A Critique of Critical Discourse Analysis
Dr. Muhammed Shahriar Haque[*]

The emergence of critical discourse analysis (CDA), as a reaction against a linguistically-based non-critical discourse analysis, has broadened the scope of discourse analysis. As a new ideological orthodoxy with a goal to make explicit the ideological bias in texts, CDA has generated controversies and invites critical attention with both its advocates and critics asserting their own respective positions. Critical discourse analysis has been criticised for being the most overtly political form of discourse analysis, offering not only critique of the existing social order, but espousing an agenda of change. My aim in this paper is to emphasize some of these comments in order to see how the critics perceive CDA, and how the practitioners (of CDA) defend themselves. A discussion of this nature would allow future practitioners to take account of the debates in CDA and enable them to make compromises in order to improve the general methodology of this branch of linguistics.

Introduction

It is undeniable the crucial role that language plays in our lives, as it is primarily through language that we perceive the world around us and express our thoughts. Foucault's (1972a, 1972b, 1984) explication of the structural concept of discourse has had tremendous influence in the humanities and the social sciences and how it is perceived today, though his comprehension predominantly delves into the discursive tradition of the history and the archaeology of knowledge. It does not deal with discourse as assuming an influencing force, somewhat dominant and hegemonic in nature, which has the potential to practice the notions of inclusion and exclusion in a society. Critical analysts, as practitioners of critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA), though influenced by Foucault in varying degrees, define and frame discourse according to their own understanding, and tend to analyse it in terms of exploring and exposing the notions of power, dominance and social inequality. In doing so, they try to explain how certain societal issues are embedded in the structural make-up of a society.

[*] Assistant Professor, Dept. of English, East West University

CDA may be perceived as a systematic method for analysing instances of social and political discourse, in order to expose opaque issues embedded in the societal infrastructure, and make the common people conscious of the unethical practices in contemporary societies. Targeting social inequality and power abuse, CDA practitioners endeavour to balance the scales of social injustice by empowering the uninformed people with the knowledge of what they initially lack. In doing so, CDA provides a congenial atmosphere for making informed choices.

In general, power may be exercised by *coercion* and by *manufacture of consent* (Fairclough, 2001a); the former exercise of power employs force or physical violence while the later tries to generate consent through influence. In many societies, explicit exclusion like apartheid, is a thing of the past. However, subtler forms of marginalisation still continues to plague some societies. Reflections of particular forms of exclusion, which are opaque or perceived as common sense and therefore taken for granted, are traceable in the contemporary social discourse. CDA studies the subtler exercise of power in social and political discourse, such as racism, sexism, marginalization, manipulation, group domination to institutional and professional forms of power, and so forth; some practitioners specifically emphasize on such exercise of power in parliamentary debates, racism in the press or the electronic media, while others focus on various issues across the socio-political spectrum.

CDA as a Network of Scholars
Critical discourse analysis has developed over the last two decades of the twentieth century or so; en route, it has gone through phases like critical language studies (CLS), critical linguistics (CL) and critical language awareness (CLA). The acronym CDA and the establishment of critical discourse analysis as a specific field of linguistics, distinguishing itself from discourse analysis, conversation analysis, pragmatics and stylistics, has taken place within the last decade or so. It was after a small symposium in Amsterdam in January 1991, where Teun van Dijk, Norman Fairclough, Gunther Kress, Theo van Leeuwen and Ruth Wodak spent two days discussing the various theories of discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis, that CDA as a network of scholars emerged (Wodak, 2001: 4).

The network was initiated with the launching of van Dijk's journal of *Discourse & Society* (1990) as an outlet to discuss the various theories of discourse from a critical perspective. The 1993 special issue *Discourse & Society* was dedicated

specifically to CDA; the books that contributed to the forming of the CDA network are Fairclough's (1989) *Language and Power*, Wodak's (1989) *Language, Power and Ideology* and van Dijk's (1984) initial book on racism, *Prejudice in Discourse* (*ibid.*). However, it was the Amsterdam gathering of the scholars, that really set the platform for CDA to take off on an international scale:

> ... the Amsterdam meeting determined an institutional beginning, an attempt both to start an exchange programme (ERASMUS for three years)[1] and multiple joint projects and collaborations between the different scholars and approaches as well as a special issue of *Discourse and Society* (1993), which brought the above mentioned approaches together. (Wodak, 2001: 4)

The first "International Conference on Critical Discourse Analysis" was held from 5-8 May 2004, in Valencia, Spain; the conference brought scholars form around the world to network and discuss on theories and research in the field of CDA.

Foundations of CDA: Discourse, Ideology and Power

In a commodified consumer oriented society, discourse, ideology and power, in relation to the social context, constitute the foundations of CDA. The production and reproduction of discourse, via certain discursive practices, projects the ideology of a select few endowing them with the power to propagate their hidden agenda(s) so as to create and / or sustain the unequal power relations in society. It is such agendas that CDA seeks to address and expose, thus empowering the common people and balancing social inequalities. CDA underlines the significance of discourse, ideology and power in perspective of the social milieu and societal practices.

Weiss and Wodak (2003: 13) point out that 'discourse' is (perceived and) employed differently by different researchers and also in different academic cultures: the Germans and Central Europeans make a distinction between 'text' and 'discourse', which relates to the tradition in text linguistics and rhetoric (see Vass, 1994; Brünner and Gräfen, 1995; Wodak, 1996 for summaries); 'discourse' in the English-speaking world is mostly used for both written and oral texts (see Schiffrin, 1992); elaborating on the connections to the sociocognitive theory of Teun van Dijk (1984, 1993, 1998), the discourse-historical approach views 'discourse' as a form of knowledge and memory, whereas text illustrates concrete oral utterance or written documents (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001). They (Weiss and Wodak, 2003: 13) also mention that other researchers, who distinguish between the different levels of abstractness, tend to adopt a rather Foucauldian approach,

for instance, Lemke (1995) defines 'text' as the concrete realization of abstract forms of knowledge ('discourse')

Notions of Ideology

Ideology is probably one of the most debated concepts in the realms of social science, which different authorities have tried to explain, according to their own understanding of the concept. The various explanations of ideology lead one to conclude that it is not only a vague concept but also one that, in some way or other, is tied to the concept of hegemony in the sense that hegemony revolves around some form of ideology. At a very elementary level, ideology may be perceived as a set of ideas or beliefs held by a group, community or a culture. It is based on these ideas and beliefs that one exerts his / her dominance or influence on others or the society at large. Keeping this in mind hegemony may be thought of as a product of ideology, so to speak (Haque and Khan, 2004: 47). In general, ideology is someone else's thought and seldom our own (McLellan, 1995: 1). In other words, an ideology may have hegemonic implications, depending on what the aim(s) of that someone else is / are.

Wodak (2001: 10) mentions that in order to comprehend CDA and the notions of 'critical' and 'ideology' it is important to acknowledge the contribution of critical theory (see Anthonissen, 2001 for an extensive discussion of this issue). She (*ibid.*) further says that Thompson (1990), when discussing the concepts of ideology and culture in relation to certain aspects of mass communication, points out that ever since the notion of ideology first appeared in the late 18th century France, the term 'ideology' has undergone changes in functions and meanings at different times over the past two centuries or so. Despite the different concepts of ideology, critical theory intends to create consciousness in the people (agents) of how they are deceived about their own needs and interests (*ibid.*); reflections of this can be seen in Pierre Bourdieu's (1989) concept of 'violence *symbolique*' and '*méconnaissnace*'. Ideology, from a CDA perspective, is seen as a significant means of establishing and maintaining unequal relations of power; hence, one of the aims of CDA is to 'demystify' discourses by deciphering ideologies (Weiss and Wodak, 2003: 14).

Hodge and Kress (1993) in their widely influential book *Language as Ideology* provide theoretical accounts of how power and ideology operate in various aspects of texts and document the connection between linguistics and social practice. To them ideology is a systematic body of ideas, organised from a particular point of view, and language is an instrument of control as well as of

communication; hearers can be both manipulated and informed about the truth by means of linguistic forms, preferably manipulated while they (the hearers) are being informed (Hodge and Kress, 1993: 6).

Van Dijk (1998: 313) says that most of the traditional approaches adopted to investigate ideology are "rather of a *philosophical* than of a systematic, analytical and theoretical nature." In his ground breaking book *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (1998) he uses a multidisciplinary approach to analyse and explain ideology in terms of the 'triangle' of (social) *cognition*, *society* and *discourse* (*ibid.*).

There exists a vast amount of literature on ideology, which explores its various dimensions. Since ideologies may be (re)produced discursively they generally have attached notions of hegemony, which sometimes seem inseparable, as already mentioned above. However, since ideologies are an integral part of the social structure the hegemonic notions are seldom noticed. It is through the practice of language in daily life, that truth is generally manipulated and / or distorted, and the hidden agendas of dominant forces in a society are legitimised and naturalised discursively by appealing to the notions of common sense of the general public. Haque and Zuraidah (2003) discuss ideology in terms of exclusionary practice in recruitment advertisements. The point of departure for their investigation is the assumption that exclusionary practice in the job market is a form of ideology and social practice that is represented discursively. The discursive dimension of exclusionary practice is of particular significance in the modern capitalist society as it is produced and reproduced in discourse and contributes to sustaining a particular ideology corresponding to the interests of the dominant group. For example, the constant reminder that certain jobs are suitable for certain kind of people of a certain gender with certain attributes may contribute in securing domination especially in gender relations, and in relations between ethnic / cultural groups and the "haves" and "have-nots". Such ideological representation is constantly reinforced so much so that it comes to be seen as "non-ideological" common-sense (see Fairclough, 1995).

Another defining feature of CDA is its concern with power as a central condition in social life, and its efforts to develop a theory of language, which incorporates this as a major premise (Wodak, 2001: 11). Independently, language is not powerful – it attains power through the use powerful people make of it (Weiss and Wodak, 2003: 14). This may account for why CDA often chooses the perspective of those who

suffer and critically analyses the language use of those in power, those who are responsible for the existence of inequalities and who also have the means and the opportunity to improve conditions (*ibid.*). Wodak (2001b: 11) opines that though power does not originate or develop from language, language could be used to challenge power, to subvert it, to alter distributions of power in the short and long term; hence, CDA shows an interest in the ways in which linguistic forms are applied in various expressions and manipulations of power.

Discourse and Power

In this age of information, language has become very significant in the functioning of a society, as it is an essential element of communication. The ability to control the discourse of a society can help people position themselves as dominant powers in the hierarchy of the social system, and it is through ideology that they balance and / or maintain the unequal power relations in a society (Haque, 2006).

In his pivotal book, *Language and Power*, Fairclough (1989) explores various dimensions of the relationships of power and language (2001: 36).[2] He focuses upon two major aspects of the power / language relationship—power *in* discourse, and power *behind* discourse. Besides other issues he also talks about the 'hidden power' of the discourse of the mass media (*ibid.*). Fairclough (2001a) explains the concept of 'power *in* discourse' with an illustration of the exercise of power in a type of face-to-face discourse setting—doctor / medical students—in a hospital where the participants are unequal, what he calls *unequal encounter*. He also explains the power in cross-cultural encounters with an example of face-to-face discourse situation—an interview. However, when discussing the notion of the 'hidden power' of discourse he says:

> ... a not inconsiderable proportion of discourse in contemporary society actually involves participants who are separated in time and place. This is true of written language generally, but the growth area for this sort of discourse has been the mass media—television, radio, film as well as newspapers. Mass-media discourse is interesting because the mature of the power relations enacted in it is often not clear, and there are reasons for seeing it as involving hidden relations of power. (Fairclough, 2001 a: 41)

He goes on to explain that one of the most obvious differences between face-to-face discourse and media discourse is the 'one-sidedness' of the latter (i.e. media discourse). In face-to-face interaction, the participants have the option of alternating between being the producer and interpreter of texts while in media discourse, which generally includes writing, the participants do not have the

option of alternating their roles (cf. Zuraidah and Mei Li, 2002; 2003; Mei Li 2005). This seems to suggest that in media discourse, the producers have the power to exert their ideology on the interpreter, and this may sometimes be hegemonic in nature.

Another important distinction that Fairclough makes is the fact that in face-to-face discourse the participants have the flexibility of adapting to the language (and situation) based on the 'feedback' they get from co-participants (*Ibid.*). In media discourse the producer of the text and the interpreter of the text are separated by time and space (Haque, 2004: 56). Hence, the producers do not have the opportunity of getting the instant feedback as is possible in face-to-face interaction in real-time; which means, they cannot always adapt according to the needs of the interpreters or audience (*Ibid.*). In such a situation, since all discourse producers produce with *some* consumers in mind, what media producers do is address an *ideal subject* (e.g. the audience), be it viewer, or listener, or reader (Fairclough, 2001a: 41). When this happens, the text is very rarely context or ideology free, as the interpretation of that text will be tinted with the ideology, at least to some extent, of the producer; media discourse is seldom, if at all, absolutely disinterested, unbiased or neutral (Haque, 2004: 56).

Power as Control

Most work on discourse, from a critical perspective, centres on the notion of soci*al power*, which van Dijk (2001: 254) terms as *control*. He differentiates between the different *types of power*: the coercive power of the military and of violent people tends to be based on force, the power of the rich is usually based on their money, whereas the relatively persuasive power of parents, professors, or journalists may be based on knowledge, information, or authority (2001: 55).

Van Dijk (*Ibid.*) says power is not always exercised in 'obviously abusive acts', it may be enacted in a variety of taken-for-granted actions of everyday life, for example, many forms of day to day sexism and racism. From a discourse-power perspective, those who control the most influential discourse possess greater chances of controlling the minds and actions of others. This is possible, according to van Dijk (*ibid.*), through the 'control of public discourse' and 'mind control'. Hence, it is possible to attain power, more specifically *social power*, through the control of public discourse as well as the control of the mind. CDA addresses such forms of power that may result in sustaining social inequalities.

Critique of CDA

As noble as the intentions of CDA may be, it has its critics. However, all of them are not necessarily adversaries of CDA. In directing their criticisms, some critics (such

as, Billig, 2003; Stubbs, 1997; Toolan 1997, Haig 2004) are optimistic and even go to the extent of offering suggestions on how to improve CDA, some (for example, Schegolff, 1997, 1998; Widdoson, 1995a, 1995b, 1996) are more critical, while others (like, Hammersley, 1997) speculate on the theoretical rationality.

Billig (2003: 44) feels that there may be a need to move away form the term 'Critical Discourse Analysis' as if it were a recognizable product, and disengage from the rhetoric that has lead from 'critical approaches' to the abbreviated and capitalized term 'CDA'. He advises (44-45) young academics not to merely identify themselves with the defined way of doing academic research but also to engage themselves in the critical analysis of discourse; in doing so, they, especially those without established positions, should criticize the language and rhetoric of the established critical writers. The results would be uncomfortable for the critical experts, which it should be, as this may safeguard the continuity of the culture of social critique into the future (Billig, 2003: 45). Van Dijk (2001c: 95) has already mentioned that he is against 'personality cults', he neither offers a ready-made 'method van Dijk' of doing CDA nor does he want colleagues or students to 'follow' him—a form of academic obsequiousness that he finds incompatible with a critical attitude. He further mentions that, during his many years of experience as editor of several international journals, he found that contributors who imitate and follow some great master lack originality. According to him (2001c: 95-6), good CDA should integrate the best work of many people (famous or not) from various disciplines, countries, cultures and directions of research; in other word, CDA should be essentially diverse and multidisciplinary.

Michael Stubbs mentions that tends to see himself as a 'sympathetic' (Stubbs, 1994) critic (of CDA) while viewing H. G. Widdowson (1995a, b, 1996) as 'less sympathetic' (Stubbs, 2002: 202). He starts off on an apologetic note by saying:

> Although ...: I make several criticisms of CDA, I hope my comments will be taken in a positive spirit. Many of the observations made in CDA seem to me to be correct. (Stubbs, 2002: 203)

Stubbs (2002: 12) perceives that though there are certain forms of circularity from which CDA cannot escape, some of the questions he posed can be answered with empirical methods. He proposes several criteria form published work:

- ethnographic studies of actual text-production (e.g. Bell, 1991);
- analysis of co-occurring linguistic features (e.g. Biber, 1988, 1995);
- comparison of texts and corpora, including diachronic and cross-language corpora (e.g. Krishnamurty, 1996; Stubbs, 1997);

- study of text dissemination and audience reception (e.g. Zipes, 1993; van Noppen, 1996).   (Stubbs, 2002: 213)

He further suggests that in addition to the studies of production and reception, the text analysis must be more detailed, comparative, not restricted to isolated data fragments as well as increasing the range of linguistic features to be studied.

Toolan (2002: 220) emphasizes that in general he is more in favour of CDA than against it. However, since it is now established enough to be an 'approach', or a shared perspective', he says that anything established to that extent deserves to be reviewed constructively, as he hopes to do. He (2002: 38) believes that the premises upon which CDA is based upon are irrefutable and CDA as an idea makes sense. Nevertheless, for CDA to make more of a difference, he thinks:

> it needs to critique some of its own theoretical distinctions (e.g. between description and interpretative explanation), it needs to be more critical and more demanding of the text linguistics it uses, it must strive for greater thoroughness and strength of evidence in its presentation and argumentation, and it must not shrink form prescribing correction or reform of particular hegemonizing discourse. (Toolan, 2002: 38)

Schegloff (2002:17) says that CDA should be applied to a world refracted through the prism of disciplined and molecular observation, observation at the level of the lived reality of the events which compose it, and not to the world as refracted through the prism of 'casual' vernacular observation, constrained neither by the discipline of interactional participation nor by that of systematic empirical inquiry. He, as Titscher *et al* (2000:163) points out, argues that in spite of the different goals of CDA, it should seriously deal with its material; in other words, it should at least be compatible with what is discernibly relevant for the behaviour of the participants in an interaction. He emphasis when such categories as the gender of participants are made relevant— for example, with specific reference to ('ladies last')—are they important for analysis (Meyer, 2001: 17). If CDA is perceived in this manner, in Schegloff's opinion, it would not be an alternative to conversation analysis, but would require a conversation analysis to be carried out first; if not, the critical analysis will not 'bind' to the data, and risks ending up being only ideological (*Ibid.*).

Even though Widdowson (2004) acknowledges the relevance and the opportune of CDA in 'engaging with real world issues of immediate and pressing importance', his views (Widdowson, 1995a, 1995b, 1996) of CDA have given raise to a battle of academic debate between himself and Fairclough. His (Widdowson, 1995a) criticisms may be condensed into three points: (i) he criticizes the fact that the term discourse is as vague as it is fashionable and that

people talk about it without knowing with any certainty just what it is; (ii) he also criticizes the lack of a clear demarcation between text and discourse; (iii) furthermore – and here his criticism approaches that of Schegloff – as Titscher *et al* (2000:163-64) points out, that Widdowson suggests CDA is an ideological interpretation and therefore not an analysis. The term critical discourse analysis is a contradiction in terms. Widdowson (1995a: 169) believes that CDA is, in a dual sense, a biased interpretation: in the first place it is prejudiced on the basis of some ideological commitment, and then it selects for analysis such texts as will support the preferred interpretation. Analysis aught to mean the examination of several interpretations, and in the case of CDA this is not possible because of prior judgements (Titscher *et al*, 2000:163-64).

Fairclough (2002: 148), in his reply, points out that Widdowson defines his 'main purpose' in his article is to show that the name 'critical discourse analysis' is a contradiction in terms – because CDA is an interpretation and not analysis (p. 159); however, a major portion of the article deals with a critique of those who fail to distinguish between text and discourse. Fairclough (*Ibid.*) emphasizes that he has always made this distinction in his work, which in a way is roughly similar to Widdowson's. Fairclough (1996), in reply to Widdowson's last criticism, emphasizes the open-endedness of the results required in the principles of CDA; he further points out that CDA, unlike most other approaches, is always explicit about its own position and commitment (Meyer, 2001: 17), a point which was also suggested by van Dijk (2002) :

> Unlike other discourse analysts, critical discourse analysts (should) take an explicit socio-political stance: they spell out their point of view, perspective, principles and aims, both within their discipline and within society at large. Although not in each stage of theory formation and analysis, their work is admittedly and ultimately political ... their critical targets are power elites that enact, sustain, legitimate, condone or ignore social inequality and injustice. (van Dijk, 2002: 107-8)

Gouveia (2003: 56-57) says that Widdowson's criticism, regarding CDA's inability to provide analysis but only partial interpretation, is missing the point, as probably is Fairclough's reply to Widdowson. He elaborates that there is nothing wrong in providing only a partial interpretation:

> If one considers that there are no static structures in discourse and that one cannot ascribe it a definite reading because its potentiality is what lies in between readings, or observations and measurements, to use more scientific words. Widdowson is, strangely enough, missing the fact that there is no value-free CDA, that, ultimately, there is no value-free science. (Gouveia, 2003: 57)

Hammersley (2002: 251) outlines three philosophical positions on which CDA could be founded—Marxism and the Frankfurt School critical theory, decisionism, and the universal pragmatics of Habermas—arguing that non of the positions is convincing. He points out that the over zealousness of CDA takes much for granted, adopting relatively crude positions on a variety of issue:

- it often involves the adoption of a macro-sociological theory in which there are only two parties—the oppressors and the oppressed—and, only one relationship between them: domination;
- equally important, the terms 'oppression', 'equality', and 'emancipation' are used as if what they referred to could be identified easily and uncontentiously, yet there are fundamental problems with each of them (see Geuss, 1981: Western, 1990: Cranston, 1967 respectively);
- in addition, this approach can lead to a rather naive view of events and actions, as being either progressive or regressive. (Hammersley, 2002: 252)

He remarks that one of the declarations of CDA analysts is that they are in favour of 'social change', regarding this he says:

> Thus, van Dijk refers to 'the necessity of change' the world, without specifying the nature of the desired change: as if change were a good thing in itself, or could be only in one direction (van Dijk, 1993a, p. 131). The history of the twentieth century, and even the past 20 years, should have cured us of such enlightenment optimism. (Hammersley, 2002: 252-53)

CDA is descriptive and not prescriptive; analysts primarily try to make people aware / conscious of opaque or non-apparent issues embedded in the society. In other words, CDA analysts merely seem to emphasize on the oppressive power structures and / or issues embedded in the social setup, and do not suggest plausible means of resisting or countering social inequalities (Haque, 2006). Toolan (1997: 88-90) argues 'that prescription not only ought to but must be part of the armoury of CDA'. Haig (2005) is very much aware of the non-prescriptive nature of CDA analysts, especially in the works of Norman Fairclough; he illustrates with reference to Fairclough's *New Labour, New Languag?*, (2000), and says that the book discusses a 'political topic addressed not to an academic but to a lay audience'. However, when it come to giving advice on how to counter the discourse of New Labour, Haig (2005: 12) points out Fairclough makes recommendations to 'New Labour' and not to the 'lay-reader' whom he had been addressing all this while:

> ... after 150-odd pages of characteristically compelling analysis and evaluation of the genres, discourses and styles of New Labour, Fairclough concludes the book with

just over a page on the question of 'Is there an alternative?' His answer takes the form ... of three 'broad recommendations' addressed rhetorically to New Labour (and not, be it noted, to the lay-reader) ... But what are readers, as 'overhearers', to make of these recommendations? ... there are no recommendations for the readers as to what they could do ... Haig (2005: 12)

Haque (2005) is also aware of some of the criticisms against CDA. In order to emphasize on the issue of exclusion in recruitment advertisements in the Malaysian context, he not only considered substantial amount of data—38 months (September 2001 to October 2004)—but also gave voice to the 'other party' by interviewing 56 respondents, comprising employers, professionals, government officials, academics, students and personnel from various organisations, companies and institutions. Furthermore, he suggested recommendations as to how the situation of the 'practice of exclusion' in recruitment advertisements may be tackled immediately and overcome in the long-run.

Conclusion
One of the objectives of CDA is to focus on social issues and problems, and take up the cause of the oppressed and downtrodden people of a society. Some academics are more inclined to help what Fairlcough (2001b) calls the 'losers of the society'—those who are marginalized, excluded, manipulated or simply taken advantage of because they are less informed about certain social practices. Such academics seem to be sceptical about DA in the sense that it is not far reaching enough to help unveil or expose social practices that are opaque in nature. They ask such questions as 'So what if you do DA?' or 'How can DA expose social inequality?'

Crossing the boundaries of the academia and venturing into the different realms of the social context, CDA addresses issues prevailing in the contemporary society. CDA analysts make it a point to take up the position of the uninformed people and endeavour to inform them about certain deceptive social practices that are practised by the select few, that is, those in positions of power; they (CDA analysts) do this by describing and explaining the relationships of social practices in terms of discourse, ideology and power. The goal of the (CDA) analysts is to curb the power of the select few who benefit at the expense of the common people, and thereby reduce social inequality. It is this addressing of social inequality, through the critical analysis of discourse that constitutes the *so-what-factor*.

Though CDA established itself through a network of scholars, these scholars are very pragmatic in the sense that they focus on real-life issues and problems of the contemporary society, problems that are social and political in nature. Even as one of the most stunch critics of CDA, Widdowson (2004: viii) acknowledges

that the 'language we come across in the print and on screen seems to be designed to deceive, used as a front, a cover-up of ulterior motives'. He also recognizes that the concern of CDA is to 'educate people more broadly in the abuse of power by linguistic means, to reveal how language is used for deception and distortion and the fostering of prejudice' (*ibid.*).

Due the advancement of communication technology, the media communication can defy the time-space-place barrier as opposed to face-to-face communication. As a result, the mass media can act as a powerful source for disseminating information. Those who control the media can act as gate-keepers and control the flow of information. Sometimes the information that is communicated to the masses may have hidden agendas which benefit a select few of the society. These select few manipulate their privileged positions in society by controlling media discourse in such a manner that they benefit at the expense of the common people.

It seems that the emergence of CDA, despite its detractors and the flaws in its methodology, is very timely in addressing the socio-political issues that are embedded in the infrastructure of societies. CDA can act as double-edged bladed: though lofty as it may seem, it could be thought of as a movement that endeavours to achieve utopian ideals, and at the same time it can be used as a system or tool for dissecting social and political discourse in order to expose the hidden agenda of the select few.

References

1   The Erasmus network consisted of a cooperation between Siegfried Jäger (Duisburg), Per Linell (Linköping), Norman Fairclough (Lancaster), Teun van Dijk (Amsterdam), Gunter Kress (London), Theo van Leeuwen (London), Ruth Wodak (Vienna).

2   The 2nd edition of Fairclough's *Language and Power* was published in 2001.

Bibliography

Billig, Michael. Critical Discourse Analysis and the Rhetoric of Critique. In Weiss, W. and Wodak, R. (ed), *Critical Discourse Analysis: Theory and Interdisciplinarity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 35-36, 2003.

Foucault, Michel. *Archaeology of Knowledge*. London Tavistock, 1972a.

Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things*. London Tavistock, 1972b.

Foucault, Michel. The Order of Discourse. In M. Shapiro (Ed.), *Language and Politics*. London: Basil Blackwell, 108-138, 1984.

Fairclough, Norman. *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. London: Longman, 1995a.

Fairclough, Norman. A Reply to Henry Widdoson's "Discourse Analysis: A Critical View". In *Language and Literature*, 5(1), pp. 49-56, 1996.

Fairclough, Norman. *New Labour, New Language?* London: Routledge, 2000.

Fairclough, Norman. *Language and Power*, 2nd edn. London: Longman, 2001a

Fairclough, Norman. The Dialectics of Discourse. In, *Textus* XIV.2, pp. 231-242, 2001b

Fairclough, Norman. A Reply to Henry Widdoson's "Discourse Analysis: A Critical View". In Toolan, M. (ed), *Critical Discourse Analysis: Critical Concepts in Linguistics* (Vol. 3: Current Analyses and Critiques). London: Routledge, pp. 148-155, 2002.

Gouveia, Carlos A. M. Critical Discourse Analysis and the Development of the New Science. In Weiss, W. and Wodak, R. (ed), *Critical Discourse Analysis: Theory and Interdisciplinarity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 47-62 2003.

Haig, Edward. Some Observations on the Critique of Critical Discourse Analysis. In Postigo, M. L., *Approaches to Critical Discourse Analysis* (ed.). CD-ROM. University of Valencia, 2005.

Haque, M. S. Critical Discourse Analysis as an Inter-Transdisciplinary Approach to Studying Issues in Contemporary Societies: An Introduction. In Hua, T. K. *et al* (eds), *Proceedings: International Conference on Social Sciences and Humanities*. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, pp. 343-57, 2004.

Haque, Muhammed Shahriar. *Discourse of Exclusion: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Recruitment Advertisements*. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Malaya, Malaysia. 2005.

Haque, Muhammed Shahriar. Discourse of Power in Recruitment Advertisements. In Azirah Hashim and Norizah Hassan (eds), *Varieties of English in Southeast Asia and Beyond*. Kuala Lumpur: University Malaya Press, 2006.

Haque, Muhammed Shahriar and Khan, Mahmud Hasan. Language and the Order of Hegemony in Society. In *Panini – NSU Studies in Language and Literature, Vol. 2, 2003-2004*, pp. 45-72, 2004.

Haque, Muhammed Shahriar and Zuraidah Mohd. Don. Discourse of Exclusion: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Recruitment Advertisements. In proceedings, *Malaysia International Conference on Languages, Literatures and Cultures (MICOLLAC) 2003*, CD-ROM. Universiti Putra Malaysia, 2003.

Hammersley, Martyn. On the Foundations of Critical Discourse Analysis. In *Language and Communication*, 17(3), pp. 237-248, 1997.

Hammersley, Martyn. On the Foundations of Critical Discourse Analysis. In Toolan, M. (ed), *Critical Discourse Analysis: Critical Concepts in Linguistics* (Vol. 3: Current Analyses and Critiques). London: Routledge, pp. 242-57, 2002.

Hodge, Robert. and Kress, Gunther. *Language as Ideology*, 2nd edition. London: Routledge, 1993.

McLellan, David. *Ideology*, 2nd edition. Buckingham: Open University Press, 1995.

Mei Li, Lean. *The Discursive Construction of AIDS in the Print Media: A Critical Discourse Analysis*. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Department of English Language, Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, University of Malaya, 2005.

Meyer, Martyn. Between Theory, Method, and Politics: Positioning of the Approaches to CDA. In Wodak, R. and Meyer, M. (ed), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Sage Publications, pp. 14-31), 2001.

Schegolff, Emanuel A. Whose Text Whose Context? In *Discourse & Society*, 3, pp. 4-37, 1997.

Schegolff, Emanuel A. Text and Context Paper. In *Discourse & Society*, 8 (2), pp. 165-187, 1998.

Schegolff, Emanuel A Text and Context Paper. In Toolan, M. (ed), *Critical Discourse Analysis: Critical Concepts in Linguistics* (Vol. 4: Critical Concepts in Linguistics). London: Routledge, pp. 1-25, 2002.

Stubbs, Michael. Whorf's Children: Critical Comments on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). In Ryan A. and Wray A. (eds) *Evolving Methods of Language*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, pp. 100-116, 1997.

Stubbs, Michael. Whorf's Children: Critical Comments on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). In Toolan, M. (ed), *Critical Discourse Analysis: Critical Concepts in Linguistics* (Vol. 3: Current Analyses and Critiques). London: Routledge, 202-218, 2002.

Titscher, Stefan, Meyer, Michael, Wodak, Ruth and Vetter, Eva. *Methods of Text and Discourse Analysis*. London: Sage, 2000.

Toolan, Michael. What is critical discourse analysis and why are people saying such terrible things about it? In *Language and Literature*, 6(2), pp. 83-103. 1997.

Toolan, Michael. What is critical discourse analysis and why are people saying such terrible things about it? In Toolan, M. (ed), *Critical Discourse Analysis: Critical Concepts in Linguistics* (Vol. 3: Current Analyses and Critiques). London: Routledge, pp. 219-241), 2002.

Van Dijk, Teun A. Editor's forward to Critical Discourse Analysis, *Discourse & Society*, 4(2), pp. 131-2, 1993.

Van Dijk, T. A. *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. London: Sage Publications, 1998.

Van Dijk, T. A. Critical Discourse Analysis. In Schiffrin, D., Tannen, D. and Hamilton. H.E. (ed), *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. Oxford: Blackwell, 352-71, 2001.

Van Dijk Teun A. Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis. In Toolan, M. (ed), *Critical Discourse Analysis: Critical Concepts in Linguistics* (Vol. 2: Leading Advocates). London: Routledge, pp. 104-141, 2002.

Weiss, W. and Wodak, R. *Critical Discourse Analysis: Theory and Interdisciplinarity* (ed). New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Van Dijk, Teun, Critical Discourse Analysis. In Schiffrin, D., Tannen, D. and Hamilton. H.E. (ed), *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 352-71, 2001b.

Wodak, Ruth. What CDA is About – A Summary of its History, Important Concepts and its Developments. In Wodak, R. and Meyer, M. (ed), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Sage Publications, pp. 1-13, pp. 2001.

Widdoson, Henry G. Discourse Analysis: A Critical View. In *Language and Literature*, 4(3), pp. 157-172, 1995a.

Widdoson, Henry G. Review of Fairclough Discourse and Social Change. In *Applied Linguistics*, 6(4), pp. 510-16, 1995b.

Widdoson, Henry G. Reply to Fairclough: Discourse and Interpretation: Conjectures and Refutations. In *Language and Literature*, 5(1), pp. 57-69, 1996.

Widdowson, Henry G. *Text, Context, Pretext: Critical Issues in Discourse Analysis*. London: Blaclwell, 2004,

Zuraidah Mohd. Don and Mei Li, Lean. The Discursive Construction of AIDS in Print Media: Texts and the representation of the Other. In Rosli Talif et. Al. (eds), *Diverse Voices: Selected Readings in Language*. Serdang: UPM. pp 255-268, 2002.

Zuraidah Mohd. Don and Mei Li, Lean. Discourse, Power and Subjectivity: Print Media ad the Discursive Construction of AIDS. In Asmah Haji Omar, Halimah Mohd. Said and Zainab Abd. Majid (eds), *Language and Power*. Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Bahasa Modem Malaysia. pp. 361-373, 2003.