Critical Discourse Analysis of the Protesters' Language

Gulnaz Begum, M.Phil. Researcher, English Linguistics
===

Abstract

The current study is conducted for presenting a critical discourse analysis of the mob's language that assembled to record protest against gas and electricity shortage. They have blocked the main Airport road in the cantonment area near the army house in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. For this study, data was collected by non-participant observation method and field notes were also taken for additional support. However, selective ways of expression such as slogans, banners and placards, conversation among the protesters and their distinctive linguistic choices for the two security forces (military and police) are taken for critical discourse analysis to identify their ideologies. This critical discourse analysis of research data elucidates that protesters exhibited their views by placards slogans, and associated themselves with the political parties and security forces by choosing in-group and out-group linguistic choices.

Key words: CDA, Ideology, Linguistic choices

Introduction

Language is the human ability to acquire and use complex systems of communication. Similarly, they are equipped to use it in a unique style for producing desired effects on the audience. This is the reason that many people, especially those gathered for protest, fully utilize this ability by choosing special linguistic expressions that may express their point of view in a striking manner.

The focus of the current study is the protesters' language who gathered for recording their protest against gas and electricity outage in the cantonment area. They had banners and placards and raised slogans against government by showing their association with other political parties. Additionally, they showed amicable and friendly gestures with the military police. However their

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 15:3 March 2015**
Gulnaz Begum, M.Phil. Researcher, English Linguistics
Critical Discourse Analysis of the Protesters' Language   85

attitude was totally different towards the district police. The aim of this study is the presentation of the critical discourse analysis of the protesters' language for highlighting its ideological basis governing their minds.

Research Questions

1. What are the mob's linguistic choices for protesting against the government?
2. Why do protesters use distinctive language for military and district police in a protest?
3. How do the protesters present their ideology through selective language?

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

- To figure out the protesters' ideology presented through language.
- To highlight the differences of the mob's language while addressing the security forces and during in-group talks with reference to their ideological perspectives.

Significance of the Study

The current study will provide assistance in developing a clear understanding of the hidden ideologies in an apparently simple text displayed by the protesters in the form of placards and banners. It will also help in getting an in-depth understanding about the ideological basis of the people's language in the so-called democratic countries, where military is considered stronger than the political forces.

Literature Review

The literature review will serve as the theoretical framework for the research study. For this particular study, Van Dijk's (1997) framework will be applied because it provides some illustration of the categories that are significant for doing CDA (critical discourse analysis) studies. According to this model different categories are given for presenting various kinds of structures. Some of them are taken for this research such as actor description, categorization, comparison, disclaimer, hyperbole and victimization. The description and meaning of selected categories are given below briefly.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 15:3 March 2015**
Gulnaz Begum, M.Phil. Researcher, English Linguistics
Critical Discourse Analysis of the Protesters' Language   86

- In actor description, ideologies determine the way of describing actors in discourse. They are divided into in-group (neutral or positive way) and out group (negative way) members.

- Categorization generally creates distinction among the people based on their social affiliation, race and ethnicity.

- In comparison (argumentation) category, out-groups are compared negatively and in-groups positively. In the similar fashion, country or government is negatively compared with repulsive undemocratic regimes.

- Disclaimers imply the ideological bases of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation strategy.

- Hyperboles are semantic rhetorical devices for enhancing and exaggerating meaning. By using special metaphors, especially in the strategy of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation, people expect good or bad actions or properties of the self or other by expressing hyperbolic terms.

- In the victimization category, bad stories are told about nations in order to focus on their bad characteristics for producing in-groups and out-groups polarization.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of discourse that views language as a form of social practice and focuses on the ways social and political domination are reproduced in text and talk. It emerged in late 1980s and influenced by Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak and Van Dijk.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) explores the connection between the use of language and the social and political contexts in which it occurs. Some important principles adopted in CDA are

a) Construction and reflection of social and political issues in discourse whether in text or talk.

b) Exerting and negotiating of powers relations through discourse.

c) Production and reflection of ideologies by using language.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 15:3 March 2015**
Gulnaz Begum, M.Phil. Researcher, English Linguistics
Critical Discourse Analysis of the Protesters' Language   87

These principles show that CDA is a unique approach for analyzing discourse that offers an explanation of why and how it works within context and leads towards deeper and in-depth understanding. It also takes language as a social practice (Fairclough & Wodak 1997). Therefore, it is relevant to the research as it acknowledges the influence of discursive practices on social constructions. Moreover, language is considered a social action (Wetherell, 2001). Similarly it is used to mean and to do things (Richardson 2007: 25). In the similar manner, it allows researchers to closely consider grammar and semantics within social, cultural and political terms as well as studying the broader consequences of language use (Gee, 2011: ix).

The term *ideology* was originally coined by Antonie Destt de Tracey after the French revolution by referring it as the new science of ideas which would be the ground of all other sciences (McLellan, 1986). In this perspective, linguistic ideology is a systematic construct about particular ways of using language for investing certain moral, social, and political values in order to influence and control the human behavior.

Language ideology is the cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships with the load of moral and political interests (Irvine, 1989:50).

Therefore, the role of CDA in ideology is to explore the nature and usage of biased language, policies and attitudes. The current study attempts to understand the ideological role of a language within mob's linguistic choices for constructing their irregular attitude towards two security forces(police and military). Moreover, it may highlight their different ways of expression for demonstrating their aggression and hatred towards present so called democratic political set up and the government policies for the shortfall of electricity generally and gas particularly in the winter season in Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

Methodology

This study is constructivist in nature; therefore case study is taken as a research approach. The data collection method is non participant observation for this study and field notes are also taken for in-depth and rich data. The case study research approach is an investigation and analysis of a single or collective case, intended to capture the complexity of the object of study (Stake, 1995) It is usually considered useful in providing answers to how and why questions,

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 15:3 March 2015**
Gulnaz Begum, M.Phil. Researcher, English Linguistics
Critical Discourse Analysis of the Protesters' Language   88

and in this role may be used for exploratory, descriptive or explanatory research. Marshall and Rossman (1989) define observation as the systematic description of events, behaviors, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study. It enables the researcher to describe existing situations by using the five senses for providing written photograph of the situation under study (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). There are two types of observation, participant and non participant. In participant observation, researcher participates in the observed group's activities, and in non participant he/she does not involve in the activities rather remain a passive observer by watching, listening and drawing conclusion (Kumar: 2011). Data for this study is exclusively collected from the mob gathered in Dec, 2014 in Rawalpindi, Pakistan by purposive sampling where subjects are selected based on the knowledge of a population and the purpose of the study.

Application of CDA and Findings

The theme of the study is mob's language for protesting against gas and electricity shortfall in Rawalpindi, Pakistan at the main Airport road in the cantonment area near the Army House. Many people, men and women, gathered at the road and tried to block the both sides for recoding their protest that was considered the suitable way in the so-called democratic countries like Pakistan. The particular purpose of this study is to show how people display their association with other demonstrators and how ideologies govern their minds for choosing different language for addressing the security agencies and political parties.

For this study, the following ways of expressions were selected: slogans, placards and banners, in-group language (among protesters) and their linguistic choices for district and military Police and with the newly emergent political party, Tehrik-e Insaf (PTI).

Sample # 1

Slogans and placard
1) "Gas do, rasta lo" (provide us gas and take your way)
2) "Army Chief apna hamsioun sa zadti ka hisab lo"
   (Army Chief! Ask for accountability against injustice towards your neighbors!)
3) Noon league Murdabad! Imran Khan Zindabad!

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 15:3 March 2015**
Gulnaz Begum, M.Phil. Researcher, English Linguistics
Critical Discourse Analysis of the Protesters' Language   89

4) Sayasi yateem murdabad! martial law zindabad!

In the first slogan, the mob makes the simple demand for gas for the people by stopping the traffic at the main road. In this manner, they do not ask for gas supply from the travelers but present their demands indirectly before the government and the concerned authorities.

In the second example, they asked Army Chief to take revenge upon the government for the injustice of the non-availability of gas and electricity. It seems people think that the Army Chief is more powerful than the government, and the Army Chief can ask for accountability even from the government. The phrase *your neighbors* in the slogan addressed to the Army Chief shows that they align themselves with the Chief. It reveals that they consider the Army Chief as the sole protector from the cruelties of the present political government. In this manner, actors (protesters) presented their in-group identities by including army and the protesters in a positive style. Out-group figure is the government.

In the third example, they humiliate the in-power political party by using derogatory term such as *syasi yateem* ('politically orphan'). However, they appreciate Imran Khan who is recently considered very famous for his *dharna*, strikes and speeches. Indirectly, they regard him better as compared to the present in-government political party. The intent of the protestors is shown through the choice of terms. They focused on people's negative attitude towards the present government and its policies. Here, they categorized one political party in a positive and the other in a negative way both by using hyperbolic terms.

In the fourth example, the protesters displayed placards and put forward their demands by using derogatory terms like *sayasi yateem* ('politically orphan') for the present party in power in government (Muslim League N). Benazir Bhutto (1988-1990, 1993-1996) and Nawaz Sharif's (1990-1993, 1997 1999) democratic governments were dismissed by the President due to the corruption charges. Nawaz Sharif had the chance to govern for less than two years during his tenure. His party always blamed that their mandate was stolen by disqualifying them, therefore they could not deliver their promises to the masses. This scenario is usually termed as *sysai yateem (political orphan)* by the masses, because this party's workers always try to win people's sympathy by presenting this point of view. But this party is again in power and the protestors are not getting basic facilities of life like gas and electricity. Therefore they show their protest

Gulnaz Begum, M.Phil. Researcher, English Linguistics
Critical Discourse Analysis of the Protesters' Language   90

towards the so-called democratic political set up by demanding for martial law, if this democracy cannot provide them such necessities of life. In simple words, they seem tired of this democracy where people do not get such basic facilities .Therefore they asked for martial law in these words *Martial law zindabad (Long-live Martial law!)* at the expense of democracy, when their rights are unsecured even in the democratic set up.

The above mentioned analysis reveals that protesters are more willing to welcome anybody who can fulfill their demands. Similarly, it may reveal their belief in democratic system is shaken since from their view this has almost failed to provide them essential facilities of life. They seem more inclined towards change in the government or to the Army-run government of the Army Chief.

Sample # 2

Communication among Protesters

> Imarn Khan us halka sa jita ha us lia yah hakoomat haman gas ni da kr saza da
>
> rahi ha (Imran Khan has won election from this constituency; therefore the
>
> present government is punishing us by the shortage of gas).

Many protesters used the name of *Imran Khan* to show their association with the new political party Tehrik-e-Insaf(PTI) .They want to show the media and other people gathered there that the present government is against this party, therefore it is penalizing and punishing the masses especially in the constituency where the present in-government party could not achieve success in the elections held in 2013.This points out that they are trying to win support from the one party on the one hand, and projecting the next party as undemocratic. In this manner, they are trying to project their identity as a supporter of the party that is in opposition. In simple words, they try to present the victimization category by highlighting the negative image of the government through the use of hyperbolic terms.

Sample # 3

Linguistics Choice for the Military versus Police

 Police

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 15:3 March 2015**
Gulnaz Begum, M.Phil. Researcher, English Linguistics
Critical Discourse Analysis of the Protesters' Language   91

1. Police ka banda hath lagia tu cheer k rakh do (If any police person men or women touch you, beat him/her).
2. Police   wala   hakmooti   kutta (Police persons are like dogs serving the government).

Military

Protester 1: Chalo road block kro (Let us block the road).

Protester 2: ni wahan army ha, (No army is standing there).

Protester3: army wala hamara bahi hn (They are our brothers).

Protester 4: General Rahil Sharif kabi zulm ni krta, wo tu hamara hero ha, yeh Nawaz Sharif ha jo ham par zulm kr raha ha. (General Rahil Sharif is our hero; he dislikes injustice. This is Nawaz Sharif who is the cruel one).

By looking at the protesters' language in glance, it may be guessed that they are more cordial towards the Military; however, they are ready for clash with the district police. They are ready to beat the district police persons if they even touch them. For instance, *Police ka banda hath lagia tu ckeer ka rakh do.* This highlights the masses' hatred and hostility for the district police which is responsible for civic organization. In simple words, their duties include maintaining law and order, curbing violence and protecting private and public property as well as keeping the rule of law according to the police rules and the fundamental philosophy of this organization. However, it is noticed that people distrust the Police and are ready to welcome the military by saying *army men are our brothers*. Although they have fear in their heart that is obvious in these words, *let's block the road, there is no army* (this is said by another person who is seen more afraid by his facial expressions).This shows people's mixed attitude towards the Military. The protesters welcome and praise them, but they are also afraid of them on the other hand. This is the reason that the protesters are reluctant to cross the road where the Army lines begin. It shows the real attitude of the undemocratic society where masses are afraid of the mighty one (army) and are ready to show their frustration for those, they think, who are less powerful. It does not mean that district police is not powerful like military in this situation, but the words uttered present the protesters' mindset and the ideologies which govern their thinking.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 15:3 March 2015**
Gulnaz Begum, M.Phil. Researcher, English Linguistics
Critical Discourse Analysis of the Protesters' Language   92

It also reveals that the protesters are ready to indulge in dispute, argument and quarrel with the district police and are less willing to confront the Military.

In the second extract the protesters humiliate district police persons by calling them *Hakmooti Kuatta (dogs serving government).* In this way they show their distrust and hatred towards the district police, but they call the army chief as their brother in these words *Rahil Sharif is our brother, he dislikes injustice.* Here they are not just appreciating him only but they are showing their respect for the institution that is undoubtedly praise-worthy for the country where terrorism and terrorists try to entrap the whole nation. However, the matter is not simple as it seems to be, because, it is the result of ideologies which govern the protesters' mind. As Haqani (2005) highlights the situation in which the chronic conflict with the neighboring India has always benefited the Pakistan Military for exalting its status and for playing its decisive roles in the government policies even during the civilian rule. Imam (2011) also pointed out that the Army was the most powerful institution at the time of independence in 1947, which kept independent provinces together. Military functioned as a second line of control in case the police failed to render their responsibility for keeping law and order. Moreover, the politicians invited it into the upper echelons and it remained in power for several decades (1958-1971, 1977-1988, and 1999-2008). These routine military rules or governance made people to trust the Army more than the Police. This is the reason that that not only the military but also the civil governments keept the police at arm's length, nothing more than a toy in the politicians' hand. Every time this institution is blamed for misconduct, the Army officials took over. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto dismissed almost 1300 civil servant including police officers by labeling them as incompetent and corrupt during 1972. After imposing martial law, Zia-ul-Haque infiltrated the police ranks with army personnel to make the police administration subservient to his government. Similarly, in 1990s both political parties, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) under Shaheed Benazir Bhutto and Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) under Nawaz Sharif used the police to increase their influence over each other. After the politically unstable decade of the 1990s, police emerged as an institution that lacked public support, integrity and professionalism. These historical facts produce ideologies that rule the people's mind for choosing their linguistic choices for the security agencies in Pakistan.

Conclusion

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 15:3 March 2015**
Gulnaz Begum, M.Phil. Researcher, English Linguistics
Critical Discourse Analysis of the Protesters' Language   93

The study examined how ideologies are constructed in the spoken and written discourse by the protesters within the framework of CDA by Van Dijk. It concludes that masses in the so-called democratic countries are seen more willing to bend in favour of undemocratic set up and the powerful individuals and groups due to the hidden ideologies framed their mind set. The whole study may also be summed up by saying that CDA enables analysts to reveal the hidden ideologies in apparently and seemingly plain text.

==

References

Erlandson, D. A., Harris, E. L., Skipper, B. L., & Allen, S. D. (1993). *Doing naturalistic inquiry: A guide to methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Gee, J. P. (2010). *How to do Discourse Analysis: A Toolkit*. Abingdon K: Routledge.

Haqqani, H. (2005). *Pakistan: between mosque and military*. Washington, D.C: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Imam, K. (2011). Police and the Rule of Law in Pakistan: A Historical Analysis. *Berkeley Journal of Social Sciences*, *1*(8). Retrieved from http://www.berkeleyjournalofsocialsciences.com/index.htm

Irvine, J. (2009). When talk isn't cheap: language and political economy. *American Ethnologist*, *16*(2), 248-267. doi:10.1525/ae.1989.16.2.02a00040

Kumar, R. (2011). *Research methodology: A step-by-step guide for beginners* [Digital Edition] (3rd ed.). Retrieved from https://books.google.com.pk

Marshall, C. & Rossman, G. B. (1989). *Designing Qualitative Research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

McLellan, D. (1986). *Ideology*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 15:3 March 2015**
Gulnaz Begum, M.Phil. Researcher, English Linguistics
Critical Discourse Analysis of the Protesters' Language   94

Richardson, J. E. (2006). *Analysing Newspapers: An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The Art of Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Taylor, S., & Yates, S. J. (2001). *Discourse Theory and Practice A Reader*. M. Wetherell (Ed.). London: Sage.

Van Dijk, T. A. (Ed.). (1997). *Discourse as structure and process of discourse studies: A multidisciplinary introduction*. London: Sage.

==

Gulnaz Begum, M.Phil. Researcher
Foundation University Rawalpindi
Pakistan
tiamalik5@gmail.com

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 15:3 March 2015**
Gulnaz Begum, M.Phil. Researcher, English Linguistics
Critical Discourse Analysis of the Protesters' Language   95