

USE OF MULTIMODAL CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS IN MEDIA STUDIES

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Abstract: This study aims to show the importance and necessity of Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis method in media analysis.

Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis provides a systematic way of studying not only the language but also different semiotic modes like image, photographs, diagrams or graphics in a media text. Visual media, which converges different communication forms together, needs to be analyzed with a multi-layered approach. In visual media like television, Internet, magazine, and newspapers, meaning is not only communicated through language but also with image, sound and other semiotic modes. Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis studies different modes of a media text and how they function together. Visual Strategies and lexical choices in a media text contribute to the representation of persons or events.

This study will try to summarize how Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis denaturalize these ideological representations and claim that, usage of Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis will result in a better understanding of media texts.

Keywords: Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis, Visual Media, Media Studies.

INTRODUCTION

Recently there has been a booming interest in the issue of multimodality. Different academic disciplines have their interest in particular modes like sound, image, language, etc. While these were the subjects of interest in distinct academic work, now there is an attempt to bring all means of making meaning together, under one theoretical roof as part of a single field in a unified account, unifying theory (Kress, 2009, p.5). Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis represents a shift of focus in linguistic research. It is now seen that language use is not an isolated phenomenon.

Multimodality has benefited from insights from a wide array of disciplines, including anthropology, philosophy, psychology, visual media and cultural studies, fine art, linguistics and semiotics.

Research in Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis pursued two main interdependent directions. The first involves screening the meaning-making potential of individual semiotic resources, and second, concentrates on theorizing the interaction between different semiotic resources in multimodal communication (Djanov and Zhao, 2013, p. 2).

SEARCHING THE MEANING

Before discussing Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis, it is helpful to remember the other methods of searching meaning through media texts.

Content Analysis has long been used for the investigations of the way social issues are represented in the mass media and has provided one of the most widely cited kinds of evidence in media studies for many decades.

Investigations took place first, in relation to newspapers and radio, and later, directed at television and cinema. Content Analysis is the most basic way of finding out something about the media's meaning and allows for apparently general statements to be made about aspects of representation. However, content analysis is quite a technical procedure. It is also of limited value in many research contexts, and might best be thought of as a necessary but not sufficient methodology for answering questions about what the media depicts or represents. Content Analysis alone is seldom able to support statements about the significance, effects or interpreted meaning of a domain of representation (Bell, 2008, s: 13).

Another method of analyzing the media texts is Social Semiotic Visual Analysis, which provides a detailed and clear method for analyzing the meanings established by the syntactic relation between the people, places and things depicted in images. These meanings are described as not only representational but also interactional concerned with the modality or perceived truth-value of images and compositional (Van Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2008, p. 3). By saying interactional we mean that images do things to or for the viewer. By saying

compositional we mean that in media, position of images and written text can also has a meaning. Without taking account of visual communication, discourse analysis might not only miss out on information but lead to inaccurate conclusions.

Critical Discourse Analysis is founded upon the Critical Theory, which takes its roots from the works of Karl Marx and Frederich Engels who pointed out that the ideology and power imbalances in society are directly linked to existing socioeconomic conditions.

Frankfurt School scholars developed the critical theory. Especially Horkheimer and Adorno used the “Culture Industry” term to stress out mass media effects on society. They argued that media is supplying an ideological illusion and manipulation on people. Following Frankfurt School, Michael Foucault described how social power operated through discourse. Habermas is one the most important contributors of Critical Theory. With his “Communicative Action” theory, he deals the dimensions of the speech in the aspect of grammatical rules of social act.

After Norman Fairclough has written *Language and Power* in 1989, Critical Discourse Analysis has become an established method in social sciences. He used “Critical Discourse Analysis” term for the first time in his edited book *Critical Language Awareness* on 1992. And this term became the name of his book of year 1995 (Bilig, 2003, p. 35). Fairclough argues that language is an inseparable part of the life and it is connected with the other aspects of social life, thus social analysis and research should always take language into consideration. He adds that one of the most productive ways of making social research is to focus on the language and discourse analysis. He also rejects the approach that says, “Everything is a discourse” and reduces social life into language (Fairclough, 2003, p. 2). Together with Fairclough, mostly known representatives of Critical Discourse Analysis are Ruth Wodak, Teun van Dijk, Paul Chilton.

Critical Discourse analysis regards discourse as a form of social practice. Discourse is socially constitutive and socially conditioned. It constitutes situations, social identities and relationships between people. Discourse reproduces the social status quo and contributes to transforming it. Discourse gives rise to important issues of power as well. Discursive practices may have major ideological effects like producing and reproducing unequal power relations among the society (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997, p. 258). Critical Discourse Analysis aims to make these effects visible.

EMERGENCE OF MULTIMODAL CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis is concerned with developing the theory and practice of the analysis of discourse which make use of multiple semiotic resources; for example, language, visual images, space and architecture. New social semiotic frameworks are presented for the analysis of a range of discourse genres in print media, dynamic and static electronic media and three-dimensional objects in space. The theoretical approach informing these research efforts is Michael Halliday's systemic- functional theory of language, which is extended to other semiotic resources. Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis aims to investigate meaning arising from the integrated use of semiotic resources and represents the early stages in a shift of focus in linguistic enquiry where language use is no longer theorized as an isolated phenomenon (O'Halloran, 2004, p.1).

Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis came out with the efforts of linguists such as Kress and van Leeuwen, Bob Hodge, Kay O'Halloran, Michael Baldry and Paul J. Thibault. These academicians began to look at how language, image and other modes of communication combine to make meaning. They thought that some of the principles of linguistic analysis found in the systematic functional theory of Halliday and also used as the basis of Critical Discourse Analysis, could be equally applied to visual communication. Kress and van Leeuwen's works have been the pioneers of the Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis.

In Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis, the analysis and interpretation of language use is contextualized in conjunction with other semiotic resources, which are simultaneously used for the construction of meaning. For example, in addition to linguistic choices and their typographical instantiation on the printed page, multimodal analysis takes into account the functions and meaning of the visual images, together with the meaning arising from the integrated use of the two semiotic resources (O'Halloran, 2004, p. 1).

Gunter Kress gives the example of traffic signs to stress the importance of multimodality. Imagine a traffic sign showing the way to go to a car park of a supermarket. The sign have 3 different modes: writing,

image and color. If the writing would be used alone it wouldn't work, message would be too complex. If the image would be alone, it would be more understandable but still together with writing and sign, 3 aspects give a more open message (Kress, 2009, p.1).

In media, especially in television, film, and newspaper magazines and in Internet, images are very important. Images are usually used to say things that we cannot say in language. Texts will use linguistics and visual strategies that appear normal or neutral on the surface but which may in fact be ideological and seek to shape the representation of events and persons for particular ends. Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis will seek to denaturalize representations on other modes of communication. Like Critical Discourse Analysis, Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis too, claims that visual communication shapes and be shaped by society. Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis is also interested with the role that visual semiotic choices play in power relations.

So, the question is, how does Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis study the texts.

Here are the basic steps of Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis that is summarized from David Machin and Andrea Mayr's enlightening work *How to Do Critical Discourse Analysis: A Multimodal Introduction*:

1. Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis considers basic lexical analysis of the texts. And then uses analysis of individual visual semiotic choices in texts.
2. Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis looks semiotic resources representing the attitudes of speakers. Analyzing quoting verbs, representation of the attitude of speakers through visual semiotic resources, gaze, poses, etc.
3. Linguistic and visual semiotic resources available for representing people and naming strategies. Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis looks how through language and image, some participants are individualized or collectivized, made specific, generic, personalized or impersonalized, objectivated, anonymised aggregated and suppressed.
4. Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis finds out the way linguistic and visual semiotic resources represent what people do. There are several resources available for representing the same action. Some participants are always represented engaging in mental type actions, while others are being represented engaging with material actions.
5. Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis deals with metaphorical tropes in discourse, i.e., with the issue of how different kinds of metaphors and other rhetorical tropes are used in different contexts to attempt to shape understandings.
6. Nominalization and presupposition in language is a study area of Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis as well.
7. Trying to analyze modality and hedging in texts and visual communication is another step of Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis. (2012)

Inspecting a multimodal text through these seven frames ensures to show out how meaning is build up in media texts and the way that people make, use and reuse semiotic choices. By understanding these choices it may be possible to reveal ideology in media texts and challenge it.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to give a summarized opinion about Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis and discuss the necessity of its usage in media texts and propose the usage of the analysis method. Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis is an excellent method for the reconstruction of media messages, as in media, written or oral expressions work together with image, sound, etc. to create a message.

Especially in Turkish academic environments, multimodal analysis of media texts is quite new and is not being known widely. Hopefully this proposal will be a starting point for the future implementations of the method.

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