

UNIVERSITATEA "OVIDIUS" DIN CONSTANȚA

ȘCOALA DOCTORALĂ DE ȘTIINȚE UMANISTE

DOMENIUL: FILOLOGIE

A Critical Discourse Analysis Approach to Perceptions of Migration in Some British Periodicals

Summary

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Constanta

2022

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Keywords: CDA, SFL, ideology, power, migration, racism, denaturalization,

The dissertation consists of four main chapters. Each of them deals with an important and complementary dimension of the study. The first chapter is devoted to deal with the theoretical background in relation to critical discourse analysis as the field of study adopted in this dissertation. It starts with providing some relevant specifications on what CDA is and some of its most relevant key terms. Then, it sheds lights on media discourse and political speeches as being of central concern to the study. It finally presents detailed explanations on the two main approaches within CDA that have been adopted in the study, i.e. Fairclough's three-dimensional approach and SFL of Halliday and Hassan.

The area of research the current doctoral dissertation deals with has become very important in the world today. Migration has always been part of what is going on with humankind. Specifically over the past decade, migration is one of the topics that make the most headlines. That is because massive movements of people have had an impact on a number of national communities. They have influenced many aspects of national and global situations. As a result, journalists and politicians have dealt with the problem of migration in many ways. One of the ways is by shaping the perceptions and the understandings of the public sphere on the issue for their own agenda's favor. This has become a top concern for politicians and journalists.

Ordinary people are not always conscious about the seriousness of such issues as the formation of perception with regards to such a sensitive topic, i.e. migration. Considering this, the study builds its objectives on two main points: (1) recognizing the importance of

increasing people's awareness on the way language can be used to shape and manipulate minds and perceptions, and (2) the selective attitude that some British periodicals adopt in representing migration issues to the public.

This dissertation takes into account migration as a serious social problem and focuses on uncovering the ways in which this phenomenon is covered in the British press, specifically the periodicals selected. It aims at examining how the discourse of nationalism and xenophobia works to reach certain audience and create important effects. The current dissertation aims at preparing the ground for the denaturalization of the language of migration as it appears in a number of British tabloids in the period of time in which they were published. The focus is on aspects of racism in western countries, where there is a large majority of white people, and on issues related to patterns of access to the public and issues of inequality, racism, and discrimination in the public space. The reproduction and promotion of racism by certain areas of the media is not an easy or uncomplicated procedure. These processes are not always the same. So, they require a series investigation.

The current dissertation focuses on a time when immigration and xenophobia became important issues in the British public space, specifically the beginning of the 21st century. The idea is to show how ideology works and how a critical reader can denaturalize it. So, the present dissertation focuses on certain critical discourse analysis approaches to create a framework for dealing with racism in relation to migration in today's public space. The approaches adopted as study model are two:

- (1) The first is Fairclough's three-dimensional approach, which is used as the main model for the ideological analysis, thematic analysis, and cultural interpretations.
- (2) The second is Halliday's systemic functional linguistics. This model provides the study with the linguistic tools needed in the analysis. So, they provide a solid base, alongside the cultural interpretations, for the ideological and thematic analyses to be done. Those tools are: transitivity, modality and lexical choices.

The data of the current doctoral dissertation, on the other hand, are chosen from British periodicals that cover the issue of migration on daily bases. Those two websites/periodicals are *The Sun* and *The Daily Mail*, more specifically its online version, its website, *Mail Online*.

The articles selected are published between 2014 and 2018. This was the time when the issues of migration and refugees became very sensitive in the British public sphere.

The current study seeks to answer questions among which the following acquire prominence:

- (i) What kind of perceptions are held, maintained or challenged in relation to migration in some British periodicals?
- (ii) What are the linguistic means used to represent migration issues in certain ideological ways?
- (iii) Can a CDA perspective come up with clear images of the way migration is covered in the chosen periodicals?

Generally, this doctoral dissertation follows the following procedures: (i) a theoretical background is represented for the main related concepts, (ii) the methodology and the eclectic model is clearly defined, (iii) the data is analysed linguistically to stop by the main linguistic means used to draw and naturalize certain perceptions, (iv) an ideological representation and discussion is done on the basis of the linguistic evidence provided earlier, and (v) some concluding remarks are formulated.

It is important to see how the media serves in the reproduction of racism. For better clarity, this role is to be separated from the general properties of racism and white dominance in society, including the structural and ideological organization of that form of group power. These key questions show that CDA is, as its name shows, not descriptive, like DA (Discourse Analysis), but critical, socially committed and issue-oriented.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is the most appropriate instrument that can be used to tackle the perception of migration in the selected periodicals. It seeks to examine the linguistic means used to naturalize negative ideologies on such social issues and to provide the basis for the cultural interpretations of texts used in social practice. The focus was on a corpus of tabloid texts, so the conclusions are open to debate, considering the limited scope of the investigation.

The current study concentrates on the relevance of CDA and of cultural studies approaches for an examination of racism and migration in the British public space. Critical Discourse

Analysis as an active engagement with discourse in the social space is one of these critical approaches. The initial sections of the current doctoral dissertation aim at preparing the ground for the denaturalization of the language about migration as it appears in a number of British tabloids, which will be done, as already mentioned, in the last chapter. The focus is on aspects of racism in western countries, where there is a majority of white people and on issues related to patterns of access to the public and issues of inequality, racism and discrimination in the public space.

Norman Fairclough, Teun van Dijk, and Ruth Wodak are among the most important representatives of contemporary Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), and their work has been found very useful in writing this doctoral dissertation, for a better understanding of the theoretical context in which various attitudes, usually negative, towards migration are represented in a certain part of the press.

The focus falls on the tabloids since they try to manipulate their audience by appealing to their emotions and by using sensational language to impress them. Their impact is easy to assess, especially in the context in which the texts were written and published. This impact has to do with the power of discourse to exploit bias and prejudice by convincingly targeting a large audience.

As mentioned, a central part for CDA is power. CDA analyses the language used by those in power, who are responsible for the confirmation, continuation and legitimization of inequalities. CDA researchers are concerned with the way discourse (re)produces social domination, that is, the power abuse of one group over other groups. The problem is that there are as many concepts of power as there are social theories. Power is central for the understanding of the dynamics and specifics of control (of action) in modern societies, but power remains mostly invisible. The relation between social power and language is a continual topic of discussion and debate not only in CDA but also in other areas of the social sciences, in sociology and sociolinguistics.

Media discourse is a rich ground for CDA studies. According to Fairclough, the politics of the media should be seen as of central interest in CDA, media analysis as well. Fairclough argues that the commercial mainstream media work ideologically and are in the service of the

powerful, the elite, and the state. He is aware that media discourses contribute to reproducing social relations of domination and exploitation

As mentioned earlier, the study adopts an eclectic model for the analysis which consists of two main approaches, Fairclough and Halliday are two of the most prominent figures of the field. Fairclough's three-dimensional approach (1992; 1995; 2010) constructs the basis for analysis in the current dissertation. Fairclough states that his work is mainly built on two objectives. The first objective is theoretical while the other is a practical one. The theoretical objective is to highlight the tight relationship between language and power, and how one can reach the latter via the use of the former. The practical objective, on the other hand, is to help increase consciousness's of the role language plays in constructing social relationships because consciousness is the way to 'emancipation' (Fairclough, 1989:1). In his three dimensional approach, Fairclough suggests three stages: *description*, *interpretation* and *explanation*. Thus, in conducting a CDA study, the part of which deals with the analysis of texts is called *description*, the part which deals with the analysis of interaction (or discursive practice) is called *interpretation*, while the part which deals with the analysis of social practice is called *explanation*. All these parts have been a frame of reference in the examination of the texts in the corpus of this doctoral dissertation.

In his textual analysis (*description*), Fairclough makes use of Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). He uses SFL as a toolkit for analysis because 'SFL theorizes language in a way which harmonies far more with the perspectives of critical social science than the other theories of language' (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999:134). Another reason is that Fairclough's idea of language multifunctionality matches to a large extent that of Halliday's idea. In the textual stage, which is also called the description stage, linguistic features such as choices in vocabulary (lexis), grammar (such as transitivity uses) and text structure (such as thematic choice) are systematically analysed. The tools to be analysed are decided by the researchers. As Fairclough states, 'description is the stage which is concerned with the formal properties of text' (Fairclough, 1989: 26).

Within the textual analysis, the current study selects three of Halliday's linguistic tools: transitivity, modality, and lexical choices. Transitivity clarifies who is doing what to whom in what context. It further shows how certain things are foregrounded over others and why. I

have started from the six classifications of processes that Halliday mentions. Those processes are material, mental, relational, behavioral, verbal, and existential.

Modality markers, on the other hand, have substantial implications as to the power relationships that obtain in a given context. The powerful subjects have the truth conditions necessary for obligating, permitting, evaluating and predicting; the powerless usually do not except in the case of irony, humour and “resistance” discourse. (Mazid, 2014:71).

A lexical item is concerned with making choices. Making choices implies that there are alternative choices from which the specific choices are made. This implication in turn implies that there are ideological reasons for preferring particular choices on others. On the base of these facts, lexical choices are important parts of the representation of ideologies on media (Fowler, 1991:81).

The second and the third stage are interrelated. The second stage is *the discursive practice stage*, also called interpretation stage. It refers to the relationship between text and interaction. It sees texts as products of a process of production, and as recourses in the process of interpretation (Fairclough, 1989:26). The third stage is *the social practice stage*, also called *explanation*. Fairclough states that ‘explanation is concerned with the relationship between interaction and social context with the social determination of the process of production and interpretation, and their social effects’ (Fairclough, 1989:26). It analyzes discourse in relation to power and ideology. It views power as a means for hegemony. This dimension is different from the other two in that it ‘may involve its more immediate situational context, the wider context of institutional practices of the event is embedded within, or the yet wider frame of the society and culture’ (Fairclough, 1995:62).

the second theoretical chapter of this dissertation deals with migration. It starts from an understanding of what migration is and from the outline of the history of migration. It also refers to migration in and to Britain and how it looks like. It also discusses migration in relation to racism, from a literature review viewpoint.

Research regarding migration in the public space is important because it is instrumental in identifying biased and prejudiced discourse in the press about an issue that concerns both the native population and the new arrivals looking for a new place in which to live and work.

Migration and racism are two terms that have often been associated. One of them shows a process, the other one a negative attitude. They repeatedly come together as racism against migrants is nowadays a general issue in the examinations of public discourse. Teun Van Dijk is one of the CDA theorists that have written a lot about racism in Western Europe in the last decades of the last century and at the beginning of the 21st century.

Britain, like the majority of Western European countries, has a long history of emigration. The immigration policy of the British government has gone through several periods. It has been fueled mostly by racial concerns rather than concerns about immigrants in general. The overall number of immigrants, often known as the gross immigration flow, has never been a source of worry. Much more important has been the focus on immigrants' skin colour, creed, and ethnic heritage.

Migration and racism repeatedly come together as racism against migrants is nowadays a general issue in the examinations of many public discourses. In the International law, racism is defined as "any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.".

Van Dijk explains that the problem of the increase of racism by the media is much more complex. Its structural and ideological ramifications require a more essential approach, accounting for the political, economic and socio-cultural role of the Press as a whole in white-dominated societies". Van Dijk concludes that the reproduction of racism by the media is not a simple and straightforward process.

Moving to Chapter Three, *The British Press and the Discourse of Racism*, I will note that the word 'racism' is not just about beliefs or statements it also contains the ability to force those beliefs or world views as hegemonic, and as a basis for the refusal of rights or equality. For this reason, racism is embedded in power relations of different types, being seen as a system justifying the use of the phrase systemic racism by a large number of critical race theorists, for example. The focus in this doctoral dissertation as a whole is on aspects of racism in the media in some British periodicals. The reproduction and promotion of racism by certain areas of the media is not a simple and straightforward process. It is important to see how the media

serves in the reproduction of racism. This dissertation shows the effects of racism as they have appeared in British periodicals over the last few years.

One might conclude that the reproduction of racism in the media has not been a straightforward and simple procedure even in more intolerant times. The role of the media in reproducing racism, in the opinion of some, is directly related to the fundamental aspects of racism and the rule of white people in society, particularly the structural and ideological patterns of group power. Whether things are changing for the better or for the worse is to be seen by the careful examination of influential expression regarding racism and immigration in the public space, especially in the mass media, which targets a very large audience.

The last chapter conducts data analysis and discussion, followed by cultural interpretation, for which contexts are particularly relevant. The language analysis is inspired by M.A.K. Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar theory and describes how transitivity, modality and lexical choices have been used for the initial description of language. This is then used as a starting point for the interpretation and evaluation of the articles from British periodicals.

Ten articles are chosen, five from *The Sun* and five from *Mail Online*. The articles are obviously communicating certain perceptions of immigrants and immigration. *The Sun* and *The Daily Mail*, whose online version (*Mail Online*) supply a few articles here, are very influential media voices in the UK, and the perceptions on migration which are being investigated in the current doctoral dissertation are based on these texts.

The study comes up with the following conclusions:

First: all the hypotheses of the study have been verified. They are as follows:

1. Migration and migrants are portrayed negatively in the two selected British periodicals: *The Sun* and *Mail Online*, even when they do not superficially create that impression all the time. All of their characteristics as individuals, intentions and motivations and the impact they leave on the country are framed in a negative way. A holistic approach is adopted in attributing negativity to migration and migrants. Also, strategies of exaggeration, aggregation, dehumanization and selectivity are used in employing certain linguistic tools.
2. A xenophobic and racist perception is promoted on those periodicals. Migrants are defined as out-group people in terms of "Them". They are distinguished from the Brits both in terms

of characteristics and qualifications and in terms of liabilities. Migrants are defined as unfavored entrants and as a burden.

3. Certain linguistic means are used to naturalize the perception and the framing so people get affected, sometimes even without awareness or conscious. The linguistic means involve making certain lexical and modality choices and structuring the participants and their circumstances in certain transitivity kinds.

4. Investigating such social issues of international importance from a CDA perspective is fruitful and important both on the academic level and the social one. The linguistic and the thematic analyses in addition to the ideological discussion and evaluation reveal a lot of hidden details in respect to migration and migrants. They put together tiny details to uncover the naturalized and the hidden big negative picture of migration and migrants on the selected media so that people can be aware of what is happening on media.

Second: The questions raised by the current dissertation are all answered. They are as the following:

1. The first question which reads as “what kind of perceptions are held, maintained or challenged in relation to migration in some British periodicals?” has been answered and clarified. The kinds of perception are undeniably negative. A holistic approach is followed to picture migrants and migration as threat to the UK society and their people. Generally, three main kinds of perception are shaped to seed the feeling of rejection in The Brits towards the migrants, which are: (i) migrants are not one of us (Us VS. Them perception), (ii) migrants and migration change the society we live in (life before them is not like life after or with them) and (iii) migrants are mostly bad people with very low life and work qualities so migration never brings the good examples of people to the UK.

2. The second question which investigates the kinds of linguistic means used to form migration and migrant discourses is also answered. The current study finds that there are three main kinds of linguistic means help the most to construct, communicate and read negative interpretations on migration and migrants. Those are: (i) the use of certain vocabularies (i.e. lexical items), (ii) the use of modalities in certain ways and (iii) transitivity structuring.

3. The third question which reads as “can a CDA perspective come up with clear images of the way migration is covered in the chosen periodicals?” has reached an answer and its answer is well verified. CDA as a field of study has proven its suitability to clarify and denaturalize the negative perceptions communicated implicitly and explicitly on migration and migrants on

certain periodicals. Thus, CDA can and does come up with clear images of the way(s) migration is covered.

Third: The negative perception of migration is framed on the base of tackling the below mentioned main ideological considerations which relate to people the most and make readers place themselves in a victim position within the negative interpretation:

1. A triangle of community components is developed to help frame the way migrants' threat and harm each of the main components of the society, namely (i) the adults, (ii) the kids and (ii) the daily life. The public space is convinced to perceive migrants and migration as a source of threat, burden and harm via their impact on each of the targeted three components.
2. A triangle of human construction is on the other hand developed as the base for discussing the planned means with which migrants' character, goal or intention and impact are attacked all together. The overall coverage intends to frame migrants into a negative state and represent them as unhealthy addition to the society.
3. Three main themes are developed to shape the perception of the audience against migration and migrants. Those themes are: (i) the theme of "US" and "Them", (ii) the theme of before and after, and (iii) the theme of "good and bad migrants." These themes work on increasing the sense of rejection and unacceptability in the public space towards migrants. The themes are all in a form of dichotomies, although the reality, to which they refer, as the articles themselves show, is much more complex than that. Anti-immigration discourse is used by some tabloids, but not accepted by the British public at large, especially by young and more educated people.

Finally, returning to the overall conjunctions of linguistic analysis and ideological interpretation that were occasioned by the specific examinations of the media texts, there is the general realisation that ideological discursive formations affect the management of media discourse, particularly the coverage of immigration discourse. They have the obvious tendency to naturalise in subtle forms (belonging to what Peter Teo calls "the new racism"), to hide under the appearance of acceptable language, what should be unacceptable in a civilized society, aspects of xenophobia, bias, discrimination, whose main targets identified in the current dissertation were the migrants. While ideological discursive formations are effective in naturalizing these unacceptable discourses, it is the responsibility of critical approaches to discourse, among which CDA assumes a central position, to denaturalise the

ideology related to these formations. The current dissertation is meant to contribute to a better understanding of the mechanisms of these IDFs and to the articulation of comprehensive ways of resisting them as part of a more balanced relationship between authoritative and influential voices in the public space and increasingly critical and ideologically-aware audiences, among whom students and researchers of CDA appear to find their right place.

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