



Tikrit University

College of Education for Humanities

English Department

PhD Studies / Discourse Analysis

Discourse and Racism

Dr. Muhammed Badea Ahmed

Language and Racism

INTRODUCTION Racism: The belief that humans may be divided into separate and exclusive biological entities called “races”; and that some races are innately superior to others. The term is also applied to political, economic, or legal institutions and systems that engage in discrimination on the basis of race or otherwise reinforce racial inequalities in wealth and income, education, health care, civil rights, and other areas. **The Concept of “Race”: A Historical-political Etymological Overview** From a social functional point of view, “race” is a social construction. ∪ On the one hand, it has been used as a legitimating ideological tool to oppress and exploit specific social groups and to deny them access to material, cultural, and political resources, work, welfare services, housing, and political rights. ∪ On the other hand, these affected groups have adopted the idea of “race.” They have turned the concept around and used it to construct an alternative, positive self-identity; they have also used it as a basis for political resistance. From a linguistic point of view, the term “race” has a relatively recent etymological history. when the term appeared in English in the 16th century, it has entered different semantic fields, for example: (1) the field of ordinal and classificational notions that include such words as “genus,” “species,” and “varieties”; (2) the field that includes social and political group denominations such as “nation”, “ruling house,” “generation,” “class,” and “family”; and (3) the field that includes notions referring to language groups and language families such as “Germanen” (Teutons) and “Slavs” In the second half of the nineteenth century, the concept was linked to social Darwinism– which can be traced to Darwin’s theory of evolution only in part “Race theorists” interpreted 2 history as a “racial struggle” within which only the fittest “races” would have the right to survive. The popular use of the word racism is relatively recent. The word came into widespread usage in the Western world in the 1930s, when it was used to describe the social and political ideology of Nazism. **How to Explain “Racism”** Many approaches from different disciplines reflect on the material, economical, social, political, social psychological, cognitive, and other causes and motives for racism. The explanations offered by each have an important impact on the choice of specific antiracist strategies. The social cognitive approach focuses on understanding prejudice as an in-dividual psychological function and postulates that prejudice is a form of innate mental categorization driven by information processing heuristics (Duckitt, 2001). A common argument of social cognitive theorists is that certain personality traits, which are considered as inherently cognitive mechanisms, can be associated with prejudicial attitudes. Social identity perspective proposes that prejudice is a manifestation of intergroup discrimination. Groups (e.g. social class, family, football team etc.) which people belonged to were an important source of pride and self-esteem. Groups give us a sense of social identity: a sense of belonging to the social world. We divided the world into “them” and “us” based on a process of social categorization (i.e. we put people into social groups). The tendency to group things together. In doing so we tend to exaggerate: 1. the differences between groups 2. the similarities of things in the same group. This is known as in-group (us) and out-group (them). The central hypothesis of social identity theory is that group members of an in-group will seek to find negative aspects of an out-group, thus enhancing their self-image. 3 Prejudiced views between cultures may result in

racism; in its extreme forms, racism may result in genocide. Five Discourse Analytical Approaches to Racism Now that we have reviewed the meanings of the word "race" and a variety of explanations for racism, it is time to turn to the approaches through which the discursive manifestations of racism have been analyzed.

1- Prejudices and stereotypes One of the first discourse analysts to attempt to study and categorize prejudiced discourse was Uta Quasthoff. Quasthoff distinguishes between "attitudes," "convictions," and "prejudices"

Attitudes: she defines it as the affective position taken towards a person one relates to and to whom one can express dislike or sympathy. ∪ Convictions: ascribe qualities to others and often provide rationalizations for negative attitudes (e.g. that "blacks smell bad") ∪ Prejudices: are mental states defined (normally) as negative attitudes (the affective element) toward social groups with matching stereotypic convictions or beliefs. ∪ Stereotype: Quasthoff defines the term stereotype as the verbal expression of a certain conviction or belief directed toward a social group or an individual as a member of that social group. ∪ The stereotype is typically an element of common knowledge, shared to a high degree in a particular culture

Convictions: ascribe qualities to others and often provide rationalizations for negative attitudes (e.g. that "blacks smell bad")

4 Prejudices: are mental states defined (normally) as negative attitudes (the affective element) toward social groups with matching stereotypic convictions or beliefs. Stereotype: Quasthoff defines the term stereotype as the verbal expression of a certain conviction or belief directed toward a social group or an individual as a member of that social group. The stereotype is typically an element of common knowledge, shared to a high degree in a particular culture ∪ Thus, broadening her linguistic horizons to social prejudice and transcending the single-sentence perspective. ∪ When, for example, she applied Toulmin's schematism to the microstructural level of argumentation, Quasthoff came to the conclusion that stereotypes do not exclusively, or even primarily, appear as warrants. If they are used to support a claim, they appear usually as a backing. ∪ Moreover, stereotypes can themselves be either data or claims, supported, in their turn, by other kinds of propositions. The sociocognitive approach

The model of prejudice use by Teun van Dijk is partially based on sociopsychological considerations similar to those of Quasthoff. Prejudice, * is not merely a characteristic of individual beliefs or emotions about social groups, but a shared form of social representation in group members, acquired during processes of socialization and transformed and enacted in social communication and interaction. Such ethnic attitudes have social functions, e.g. to protect the interests of the ingroup. 5 Their cognitive structures and the strategies of their use reflect these social functions. (van Dijk 1984: 13) one of the most valuable contributions of van Dijk's model is the heuristic assistance it provides in linking the generation of prejudice to discursive units larger than the sentence. Van Dijk's initial assumption is that those parts of long-term memory directly relevant to the production and retention of ethnic prejudices (recognition, categorization, and storage of experience) can be divided into three memory structures: semantic memory, episodic memory, and control system

semantic memory is social memory: it is here that the collectively shared beliefs of a society are stored. These beliefs are organized as attitudes, which are of a generalized and abstract nature and are determined by their organization in socially relevant categories of the group that is being evaluated (e.g. national origin and/or appearance, socioeconomic status, and sociocultural norms and values, including religion and language). Episodic memory retains personal or narrated experiences and events as well as patterns abstracted from these experiences. The

listener constructs a textual representation of a story in episodic memory. General situational models are the link between narrated events or personally retained experiences and the structures of the semantic memory. the control system, as a personal model of the social situation. The control system's task is to link communicative aims and interests (e.g. persuasion) with the situational and individual social conditions (e.g. level of education, gender, and relationship to the person one is addressing). Van Dijk calls the processes involved in the perception, interpretation, storage, use, or retrieval of ethnic information about minority groups and their actions "strategies." 6 The control system coordinates these various strategies and at the same time monitors the flow of information from long-term memory to short-term memory, as well as the storage or activation of situation models in episodic memory Van Dijk's model can thus explain the cognitive processes of the text recipients: isolated experiences, statements, and symbols are assigned to general schemas and confirm existing prejudices. More recently, he has turned to the analysis of "elite racism" and to the integration of the concept of "ideology" into his sociocognitive model. He mainly focuses on the investigation of newspaper editorials, school books, academic discourse, interviews with managers, political speeches, and parliamentary debates, with the basic assumption that "the elite" produces and reproduces the racism that is then implemented and enacted in other social fields. Discourse strands and collective symbols Siegfried Jäger and the Duisburg group are probably the most prominent researchers in Germany dealing with issues of racism and discourse The research was triggered largely by the violent racism that started shortly after 1992, when new and stricter immigration laws were implemented in Germany Simultaneously, the unification of West Germany and the former communist East Germany erupted in racist violence against many foreigners, who were physically attacked and whose asylum homes were set afire. Among others, this violence was and continues to be connected to the fact that the unification poses tremendous cultural and economic problems for the Germans and that foreigners provide a comfortable scapegoat for these problems (e.g. that millions of people lost their jobs postunification) In several respects, the Duisburg group follows and extends the research of van Dijk. Among others, they interview different groups of people to elicit their attitudes toward foreigners and Jews. 7 In contrast to standard methods for conducting interviews, their method leads people to tell their personal stories in depth. Besides studying everyday racism, the Duisburg group also does media analysis, in particular of the German tabloid Bildzeitung, which launches large campaigns against foreigners. The main focus in many of the Duisburg studies is discourse semantics, and especially the uncovering of "collective symbols" that are tied together in "discourse strands," best explained as thematically interrelated sequences of homogeneous "discourse fragments" which appear on different "discourse levels" (i.e. science, politics, media, education, everyday life, business life, and administration). "Collective symbols" are designated as "cultural stereotypes" in the form of metaphorical and synecdochic symbols that are immediately understood by the members of the same speech community Water," natural disasters like "avalanches" and "flood disasters," military activities like "invasions," all persuasively representing "immigration" or "migrants" as something that has to be "dammed," are examples of collective symbols, just as are the "ship" metaphor, symbolizing the effects of immigration as on an "overcrowded boat," and the "house" and "door" metaphor that metaphorizes the in-groups' (e.g.

“national”) territory as “house” or “building” and the stopping of immigration as “bolting the door”