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**Critical Discourse Analysis in Practice:
Description**

Presented to

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1- Introduction

Fairclough in *Language and Power* identified text, interaction, and social context as three elements of a discourse, and the corresponding distinction he drew between three stages of critical discourse analysis; **description of text**, **interpretation of the relationship between text and interaction**, and **explanation of the relationship between interaction and social context**.

This chapter deals with the analysis of the first element which is text. It is organized around ten main questions (and some sub-questions) which can be asked of a text. Under each question, readers will find analytical categories or concepts briefly introduced. These questions are related to vocabulary, grammar and textual structures as shown below:

A. Vocabulary

1. What experiential values do words have?

This question delves into how words represent the world and our experiences. It explores several sub-questions:

- What classification schemes are drawn upon?

This examines how the text categorizes things using specific vocabulary. Are there technical terms, everyday words, or a mix?

- Are there words which are ideologically contested?

This looks for words with potentially biased or controversial meanings that reflect a particular viewpoint.

- Is there rewording or overwording?

This analyzes how repetitively or elaborately ideas are expressed.

- What ideologically significant meaning relations (synonymy, hyponymy, antonymy) are there between words?

2. What relational values do words have?

This question focuses on how words interact with each other and create social relationships. It asks:

- Are there euphemistic expressions?

Euphemisms are indirect or mild terms used in place of more offensive or blunt ones. Their presence can indicate sensitivity or attempts to downplay something.

- Are there markedly formal or informal words?

3. What expressive values do words have?

This section explores how word choice conveys emotions, attitudes, and the writer's personality.

4. What metaphors are used?

B. Grammar

5. What experiential values do grammatical features have?

- What types of process and participant predominate?

Identify the main verbs (processes) and who or what is involved (participants). Are they actors (doing) or patients (being acted upon)?

- Is agency unclear?

Is it clear who or what is causing the action? Vague agency can create a sense of mystery or objectivity.

- Are processes what they seem?

Do the verbs accurately represent the actions? Are they metaphorical or figurative?

- Are nominalizations used?
- Are sentences active or passive?
- Are sentences positive or negative?

6. What relational values do grammatical features have?

- What modes (declarative, grammatical question, imperative) are used?
- Are there important features of relational modality?

Are there hedging words or phrases that express certainty, possibility, or obligation (e.g., "might," "should")?

- Are the pronouns we and you used, and if so, how?

7. What expressive values do grammatical features have?

- Are there important features of expressive modality?

Does the text use exclamation points, questions, or emphasis to convey emotions or attitudes?

8. How are (simple) sentences linked together?

- What logical connectors are used?

How are sentences linked together? Are there simple connectors (and, but) or more complex ones (because, although)?

- Are complex sentences characterized by coordination or subordination?

Are sentences linked as equals (coordination) or is one dependent on the other (subordination)? Subordination can create a hierarchy of information.

- What means are used for referring inside and outside the text?

How does the text refer back to previously mentioned elements? Does it use pronouns, repetition, or synonyms?

C. Textual structures (looks at the broader organization and purpose of the text)

9. What interactional conventions are used?

- Are there ways in which one participant controls the turns of others?

10. What larger-scale structures does the text have (e.g., narrative, argument, description)?

Fairclough distinguishes between three types of value that formal features may have:

1. **Experiential Value:** This focuses on the content and knowledge represented in the text. It reflects the author's perspective on the natural or social world. For example, the use of specific vocabulary or factual details can tell us about the author's understanding of a topic.
2. **Relational Value:** This concerns the social relationships established through the text. The way the author chooses to address the audience, the use of formality, and the power dynamics implied all contribute to relational value. For instance, using informal language suggests a closer relationship with the reader, while formal language creates distance.
3. **Expressive Value:** This deals with the author's evaluation or attitude towards the subject matter. It reveals their feelings,

opinions, and biases. The choice of words with positive or negative connotations, use of humor or irony, and framing of arguments all contribute to expressive value. Here, Fairclough acknowledges that while expressive value reflects the author's social identity, it's not the only factor shaping it.

Any given formal feature may simultaneously have two or three of these values. These are shown diagrammatically:

Dimensions of meaning	Values of features	Structural effects
Contents	Experiential	Knowledge/beliefs
Relations	Relational	Social relations
Subjects	Expressive	Social identities

Figure 5.1 Formal features: experiential, relational and expressive values

Question 1: what experiential values do words have?

Words can hold **experiential values**. This means they go beyond just their dictionary definition and can evoke experiences or concepts related to the words. Experiential values of words can reveal ideological differences in texts. In simpler terms, the choice of words can expose hidden biases or viewpoints about the world.

The following pair of texts is an example: they constitute, according to a study of the language of the ‘helping professions’, two different wordings of the same psychiatric practices.

deprivation of food, bed, walks in the open air, visitors, mail, or telephone calls; solitary confinement; deprivation of reading or entertainment materials; immobilizing people by tying them into wet sheets and then exhibiting them to staff and other patients; other physical restraints on body movement; dragging the mind against the client’s will; incarceration in locked wards; a range of public humiliations such as the prominent posting of alleged intentions to escape or commit suicide, the requirement of public confessions of misconduct or guilt, and public announcements of individual misdeeds and abnormalities. (Psychiatric text 1)

discouraging sick behaviour and encouraging healthy behaviour through the selective granting of rewards; the availability of seclusion, restraints, and closed wards to grant a patient a respite from interaction with others; enabling him to think about his behaviour, to cope with his temptations to elope and succumb to depression, and to develop a sense of security; immobilizing the patient to calm him, satisfy his dependency needs, give him the extra nursing attention he values, and enable him to benefit from peer confrontation; placing limits on his acting out; and teaching him that the staff cares. (Psychiatric text 2)

The first text uses language critical of certain practices, while the second rewords the same practices from a more favorable (psychiatric) viewpoint. This highlights how word choice reflects ideological stance.

Specific words can signal **ideological leaning**. "subversive" often leans right-wing, while "solidarity" leans left-wing. Their presence can indicate the text's ideological position.

In the second psychiatric text, "behavior" **collocates** (appears alongside) with "sick" and "healthy," implying a specific way of classifying behavior (dominant ideology in this context).

Text 1 uses "solitary confinement" to describe a psychiatric situation, **metaphorically** framing it as imprisonment. This metaphor reflects an ideological critique of the practice.

In answering Question 1, it is generally useful to alternate our focus between the text itself and the discourse type(s) it is drawing upon, including classification schemes in terms of which vocabulary is organized in discourse types.

Just 23 vital steps to success

- How to claim your heritage of constant, radiant health
- How to increase your vocabulary
- How to boost your powers of concentration
- How to develop your memory
- How to cultivate positive emotions
- How to develop an attractive voice and clear speech
- How to learn the importance of tact
- How to make yourself valuable to your employer
- How to formulate ideals — the essentials of progress
- How to achieve the goals of maturity
- How to build a successful marriage
- How to communicate effectively
- How to enjoy the treasures of literature
- How to solve your problems
- How to be happy
- How to widen your mental horizons
- How to develop thought-power
- How to develop your imagination
- How to keep busy for creating peace of mind
- How to go the extra mile!
- How to be a better parent
- How to achieve serenity
- How to enrich your life

The list itself constitutes a classification of 'steps to success, but it also draws upon pre-existing classification schemes:

1. **Psychological Development:** It focuses on improving mental faculties ("powers") like concentration and memory. Here, the language ("powers") implies a mechanistic view, treating the mind like a machine that gains performance with increased "power."
2. **Language Evaluation:** It emphasizes improving communication skills like vocabulary and clear speech. Words like "increase" and "communicate effectively" suggest a focus on efficiency and social impact, neglecting aspects like empathy and deeper connection.

Classification schemes are powerful tools for analyzing different types of discourse. Discourse types use vocabulary to describe reality to varying degrees. Some might be very specific (e.g., legal documents), while others might be more general (e.g., casual conversation). Overwording refers to using an excessive amount of words, often synonyms, to emphasize a particular point. It can be a clue for deeper analysis. The overuse of synonyms suggests a preoccupation with a specific concept. This can be a sign of ideological struggle, where different groups compete to define an idea. For example, the list "Just 23 steps to success" is loaded with words related to growth and development (increase, boost, develop, cultivate, build, widen, enrich). This suggests a strong focus on those concepts, possibly reflecting a current ideological emphasis on self-improvement.

Question 2: what relational values do words have?

Relational values focus on how words shape social relationships in communication. They can coexist with other values like conveying knowledge or emotions. **Formal language** in a courtroom shows respect, while **euphemisms** maintain a positive connection by softening harsh terms. In short, relational values show how word choice reflects and builds social dynamics.

For instance, the use of racist vocabulary such as coons in a text has experiential value in terms of a racist representation of a particular ethnic

grouping; but its use - and the failure to avoid it – may also have relational value, perhaps assuming that racist ideology is common ground for the speaker and other participants.

Euphemisms like "seclusion" instead of "solitary confinement" soften the language to be more sensitive for patients.

Question 3: what expressive values do words have?

Expressive values are the emotional associations words carry beyond their literal meaning. These connotations can be positive, negative (exhibiting, incarceration, humiliations), or neutral, and influence how readers perceive a text. Word choice reveals a writer's ideology. Positive connotations promote the writer's ideas, while negative ones criticize opposing views.

Question 5: what experiential value do grammatical features have?

Grammar reflects how we perceive the world, showing us events, participants, time, and more. Let's tackle those sub-questions and see how languages encode these experiences!

What types of process and participant predominate?

A simple sentence of the 'declarative' sort consists of a subject (S) followed by a verb (V); the V may or may not be followed by one or more other elements from this list: object (O), complement (C), adjunct. There are three main types of simple sentence: SVO (has object), SV (no object), and SVC (describes subject). Objects can be passive subjects and complements cannot.

Sentences have subjects (S), objects (O), and complements (C) that can be nouns, pronouns, phrases, or (for C) adjectives. Adverbs or prepositional phrases can be added as adverbials (A) to modify the sentences. The sentences (SVO, SV, SVC) reflect processes (actions, events, attributions). SVO often has an agent (acting) and patient (receiving).

Simple sentences composed of SV can be classified into events and non-directed actions.

Events (e.g., "peasants died") describe happenings with one participant. Non-directed actions (e.g., "Reagan fishing") involve one animate participant doing something, but without a target (like an object). The key difference is intention - events just happen, while non-directed actions are done by someone.

However, events can be ideological. We see this with "agency": focusing on who caused something (agents) vs. what happened (events). This choice can be unconscious or intentional.

Is agency unclear?

Quarry load-shedding problem

Unsheeted lorries from Middlebarrow Quarry (S) were still causing (V) problems (O) by (S) shedding(V) stones (O). . .

In the former, S is an untypically inanimate agent of an action process; agency in causing problems is attributed to the lorries, it would be more properly attributed to the people who control them. Agents are animate,

and this is generally so. But agents can be realized as inanimate nouns, abstract nouns, or nominalizations. In all such cases, one should be sensitive to possible ideologically motivated obfuscation of agency, causality and responsibility.

Are processes what they seem?

Normally, "lorries" (trucks) wouldn't be considered agents – they can't act on their own. But the sentence "stones(S) were falling(V) from the lorries(A)" treats them as if they're actively causing the stones to fall. There might be a reason for portraying the lorries this way. Perhaps it's to emphasize the danger they pose or shift blame away from the people who loaded them improperly (ideological reasons).

Are nominalizations used?

Are sentences active or passive?

Are sentences positive or negative?

Question 9: what interactional conventions are used?

What is the turn-taking system?

- Informal conversation between equals

Negotiation between participants determines who speaks next. The speaker can choose the next speaker, or someone else can jump in (self-select). Everyone has equal rights to participate at any point.

- Dialogue between unequals (e.g., classroom teacher and students)

Turn-taking rights are unequal. Students can only speak when directly addressed by the teacher (questioned). Teachers can always choose to speak themselves (self-select). Students' turns are limited to providing relevant answers to the teacher's questions. Teachers control the definition of "relevant" answers. Teachers have more options in their turns (e.g., information, instructions, feedback).