conditions, of institutional and social structures. (26)

Relating to these three dimensions Fairclough further talks about three dimensions or stages-a) Description, the stage which is concerned with formal properties of the text, b) Interpretation is concerned with the relationship between text and interaction, c) Explanation is concerned with the relationship between interaction and social context – with the social determination of the processes of production and interpretation, and their social effects. He gives emphasize on the relationship of discourse to society. Similarly, another prominent scholar Ruth Wodak constructs her model on ‘sociolinguistics’. She has carried out many researches on the important social issues like racism, sexism and anti-sexism. “Discourse Sociolinguistics is a sociolinguistics which not only is definitely dedicated to the study of text in context but also gives equal weight age to both factor” (Wodak and Meyer, 2009, p. 209). Wodak’s approach identifies and describes the underlying mechanisms that are the part of those disorders in a discourse which are embodied in a particular context.

Similarly, another model applicable to analyze is Discourse Historical Approach developed in an Austrian political context which engages a systematic methodology centered upon context throughout all stages

of analysis where scholars try to incorporate knowledge of the historical sources and background. Wodak while working on anti-sexism has applied this approach as she mentions, “the historical sources and background of the social and political fields in which discursive events are embedded” (Wodak, 65). Apart from this Van Dijk talks about sociocognitive approach focusing a mental model as a subjective representation of an event, person, action, or situation that exists in the minds of social actors as he mentions it as subjective participant interpretations, constructions or definitions of the social environment. Similarly, Dialectical Relational Approach developed by Fairclough which views discourse as an element of the social process, Van Leeuwen’s model of Social Actor Analysis which focuses on the centrality of the representation of humans as social actors and their involvement in discursive events, Foucault’s concept of power and Gramsci’s Hegemony are also applicable to analyze the discourse of the article critically.

Discussion and Analysis

The article “Nepali Women in politics: Success and Challenges” is a well-organized article which mainly depicts the reality of the active political presence of Nepali Women in the main stream politics and the challenges that they are facing to achieve their goal. Nepali society is an archetype of patriarchal society where all major positions are reserved for male members. In such society making space in all sphere for the females is obviously challenging. The role of mass media, female

rights activists, authors of books and article and other well-wishers is praiseworthy for the establishment of equal rights to male and female. The article is also a crucial attempt of the three authors in the same direction. Giving light to the article from Fairclough model of CDA it is a unified whole of the three dimensions that Fairclough focuses. As we see the article taking the first dimension i.e. Description which sees the formal properties like grammar, layout, structuring the information and so on it seems a unified whole. The title of the article “Nepali Women in Politics: Success and Challenges” is short and very impressive as it is too appealing. The vocabularies that are used in the title are simple yet quite bold. As we move ahead, we can find the organizational pattern of the article is as per the standard of creating articles as it begins with an impressive abstract followed by key terms and different sections loaded with enough data and evidences. Discussing all important issues that the title demands the article ends with a clear conclusion followed by a complete citation. As the thesis statement is the core of any text the authors have presented a complete and clear thesis statement which gives a clear direction for further discussion as, “In this paper we will discuss women’s struggle for equality in Nepal, their current successes in the political process, and remaining underlying challenges” (Nepali 76). The thesis statement clearly depicts the central idea of the article that how Nepali Women are stepping ahead facing different challenges.

Similarly, moving ahead the article has been presented under nine different sub-headings to discuss the issues systematically. All paragraphs have a clear topic sentence with enough details and evidences. There is a well-formed coherence among the paragraphs to establish the issue mentioned in the thesis statement. The use of proper tense, active and passive structures, use of connectives, signposting, pronoun and so on also is appropriate to form the sentence effective as: “The struggle of women for equality and political participation goes back more than a century, during these period of political instability” (Nepali Women in Politics: Success and Challenges, p. 77). Here the compound subject is used with correct subject verb agreement and proper choice of vocabularies. Similarly, another discourse asserts:

Although under the direct rule of King Mahendra major reforms were established in infrastructure development – ranging from health, education, communication, agriculture, road networks and transportation – failure to gain the public trust, repeated corruption scandals of officials, bans on political parties, and suppression of opposition voices all weakened his legitimacy. (78)

The discourse opens with contrastive connective ‘Although’ which makes the argument curious. As it moves ahead it shows the clear comparison between monarchical system and democratic system.

The words showing the fundamentals of development have been properly linked with political term like ‘legitimacy’. The article mentions the tables with verities of data showing the presence of women in political sphere which is another scientific asset. As it is said all analysis is partial up to a point and one cannot thoroughly describe every textual feature a selective attention is a need, the above-mentioned utterances show the textual property of the article valid.

The article is strong enough to depict the social reality regarding the participation of Nepali women in politics as Fairclough and Wodak mention, “CDA has three central tenets: 1. Discourse is social action (or “social practice”); 2. Social action constructs social reality (objects, situations, identities, social relations...); 3. Discourse is the use of language” (pp. 258-284). It follows, as Chilcote argues, “Discourse (or use of language) constructs social reality. Further, as proponents of CDA contend, ‘language use (discourse) is, as the tenets of CDA assert, connected to the “construction” of knowledge about social objects, identities, processes, etc.’” (37). Discourse constructs the reality, as in the articles each and every utterance express the social reality as, “Nepali women began their struggle during the Rana Regime and Regime and advanced since the 1950s, by engaging both in popular peaceful movements to armed insurgency and parliamentary competition with their male political counterparts” (76). Nepali women took part in any type of political events

though the male counterpart took the major authority.

Van Leeuwen’s Social Actor Analysis of CDA focuses on the centrality of the presence of humans as actors and their role in discursive events. Such social actors can be highlighted through the grammatical organizations as he puts, “... sociosemantic inventory of the ways social actors can be represented” (23). In the article, the authors mention several such women actors such as Yogmaya Neupane (1860-1941), under her leadership Nepali women began their struggle during Rana Regime (Nepali 76), Queen Rajendra Laxmi led a process to unify Nepal, Mrs. Kamala Kunwar (the wife of the warrior Balabhadra Kunwar) participated in the Nalapani Fort battle...” (Nepali 77) and so on who showed their bravery for shake of people and nation. Similarly, when we see the article through Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) which focuses on historical sources and backgrounds, the authors mention enough such sources and backgrounds to clarify their argument as, “The direct engagement of, and confrontation with the ruling elite for the rights of women began with Mrs. Yogmaya Neupane (1867-1941), born at Simle, Bhojpur, Eastern Hill of Nepal” (77). The line clearly provides the historical sources of the leader Yogmaya Neupane. Furthermore, the entire article is a historical document as it documents the historical roles of women in all important political changes. From the perspective of Sociocognitive Approach which attempts to link discourse structures and social

structures, the article can be found as a good example as the discourse of the article clearly shows the political structure of Nepal in which Female participation is still low though it is increasing as per the data of the article show. As Van Dijk puts defining ideology which is closely related to this approach “foundational beliefs that underlie the shared social representations of specific kinds of social groups that form the basis of discourse and other social practices” (120-121). The authors put in the article:

Nepali women who were once deprived of all kinds of political, social and economic rights, victims of oppressive cultural, religious and social traditions emerged as key actors in fighting for and securing their rights.... This does not mean that the oppressive conditions have been obliterated...many girls and women still experience de facto discrimination embedded in cultural norms, beliefs, and practices. (81)

The discourse depicts that though the women played a vital role for any revolutions still they are the victim of domination and discrimination. This fact the entire article depicts with enough evidences. These lines speak the reality of Nepali society.

Nepali women are deprived from different power and privileges due to patriarchal hegemony. Hegemony refers to the dominance of one group over another, often

supported by legitimating norms and ideas. Gramsci has coined the term hegemony, which deals with issues of power on a mass cultural and societal scale. Gramsci (1971, p. 8) asserts This system relies on a delicate balance between force and the illusion of consent from the majority. While force is always present, it's disguised as being backed by popular approval.

In patriarchal Nepali society, Women remain in minority due to the power exercise of male. Mouffe (1979, p. 182) defines Gramscian hegemony as “the ability of one class to articulate the interest of other social groups to its own”. As Mouffe argues in Nepali politics it's men who speak the voices of women counterpart making their convenient. Men lead the society making majority of women followers. It makes the women as traditional outsiders from the political realm. We can see certain scholars who argue that due to feminized quality the representation of women undermines their political leadership. “Masculinity as the unmarked norm of leadership against which women were, if considered, marked as different” (Adcock, 2010, p. 150). Adcock argues that the marking of women served to undermine their status as serious political contenders, and “replicated a gendered hierarchical public/private distinction”. When women are undervalued then even if they give a great contribution in any political movements, their contributions are not given due space as it is not documented as the contributions of men.

The article depicts that discourse

continues to reproduce structures of inequality. Focusing the feminized traits, male politicians alienate them from the traditionally “masculine” world of politics. Women’s glorious sacrifices remain unheard as the article mentions:

The struggle of women for equality and political participation goes back more than a century, during these periods of political instability. Nepali women’s engagement in social, economic, and political freedoms have not been properly documented.... The history of women’s struggle for their freedoms is not well documented because men were the writers of history. (77)

The lines clearly show the power relation between male and female especially in the context of Nepali politics. It also portrays that history is in the mercy of power. It is the document created by the powerful people. The discourse of the lines is powerful to show the voice of Nepali women that how they are victimized by powerful one. Foucault (2006) writes:

The omnipresence of power: not because it has the privilege of consolidating everything under its invincible unity, but because it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another. Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but

because it comes From everywhere. (93)

Foucault would see discourse written or spoken as an important part of the society everyone holds. Discourse creates history, it creates reality too. It is the very discourse which is under control of male members of the society is one of the responsible factors that covers the endeavors and achievements of the female and this is the main cause that Nepali women still facing challenges to make space in the world of Nepali politics.

Conclusion

Nepal has witnessed a long political journey since long and has undergone colossal socio-political uncertainties and transformations. Nepali women have exhibited untiring struggle to make their space in deep rooted patriarchal society. Nepali women have been able to realize few changes in issues the issues like political rights, civil liberties and individual freedom but are still not got liberated from the burden of living in a patriarchal society. Gradually, they are making space in political world with the role of leadership. The article with its powerful discourse delineates the historical achievements made by the women with their rigorous participation in all political struggles though their attempts have not been fully documented. This short article is a great effort to strengthen the identity of Nepali women which still has not been fully acknowledged.

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