**Critical Discourse Analysis**

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**1. Discourse Analysis**

Before describing the term of discourse analysis, we need to define and explain the term of discourse itself in order to comprehend the basic concepts of discourse analysis. As a branch of language study, discourse is a complete unit that has two forms: written and spoken. Discourse is a unit of language that is the most complete and higher than a sentence or a clause with high cohesion and coherence continuously, that have the beginning and ending, that is delivered both in oral and written. Cook (1989: 7ff.) stated that the term of discourse is the language in use for communication.

According to Widowson (2007: XV), discourse is an area of language study concerned with how people make meaning, and make out of meaning in texts and as social practice, whether simple or complex, all texts are the uses of language which are produced with the intention to refer to something for some purposes.

In sum, referring to some theorists (Trappes-Lomax, 2004: 136) , discourse is a term used in linguistics to describe the rules and conventions underlying the use of language in expanded stretches of text both spoken and written. Discourse practically always relies on the speaker or the writer (what he is talking about or writing) and the hearer or reader (what he is listening or reading). In discourse analysis, each of linguistic analysts use different theories and techniques of a number of disciplines for the study of language in use. They tend to favour one or more of a variety of approaches to conducting their research that have developed from these various sources. There are four main headings related to the ways and means of discourse analysis : rules and principles, contexts and cultures, functions and structures, and power and politics:

**1.** Rules and principles

· pragmatics (including speech act theory and politeness theory)

· conversation analysis

**2.** Contexts and cultures

· ethnography of communication

· interactional sociolinguistics

**3.** Functions and structures

· systemic-functional linguistics (SFL)

· Birmingham school discourse analysis

· text-linguistics

**4.** Power and politics

· pragmatic and sociolinguistic approaches to power in language

· critical discourse analysis

Discourse analysis approach of language includes critical discourse analysis which is not only doing the textual interrogation but also revealing the relationship of the interrogation product with the macro contextual behind the text. It is more specifically as a study on how the power misused or how the domination and the inequality put into the community (ibid.).

**2. Critical Discourse Analysis**

Critical discourse analysis( CDA) is practically oriented form of discourse analysis addressing social problem. '' Critical '' is used in the special sense of aiming to show up connections which may be hidden from people such as the connections between language, power, and ideology (Fairclough, 1989: 5). It is a form of applied linguistics; linguistics applied to the remedying of imbalances of power and various forms of social injustice. In this view, since ideologies permeate society by disguising themselves as common sense, the way to resist them is to unmask them(Trappes-Lomax, 2004: 158). CDA may be defined as being fundamentally concerned with analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language. In other words, CDA aims to investigate critically social inequality as it is expressed, signaled, constituted, legitimized by language use or in discourse (Wodak and Meyer, 2001: 1ff.).

According to van Dijk, CDA is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context (van Dijk, ''18 Critical Discourse Analysis'', 353 – 371) (http://www.discourses.org/OldArticles/Critical%20discourse%20analysis.pdf) .

He added that CDA is a specific form and practice of discourse analysis obviously always needs to account for at least some of the detailed structures, strategies and functions of text and talks, including grammatical, pragmatic, interactional, stylistic, rhetorical, semiotic, narrative or similar forms of verbal and para verbal organization of communicative events (Wodak and Meyer, 2001: 97). Referring to van Dijk, Fairclough, and Wodak's opinion, one can provide the characteristics of Critical Discourse Analysis as follows: ***First*,** action concerns that discourse is observed as the matter that has goals whether it is to influence, debate, persuade, react, etc. ***Second*,** context confirms that discourse considers the context such as background, situation, event, condition and all of matters outside of the text and other factors which influence the meanings such as language participants, the situation when text is produced and aimed. Discourse should be interpreted in a certain situation and condition. ***Third*,** history places discourse in a specific social context and cannot be understood without concerning the attached context. ***Fourth*,** power elaborates that what discourse form whether spoken or written language is not neutral and natural but it represents a form of power fight. ***Fifth*,** ideology focuses that text, conversation, and others are forms of ideological practice. More specifically, CDA focuses on the ways discourse structures

enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce, or challenge relations of power and dominance in society (Ibid.) .

There are many types of critical discourse analysis. Hence, the theoretical and analytical use is also different. Critical discourse analysis of conversation is different from the critical discourse analysis of news reports in the press, lesson, and teaching at school. But, overall the common perspective of conceptual and theoretical framework is closely related. Most kinds of CDA ask questions about the way specific discourse structures are deployed in the reproduction of social

dominance, whether they are part of a conversation or a news report or other genres and contexts. Thus, the typical vocabulary of many scholars in CDA will feature such notions as "power", "dominance", "hegemony", "ideology", "class", "gender", "race", "discrimination",

"interests", "reproduction", "institutions", "social structure" and "social order" besides the more familiar discourse analytical notions (van Dijk, 1993: 354). Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the study of critical discourse analysis deals with the relationship between discourse and social problems. CDA was developed to identify the hidden socio-political control which proponents of CDA believe actively constructs society on some levels. This may be one reason the highly politicized media has much influence on the society’s view (Atkins, 2002: 2).

**3. Some Models of Critical Discourse Analysis**

There are three major models of critical discourse analysis which are always associated with the researchers such as Norman Fairclough, Teun A. van Dijk and Ruth Wodak. They essentially have the same idea of critical discourse analysis, but they have distinctive models of analysis. Generally, they analyse how social and political inequalities are manifested in and reproduced through

discourse. It is very clear among researchers that only Fairclough and van Dijk who have detailed models of critical discourse analysis.

**3.1. Norman Fairclough’s Dialectal-Relational Approach (DRA)**

Norman Fairclough is one of the founders of critical discourse analysis that looks at ''the influence of power relations on the content and structure of writings''

Fairclough explains that CDA aims to ''systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between **(a)** discursive practices, events and texts, and **(b)** wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically

shaped by relations of power and struggles over power'' (Fairclough, 1995: 132). He provides us with a useful definition that summarizes most other definitions of CDA:

**CDA is the study of often opaque relationships of causality and determination between *(a)* discursive practices, events and texts, and *(b)* wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power** (ibid.:133).

Looking at language as discourse and social practice, someone cannot analyse the text only, not just analyse the process of production and interpretation, but also analyse the texts, processes, and their social conditions. Accordingly, Fairclough distinguishes three dimensions or stages of Critical Discourse Analysis (ibid.:98 ):

**a.** Description is the stage which is concerned with formal properties of the text.

**b.** Interpretation is concerned with the relationship between text and interaction with seeing the text as the product of a process of production, and as a resource in the process of interpretation. Notice Fairclough uses the term interpretation for both the interactional process and a stage of analysis.

**c.** Explanation is concerned with the relationship between interaction and social context with social determination of the process of production and interpretation, and their social effects.

**Norman Fairclough’s Model of Critical Discourse Analysis**



According to Meyer (2001), his method is, like Wodak’s, pragmatic and problem oriented.

First, he sets out to identify and describe the social problem to be analysed. Then, he goes on

with the structural analysis of the context, then the interactional analysis focusing on

linguistic features (such as agents, time, tense, modality and syntax), and finally, he conducts

an analysis of interdiscursivity, which seeks to compare the dominant and resistant strands of

discourse. Fairclough's analytical framework is represented schematically below:

1. Focus upon a specific social problem which has a semiotic aspect; go outside the text and

describe the problem and identify its semiotic aspect.

2. Identify the obstacles to it being tackled, through an analysis of:

a. the network of practices it is located within

b.the relationship of semiosis to other elements within the particular practice(s)

concerned

c. the discourse (the semiosis itself)

· structural analysis: the order of discourse

· interactional analysis

· interdiscursive analysis

· linguistic and semiotic analysis

3. Consider whether the social order (network of practices) in a sense ‘needs’ the problem.

4. Identify possible ways past the obstacles.

5. Reflect critically on the analysis.

(Ibid.: 28) and Fairclough (2001: 125-127)

**3.2. Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Approach(SCA)**

van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Discourse Analysis is an approach characterised by the interaction between cognition, discourse and society. It began in formal text linguistics and subsequently incorporated elements of the standard psychological model of memory, together with the idea of *frame* taken from cognitive science. A large part of van Dijk's practical investigation deals with stereotypes, the reproduction of ethnic prejudice, and power abuse by elites and resistance by dominated groups.

van Dijk also emphasises the control of discourse dimensions as a means to gain access to power. A further element in his account of discourse production and comprehension is the *K-device*, which is shorthand for personal, interpersonal, group, institutional, national and cultural knowledge (van Dijk,2005: 75). Cognition, realised in collective mental models as a result of consensus, is the interface between societal and discourse structures (van Dijk,2009: 62-85). While societal structures influence discursive interaction, in the latter the former are said to be “enacted, instituted, legitimated, confirmed or challenged by text and talk” (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 266). van Dijk (2009:62-85 ) believes CDA needs a model of context such as Moscovici's (2000) social representation theory: One individual's cognition is informed by dynamic constructs known as *social representations*, that is, the concepts, values, norms and images shared in a social group, and activated and maintained in discourse.

This approach therefore suggests concentrating the analysis upon linguistic markers as follows:

• stress and intonation

• word order

• lexical style

• coherence

• local semantic moves such as disclaimers

• topic choice

• speech acts

• schematic organization

• rhetorical figures

• syntactic structures

• propositional structures

• turn-takings

• repairs

• hesitation.

It supposes that most of these are exemplary forms of interaction which are in principle susceptible to speaker control, but in practice mostly not consciously controlled. Other structures, such as the form of words and many structures of sentences, are grammatically obligatory and contextually invariant and hence usually not subject to speaker control and social power. SCA further suggests six steps of analysis:

**1**. The analysis of *semantic macrostructures*: topics and macropropositions.

**2**. The analysis of *local meanings*, where the many forms of implicit or indirect

meanings, such as implications, presuppositions, allusions, vagueness, omissions

and polarizations are especially interesting.

**3**. The analysis of ‘*subtle’ formal structures*: here, most of the linguistic markers mentioned

are analysed.

**4**. The analysis of *global and local discourse forms* or formats.

**5**. The analysis of *specific linguistic realizations*, e.g. hyperbole, litotes.

**6**. The analysis of *context*. (Meyer, 2001: 26)

**3.3. The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) (Wodak and colleagues)**

It attempts, *inter alia*, to describe those cases where language and other semiotic practices are used by those in power to maintain domination (Reisigl and Wodak, 2009: 87-121). Initially, it was concerned with prejudiced utterances in anti-Semitic discourse. Recent developments include the discursive construction of national sameness and the social exclusion of out-groups through the discourses of difference, and the reconstruction of the past through sanitised narratives. The general approach reflects sociolinguistics and ethnography; it also gives an important place to Habermas's notion of the public sphere and to strategic communicative action as opposed to ideal communication oriented to understanding. Its central tenet is the importance of bringing together the textual and contextual levels of analysis. **The model of context used in this approach invokes historical knowledge understood in terms of** **four layers**:

**(a)** the linguistic co-text, **(b)** the intertextual and interdiscursive level, **(c)** the extralinguistic level, and **(d)** the socio-political and historical level (Wodak and Meyer,2009: 1-33). The interconnection between various texts and discourses leads directly to the notions of ***de-contextualisation***and ***recontextualisation***, processes in which elements typical of a particular context can be taken out of it and inserted into a new context with which it has not been conventionally associated.

DHA has further produced a series of analytical and descriptive tools, drawing on linguistic models and argumentation theory. In particular, DHA lists six strategies for identifying ideological positioning (i.e. ***nomination*, *predication*, *argumentation*, *perspectivisation*, *intensification*** and ***mitigation***) which are analysed as part of a larger process that includes also the characterisation of the contents of a discourse, linguistic means of expression and context-dependent linguistic realisations of stereotypes. One of the strengths of DHA is the emphasis on the combination of observation, theory and method, and the continuum between application and theoretical models. Its historical, political and sociological analyses are also an important part of its methodology, especially in relation to systems of genres, although the lack of a fully systematic procedure in this regard is one of its weaknesses.

The discourse-historical approach concentrates upon these six discursive strategies as follows (Wodak, 2001: 73):

• *Referential strategy or strategy of nomination*, where the linguistic devices of interest

are membership categorization, metaphors and metonymies

and synecdoches.

• *Strategies of predication* which appear in stereotypical, evaluative attributions of

positive or negative traits and implicit or explicit predicates.

• *Strategies of argumentation* which are reflected in certain *topoi* used to justify

political inclusion or exclusion.

• *Strategies of perspectivization, framing or discourse representation* use means of reporting,

description, narration or quotation of events and utterances.

• *Strategies of intensification and mitigation* try to intensify or mitigate the illocutionary

force of utterances.

**3.4. Systemic- Functional Linguistics**

Many CD Analysts base their text analyses on Systemic Functional Linguistics of Halliday (1985) , a method of analysis oriented to the social nature of texts. Texts simultaneously have ‘ideational’, ‘interpersonal’ and ‘textual’ functions – i.e. they simultaneously represent aspects of the world (physical, social and mental), enact social relations between participants in social events and the attitudes, desires and values of participants, and coherently and cohesively connect parts of text together and connect texts with their situational contexts.

**4. General Methodology**

Methodology is one of the most complex issues within the field of CDA. Meyer, for instance,

claims that there is no such thing as a common methodology or theoretical viewpoint in CDA:

CDA theoreticians draw on a number of theoretical levels in their analyses, from

epistemology, grand theories or general social theories, middle-range theories, microsociological

theories, socio-psychological theories, discourse theories to linguistic theories

(see Meyer,2001: 18-20 for a more thorough discussion).

CD analysts are both aware of this criticism and recognize it. van Dijk states that CDA, like

any good scholarship, should integrate the best work from all the relevant contributors and

disciplines (van Dijk,2001: 95-96), whereas Wodak points out that CDA has never attempted

to be or to provide one single or specific theory. Quite the contrary: ‘studies in CDA are

multifarious, derived from quite different theoretical background, oriented towards different

data and methodologies. Researchers in CDA rely on a variety of grammatical approaches’

The reason for this, according to Wodak (2001: 8), is that relationships

between language and society are so complex and multifaceted that interdisciplinary research

is necessary.

Furthermore, Meyer (2001) claims that in CDA there is an assumption that all discourses are

historical and can therefore only be understood with reference to their context, making him

conclude that CDA, thus, is open to the broadest range of factors that exert an influence on

texts. Consequently, by applying extra-linguistic factors such as culture, society, and

ideology, CDA scholars, by necessity, have to make use of an interdisciplinary procedure.

Nevertheless, there are at least a few features that are common no matter which approach to

CDA one chooses. **Firstly,** they are all problem oriented and not focused on specific linguistic

items (although linguistic expertise is obligatory for the selection of the items relevant to

specific objectives). **Secondly,** both theory and methodology are eclectic, i.e. both are

integrated as far as it is helpful to understand the social problems under investigation (ibid.: 29).

As for a single and applicable methodology, even Fairclough admits that it simply does not

exist. CDA is not a technique, nor a tool from a toolbox; it is as much theory as method

(Fairclough, 2001: 121). van Dijk elaborates: ‘In CDA, theory formation, description, problem

formulation and applications are closely intertwined and mutually inspiring’ (van Dijk ,2001:

96). However, the aim of CDA is clear: It can only make a significant and specific

contribution if it is able to provide an account of the role of language, language use, discourse

or communicative events in the (re)production of dominance and inequality (van Dijk,1993:

279).

Nevertheless, the method of CDA is generally composed of four main steps: 1) Having a text or discourse to be analyzed. This text or discourse must be authentic from any social event. 2) Interpretation from a selection of information that may portray or reveal any structure of power, domination, and/or exploitation. The interpretation can be done from the phonetic, morphological, syntactic, or semantic analysis. 3) Launching theory from the interpretation and further examination of the assumptions of the information that contains the structures issued. 4) Operationalization which is the conceptualization of the selection of theoretical concepts, relations, and assumptions.

**Example 1 (Adapted from the detailed analysis of typical discourse fragments (Jâger & Maier, 2009 : 55)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Step 1: The text/discourse**  [[The teacher is talking to conclude a debate session about computer use]]  “Thank you very much thank you thank you a lot so finish finish finish very good for your participation very good for your effort to communicate or express your ideas it was very fantastic I guess that you felt out less nervous less anxious to speak more freely, that was the purpose of this discussion, I just have two comments two comments that you eh that you have to be careful about and two very good points, so the very good points [[some SS laugh]] number one good because you had very good strategies for example the dictionary, writing but as you notice you said what you wrote and I made questions to expand what you had in your notes and you did it well, I mean you had the reference here you had your notes here but you could expand your knowledge in your mind, ok very good for that every time you participated, eh second good second good point eh you have improved your confidence about speaking and when you have improved your confidence I am aware of that and when you have improved your confidence you have also improved your pronunciation and you have improved the way you construct the sentences in English and you didn’t even notice it and it was so so so good for you I mean if I counted all your eh grammatical mistakes if I can say that they would be very few because you have improved your confidence and I am very happy because of that, and two thing that you have to be careful about number one please↑ system engineer is a Spanish translation into English but you don’t say system↑ engineer you say computer↑ engineer if you want to expand it you say computer science engineer and the profession is computer science engineering↑ con I n g but you don’t say system engineer, and the second one is como se pronuncia virus en ingles? [[some SS say virus correctly]] vi-rus vi-rus vi-rus vi-rus vi-rus vi-rus vi-rus vi-rus, thank you very much, can you please organize the classroom before you go.”  [[SS stand up, tidy the classroom and go]] | **Step 2: Interpretation**  **Why is this excerpt typical?**  At the end of a classroom activity in which there is no space for the teacher to correct students’ mistakes, nor space for providing feedback to each of them, the teacher takes the last minutes of the class session to make his/her voice heard in terms of students’ performance, thou it is done in general terms.  **Who talks and from what position?**  The teacher from his/her position of teacher-manager, controller, and evaluator of the students’ performance and the class activity.  **What is the discursive event?**  A teacher’s feedback provision at the end of a class activity of debate about a topic for English use.  **How is the discursive event structured?**  The teacher first thanks the students for their participation in the class debate. The teacher highlights the students’ effort to communicate in English. The teacher also highlights that the purpose of the activity was to make them speak freely. Then, the teacher remarks that there are two aspects for the students to consider from the activity. First, the students had the chance to use notes to talk; second, this use brings more confidence for the students when talking. Despite this confidence there is still accuracy trouble in the students’ talk. For example Spanish literal translation in English talking, and pronunciation mistakes. Finally, the teacher dismissed the students.  **What topics are touched in the event?**  The success of the activity for speaking promotion in the students, the good points in the students’ performance; and then, the bad points in theirs.  **How do the topics relate to each participant in the discursive event?**  It relates to the teacher in the way that s/he is the one who is in charge of providing the respective evaluation. It relates to the students because what the teacher says is about what they do in that session.  **What arguments are presented?**  The session is successful because the students talk by using English, the students have good points for the use of the strategy of note-taking, the expansion of ideas bring some mistakes of translation and pronunciation.  **What strategy is used for doing it?**  Marginalization of individual mistakes, teacher’s authorization of providing feedback under the students’ concern for it, students’ inaccessibility to participate in the feedback provision, ignoring some other mistakes, restricting the nomination of students, addressing to all of them, expressing teacher’s opinion as the valid one  **What implications does this discursive event bring to the class?**  The students have a bitter-sweet sensation of success, they perform well but with the presence of some mistakes. It still gives the teacher the role of the good user of English, and the students still the role of learners. Apart, activities in which the students feel free to speak in English seem to promote more students’ talk.  **What vocabulary and style is used in the discursive event?**  Direct vocabulary and style. The teacher talks steadily without being interrupted. There is a touch of concern for the students’ performance in terms of quality and quantity of language use.  **What identities does the discursive event form on the actors in the event?**  Students: receivers, learners, submissive, English practitioners.  Teacher: provider, controller, manager, evaluator, English good user, |
| **Step 3: Theory**  **What is your theory of exercising power in this discursive event?**  Teacher’s roles of power are guaranteed and confirmed by the same students by offering him/her the space and the act of evaluating what happens in the class in terms of activities and their own performance.  **How is subjugation/submissiveness portrayed?**  The students’ acceptance of teacher’s comments on their performance without replying or highlighting their own vision of success in the class. | |
| **Step 4: Conceptualization**  **How are theoretical concepts, relations, and assumptions interconnected to construct power relations in this discursive event?**  Both, the students need the teacher for confirming their level of proficiency in their performances in the class activities, as the teacher needs the students to exercise his/her role of power as an English knower and then evaluator of it during the class. | |

**Other Examples (van Dijk, 2006: 728-740)**

Van Dijk uses some fragments from a debate in the British House of Commons on asylum seekers, held on March 5, 1997. Mrs Gorman, representative of Billericay for the Conservative Party, then still in power, had taken the initiative for this debate, which she opened with a critique of the alleged costs of asylum seekers, costs she claimed were being paid by poor old English ratepayers. Among those who opposed her was Jeremy Corbyn, of the Labour Party.

In order to enhance the usefulness of our analysis, he shall assign an analytical category to each example, and order the categories alphabetically. After the category name he shall add the domain of discourse analysis to which the category belongs (e.g., meaning, argumentation, etc.). The main point of the analysis is to show how various ideologies, especially those of racism and antiracism, are expressed in various kinds of structures. There are in principle hundreds of such

categories, so a small selection are made .

**Some Categories of Ideological Discourse Analysis**

**ACTOR DESCRIPTION (MEANING).**

The way actors are described in discourses also depends on our ideologies. Typically we tend to describe ingroup members in a neutral or positive way and outgroup members in a negative way. Similarly, we will mitigate negative descriptions of members of our own group, and emphasize the attributed negative characteristics of Others. Here is how Mrs Gorman describes a Romania asylum seeker:

**(1)** In one case, a man from Romania, who came over here on a coach tour for a football match (. .) decided that he did not want to go back, declared himself an asylum seeker and is still here 4 years later. He has never done a stroke of work in his life (Gorman).

**AUTHORITY (ARGUMENTATION**).

Many speakers in an argument, also in parliament, have recourse to the fallacy of mentioning authorities to support their case, usually organizations or people who are above the fray of party politics, or who are generally recognized experts or moral leaders. International organizations

(such as the United Nations or Amnesty International), scholars, the media, the church or the courts often have that role. People of different ideologies typically cite different authorities. Thus, Mr Corbyn ironically asks Mrs Gorman whether she has not read the reports of Amnesty or Helsinki Watch.

**BURDEN (TOPOS).**

Argumentation against immigration is often based on various standard arguments, or topoi, which represent premises that are taken for granted, as self-evident and as sufficient reasons to accept the conclusion. One of the topoi of anti immigration discourse is that asylum seekers are a financial ‘burden’ for ‘us’:

**(2)** It is wrong that ratepayers in the London area should bear an undue proportion of the burden of expenditure that those people are causing (Gorman).

**CATEGORIZATION (MEANING).**

As we also know from social psychology, people tend to categorize people, and so do speakers in parliament, especially when Others (immigrants, refugees, etc.) are involved. Most typical in this debate is the (sub)categorization of asylum seekers into ‘genuine’ political refugees, and ‘bogus’ asylum seekers, a categorization formulated in the following ways:

**(3)** There are, of course, asylum seekers and asylum seekers (Gorman).

**(4)** . . . those people, many of whom could reasonably be called economic migrants and some of whom are just benefit seekers on holiday, to remain in Britain (Gorman).

**COMPARISON (MEANING, ARGUMENTATION).**

Different from rhetorical similes, comparisons as intended here typically occur in talk about

refugees or minorities, namely when speakers compare ingroups and outgroups. In racist talk, outgroups are compared negatively, and ingroups positively. In antiracist talk, we may negatively compare our country or government with loathsome undemocratic regimes. In the following example, Mr Corbyn uses an argumentative comparison with the Second World War to emphasize the plight of asylum seekers:

**(5)** Many soldiers who were tortured during the Second World War found it difficult to talk about their experiences for years. That is no different from the position of people who have been tortured in Iran, Iraq, West Africa, or anywhere else. (Corbyn).

**CONSENSUS (POLITICAL STRATEGY).**

To claim or insist on cross-party or national consensus is a well-known political strategy in situations where the country is threatened, for instance by outside attack. Immigration is often seen as such a threat. Thus, Mrs Gorman insists that the current immigration law is the fruit of consensus, and hence should not be tampered with:

**(6)** The Government, with cross-party backing, decided to do something about the matte

(Gorman, C).

**COUNTERFACTUALS (MEANING,ARGUMENTATION**).

(see also Counterfactuals.) ‘‘What would happen, if . . .’’ the typical expression of a counterfactual,

is often used in this debate by the Labour opposition in order to suggest that the conservatives try to imagine what it would be like to be in the situation of asylum seekers, an persuasive argumentative move that is also is related to the move of asking for empathy:

**(7)** I suggest that he start to think more seriously about human rights issues. Suppose he had to flee this country because an oppressive regime had taken over. Where would he go? Presumably he would not want help from anyone else, because he does not believe that help should be given to anyone else (Corbyn).

**(8)** If that happened in another country under a regime of which we disapproved, the British Government would say that it was a terrible indictment on the human rights record of that regime that prisoners were forced to undertake a hunger strike to draw attention to their situation

(Corbyn).

**DISCLAIMERS (MEANING).**

A well-known combination of the ideologically based strategy of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation are the many types of disclaimers. Note that disclaimers in these debates are not usually an expression of attitudinal ambiguity, in which both positive and negative aspects of immigration are mentioned, or in which humanitarian values are endorsed on the one hand, but the ‘burden’ of refugees is beyond our means. Rather, disclaimers briefly save face by mentioning Our positive characteristics, but then focus rather exclusively on Their negative attributes. Hence our qualification of the positive part of the disclaimer as Apparent, as in Apparent Denials, Concessions, Empathy, etc.:

**(9)** [Apparent Empathy] I understand that many people want to come to Britain to work, but there is a procedure whereby people can legitimately become part of our community (Gorman).

**(10)** [Apparent Denial] I did not say that every eastern European’s application for asylum in this country was bogus. However. . . (Gorman).

**EUPHEMISM (RHETORIC; MEANING**). (see Taboo, Euphemism, and Political Correctness.)

The well-known rhetorical figure of euphemism, a semantic move of mitigation, plays an important role in talk about immigrants. Within the broader framework of the strategy of positive self-presentation, and especially its correlate, the avoidance of negative impression formation, negative opinions about immigrants are often mitigated, especially in foreign talk. The same is true for the negative acts of the own group. Thus, racism or discrimination will typically be mitigated as resentment or unequal treatment, respectively. Similarly Ms Gorman in this debate uses the word ‘discourage’ (‘‘to discourage the growing number of people from abroad. . .’’) in order to refer to the harsh immigration policies of the government, and thus mitigates the actions of the conservative government she supports. Similarly, the Labour (Corbyn) opposition finds the condemnation of oppressive regimes by the Government ‘very muted’ instead of using more critical terms. Obviously, such mitigation of the use of euphemisms may be explained both in ideological terms (ingroup protection) as well as in contextual terms, e.g., as part of politeness conditions or other interactional rules that are typical for parliamentary debates.

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