Current Directions of Discourse Analysis in Education

Laura PITARIU

Universitatea „Lucian Blaga" din Sibiu
Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu
Personal e-mail: laura.pitariu@yahoo.com

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This paper sets out to emphasize the relevance of Critical Discourse Analysis in the field of education, by tackling some classical, as well as, contemporary approaches, emerged in a period of paradigm shift from the classical classroom discourse to innovative teacher-student discourses and interdisciplinary, communicative attempts. This paper provides an overview of the role of the critical discourse analysis in education.

Keywords: didactic discourse, discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis, communicative approaches, classroom discourse

Critical discourse analysis is a compilation of theories and methods which are problem-oriented and cross-curricular. This is why there are a lot of parallel "areas of commensurability" between the CDA practices and the educational field of research. Rebecca Rogers identified three main areas. (Rogers in Rogers ed. 2011:1)

To start with, education activities are considered to be communicative, thus CDA has the role of analysing how texts and oral interaction evolve in different contexts. Secondly, discourse studies offer the possibility to analyse the educational process form a sociocultural point of view. Since discourse deals with cultural, political, gender, religious or economic factors, these factors provide a wide frame of analysing the texts and the interaction at a particular moment, a third area of study. A first area refers to the fact that both discourse and education studies are based on two systems of theoretical assumptions that interfere to address the complex problems of the world and not simply language utterances.

The role of the discourse studies in education has been clearly defined in the work "Discourse Studies in Education" written by Teun van Dijk from the University of Amsterdam, a linguist who has been quoted in the previous chapters, too. He emphasizes the importance of the discourse studies in education, since both of them can be considered interdisciplinary fields. He identifies three main directions to express the relevance of CDA to education. (van Dijk, 1981).

First, learning materials are various such as texts, manuals, class interaction, dialogue, etc., consequently their contents should be examined from different points of view. Secondly, one should examine the influence of these educational written or oral texts on the process of learning, having in consideration that learning acquisitions are also influenced by emotions, personal beliefs or changes in the system of education. Last, but not least, he refers to the sociocultural influence on the process of learning-teaching-evaluation, which provides another area to be analysed.

When speaking about educational contexts, he has in view the classroom interaction, the reading comprehension process, textbooks, teaching discourse

and communication and the analysis of discourse and communication, aspects that are considered the most relevant.

Classroom interaction refers to the dialogue between teachers and students and it is influenced by the institutional context, as well as by other local and internal factors. He exemplifies that knowledge given in a particular subject "calls for a large variety of speech acts and transaction types," (van Dijk 1981:12) as it is not enough to simply offer the information to students and then ask questions about it, but the process should be an interactive one. Students have to base their acquisitions on exiting previous knowledge about a topic and on the global coherence of a topic. They need to be given aims and targets, a personal plan and some instructional suggestions.

Reading and comprehension do not refer to word or letter identification. Students need to be provided with different types of discourses at the higher levels of education, starting with high school, so that they should be able to overpass any obstacles such as incoherent texts or redundantly coherent texts. Personal beliefs, the ability to create connections and sociocultural factors will help students understand better the text, using a global comprehension. Thus, different types of discourses, especially more abstract one will enable students to develop their reading-comprehension competence. Textbooks and other materials containing texts represent another area of discussion for van Dijk. Textbooks should explain the global context according to various other factors, such as economic, political and cultural, whenever tackling a particular topic of a subject such as literature, geography, history, etc. Important passages in a textbook can be underlined by authors in order to help students make summaries or generalisations. Argumentative discourses play the role of explaining to students the conditions of a certain process or event.

The linguist considers that teaching discourse from early ages would be of much help. National curricula must contain different types of discourse, from different domains, depending on the age of the students, both receptive and productive: narratives, essays, letters, newspapers, etc., in order for the students to acquire a wide range of communicative skills.

There is a close link between the analysis of the discourse and communication. Teaching supposes introducing different types of discourses at different levels. However, students also need to possess information about language and types of discourse, or in other words, I will call it *a metalanguage of the discourse and language*. This will enable them to use the appropriate language when analysing different types of discourse, when explaining their opinions on certain text, oral or written. Van Dijk suggests different types of communicative activities for teachers

to use in the classroom, in order to develop students' discourse competence, such as materials from media, conversations on various topics or projects.

To conclude, the role of CDA in education is relevant. At higher levels of education (starting with high school), students should be able to analyse different types of discourses and to correlate them with sociocultural realities of the world.

1. Critical Discourse Analysis as Theory in Education

Educational practices in classrooms and schools have become over the past years, not only opportunities to analyse the language produced in the classroom, but also to consider the relation between the language used and the macro-factors that govern the world around: sociocultural factors, political factors, identity, gender, etc.

Norman Fairclough used the term *semiosis* to refer to discourse as language and the term *text* to refer to social events, both written and spoken. He also provides a scheme to correlate the two terms mentioned, explaining that languages and texts are mediated by means of discourse methods:
"Social structures: languages"
"Social practices: orders of discourse"
"Social events: texts"
(Fairclough in ed. Rogers, 2011:120)
Being an abstract entity, language is regarded as a social structure, while the effects of this social structure are the social events, or texts, intermediated by orders of discourse. Orders of discourse refer to discourses (ways of acting), genres (ways of representing) and styles (ways of being) and the three aspects represent "semiosis." For example, the classroom teaching process comprises ways of using language with particular interaction, social background and persons involved. CDA analyses genres, styles and discourses and the relationship among them. He considers educational research as being a social practice including classroom activities, educational management, government guidance, etc.

Another aspect discussed by Fairclough in his study is that of "interdiscursivity," which he defines as the combination of two types of discourses. (Fairclough, 1992). "Interdiscursive texts" have the potential to reanimate stable discourses and to link language to learning. Cynthia Lewis, professor at the University of Minnesota and Jean Ketter, professor at the Grinnel College, provided us with a study of the interdiscursivity in classroom literature texts presented in their paper "Learning as Social Interaction: Interdiscursivity in a Teacher and Researcher Study Group," article edited in Rebecca Roger's book of 2011, "An Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis in Education."

They analysed the interaction of a teacher and a research study group regarding the reading and teaching of multicultural literature in a study which expanded over 4 years. Not only did they focus on multicultural literature, but they also discussed problems of race, identity and choice of texts. They recorded data of literature discussion, interviews with participants and observations and notes after each group discussion. Fifteen transcripts of texts were selected to represent the corpus of analysis, which were divided into episodes on different topics, starting their process from Luke's definition of discourse as being "systematic clusters of themes, statements, ideas and ideology." (Luke, 200:456 in ed. Rogers, 2011:132).

Two different discourses were identified in the transcripts, the predominant one being that of "liberal humanism," characterised by freedom of choice, expression and coherence, and the second one being that of "critical multiculturalism" which figured in assumptions determined by the social, cultural and historical individual ideas. These two types of discourses were examined by making use of the categories of genre and voice as defined by Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999:63 in Rogers ed. 2011:133): genre is "the language (and other semiosis) tied to a particular social activity" and voice is "the sort of language used for a particular category of people and closely linked to their identity."

The findings were relevant for the relation between CDA and learning and teaching. The teachers proved to use language and ideas which were characteristic to their own identity and choice. Their language resulted from the social world they came from, thus genres and discourses were mixed. Their study was a step forward in the study of *interdiscursivity* in the learning and teaching process.

Another important aspect related to CDA in education is language awareness. In one of his studies, "Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language," (1995), Fairclough discusses the difference between language awareness (LA) and critical language awareness (CLA) in the classroom practices. He claims that LA is simply a tool "for tackling with social problems which centre around the language" (Fairclough, 1995:223), used in order to surpass social problems. He exemplifies with the instances of access to standard English language for students who do not beneficiate from it at home. CLA, on the other hand, offers other opportunities for students. It consists in "a critical pedagogy ought to provide learners with understanding of problems that cannot be resolved in schools," (Fairclough, 1995:223), addressing various social areas.

Fairclough makes use of Clark's diagram of language learning (Clark *et all.* 1991, in Fairclough, 1995:226):

Fig. 3. A model of language learning (Fairclough, 1995:226)
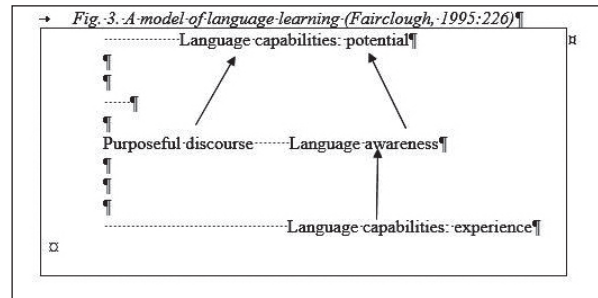
A critical language approach should be "fully integrated with the development of practice and capabilities." (Fairclough, 1995:226). In fact, CLA is based on the existing students' experience valorized with the help of teachers so that learners should make use of previous experience to understand and solve social problems. A precise purpose and the wish or need of the learner will provide success to this model.

CDA offers a lot of opportunities in the educational research. Teaching and learning refer a lot to talking and if teaching is talking, then discourses are important part of the process. If until recently, the educational system was based on a teacher "transmissive pedagogical practice," (Woods, 2006:159) nowadays the student-centred education implies a collaborative talk in classrooms, a dynamic structured dialogue.

2. Critical Discourse Analysis as Teaching Model

Critical Discourse Analysis is considered to be an approach more than a didactic model. However, three linguists from the Kazakh Abail Khan University of International Relations and World Languages have tried to prove that CDA can be also used as a teaching model for developing students' critical thinking and discourse analysis skills. (Yelubayeva, 2016). Although the model they propose is for language for special purposes (LSP) classrooms of university students, it can be also applied to high school students from 11th or 12th grade, so that they are mature enough to understand things in a larger context. Students proved their abilities to be aware of the political, cultural and social aspects of a certain topic under discussion as well as their abilities to examine and analyse particular topics.

The three linguists have started from the assumption that CDA is a cross-curricular approach, as stated by Fairclough and his colleagues in his study of the political argumentative texts. (Fairclough, 2012). The basis of their model is to assign students an authentic text to be given a pragmatic nature, having in view the metalinguistic, sociocultural and metacognitive background. They analyse discourse from four angles: cohesion (which gives cohesion to the authentic text), coherence (producing coherent language functions), situation of communication and

information structure. The discourse competence, as they called it, refers to the abilities of identifying elements of argumentation, evaluating assumptions, interpreting ideas, summarizing the outcome of debates and analysing ideas as far as cultural, social and political aspects are concerned, interpreting facts, etc.

They based their model on Fairclough's model of CDA, which comprises three elements: "description", "interpretation" and "explanation." Description refers to text analysis. It supposes getting enough information about language and the world, so as to be able to analyse a text. Interpretation is a process of interpreting texts; students develop their point of view on events and facts and present them as such, while explanation refers to free communication in different social contexts, using their own strategies and tactics.

Communicative tasks have the important role of "operating communication strategies" and, consequently, Yelubayeva and her colleagues make use of the four types of communicative tasks, as presented in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2002:63-88):

- productive activities, such as: rehearsing; finding resources; having in consideration audience; adjustment of the task and message; building on previous knowledge and experience; monitoring success and progress; self-assessment.

- receptive activities: Framing (selecting mental set, activating schemata, setting up expectations); identifying clues; testing and revising hypotheses.

- mediating activities: developing background knowledge; preparing a glossary of words; having in view interlocutors' needs; selecting unit of interpretation; previewing; bridging gaps; using thesaurus, experts and other documents, summarising, etc.

Using the above-mentioned activities and strategies, the three linguists have offered sample tasks to be assigned to students and they created a grid of evaluating CDA development. (Yelubayeva, 2016: 219-220). The first field of the grid is "speech emergence." This means that the student is "fluent in familiar, standard situations." Students make language mistakes, but they want to communicate, even though they cannot analyse critically the information. However, students know about different strategies of communication: persuasive, aggressive, etc.). "Intermediate fluency" refers to the fact that the student "communicates confidently in any professional situation except the most complicated." Students make very few language mistakes, they analyse critically the facts and find solutions to problems. "Developed speaker" refers to the fact that the student "uses second language confidently and fluently in any professional situation." Students are able to initiate professional communication, to present their points of view and make critical evaluation of information. Some example

tasks that can be given to students follow:

Sample task 1

Students have to write a report on the advantages and disadvantages of using modern technologies. They have to use between 300-350 words and they should be able to present their arguments supporting their points of view.

Sample task 2

Students have to write a report on the advantages and disadvantages of Brexit. They have to use between 300-350 words and they should be able to present their arguments supporting their points of view.

Students have to gather information about the positive and the negative aspects of the two topics under discussion, identify consequences, anticipate possible problems and organize their arguments.

On the other hand, teachers should provide worksheets and communicative activities to develop students' critical thinking. Students should be monitored all the time and encouraged to re-assess their ideas. Although some aspects need further study and assessment, this method proves its efficiency in developing critical thinking and discourse competence and it also proves the integration of CDA in the teaching process as being appropriate.

Another suggestive approach to CDA as teaching model is the one offered by Elite Olshtain and Marianne Celce-Murcia in their article "Discourse Analysis and Language Teaching." (Olshtain and Celce-Murcia, 2001:707-722). Although it is an approach published in 2001 and tackles the problem of DA in the communicative approach, it can apply to CDA too, since the authors refer to the sociolinguistic context and its interpretation while communicating. The two authors claim that discourse analysis stands at the basis of the decision making in teaching and learning languages, since the teacher needs to create certain sociocultural contexts of interaction for the learners, so that they are able to interpret the language, not only to reproduce it. The role of a "competent teacher" should be that of a "sociolinguist, not only that of a grammarian." (Olshtain and Celce-Murcia, 2001:709), continuing the idea presented by Cook (1989), who also directed his approach to language teachers and the way they can combine language teaching with discourse analysis.

Elite Olshtain and Marianne Celce-Murcia identified six features, adapted from Swales (1990: 24), "necessary and sufficient to describe a group of people as a discourse community," thus describing a classroom of students as a discourse community, with the following features:

- "a set of public goals." This means the aim of a classroom is to acquire the target language.

-a "mechanism of intercommunication among its members". The communication can be student-

student, student-teacher, teacher-student, or in groups.

- it "provides information and feedback". Both the teacher and the students can assess work, activities and information given / acquired.

- It "possesses one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims." During classroom activities, different genres are used and students recognize each of them in order to use them in different classroom contexts. This is why students joining a class after the school has started have to get used to some characteristics of the genre of the class.

- some specific lexis." It goes without saying that a classroom has specific lexis, as well as a teacher has his/her specific way of using language. The authors consider that even the leaders of the classroom can involuntarily impose some of their lexis on the other students.

- "a discoursal expertise." This characteristic could refer to the fact that all educational systems start with the premise of the teacher being the expert and the students learning to become experts.

If a classroom is defined as a discourse community, it has its own sociocultural practices and context. Starting from this, the two authors explain the fact that phonology, vocabulary and grammar should be learned in context and that this context is best offered by the practices of the discourse analysis. Language skills, both productive and receptive, can be also taught / learned with the help of the DA and CDA, since the students communicate in the context and the teacher should offer them opportunities to use various sociocultural contexts via listening, reading, writing and speaking activities. As a result, students will be able to decode the message and interpret it in a given context.

Overall, the communicative approach to teaching languages makes use of the discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis practices in both traditional classes as well as in multicultural modern classes.

Conclusion

The analytic perspectives on Critical Discourse Analysis illustrated in the present paper emphasize its relevance during the didactic theoretical, as well as teaching classroom process. As a follow-up of the present overview of the Critical Discourse Analysis and its current approaches related to education, a close-up analysis of the didactic written and oral discourse seems to be a fruitful avenue for my future research.

In conclusion, it appeared that the Critical Discourse Analysis has specifically proved to be a useful tool in this process of elaborate discussions.

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