

**Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA): A New  
Research Technique for Assessing EFL  
Learners' Oral Presentations**

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**2015**

# Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA): a new research technique for assessing EFL learners' oral presentations

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## Abstract

The aim of this empirical study was introducing critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a new research technique for assessing oral presentations of EFL university learners. Three voluntary EFL participants in Level 8 constituted the sample of the study. They were given each twenty minutes to deliver an oral presentation on the topic agreed upon with them beforehand. The participations were tape-recorded, transcribed, codified, analyzed and then interpreted in the realm of the dimensions of social discourse: speech analysis, processing analysis and social analysis related to language, power and ideology respectively. The findings revealed that CDA can be a research technique, an analytic tool and a procedural methodology that enables a vigorous assessment of social discourse and what is meant to describe and explain, since language is used as a form of social practice. The study provided a five-step cognitive map as well as CDA sheet with an assessment rubric in order to help the researchers concerned to follow when conducting a similar study.

**Keywords:** social discourse, critical discourse analysis, oral presentations, speech analysis, processing analysis, social analysis, , unemployment

التحليل النقدي للخطاب : أسلوب بحثي جديد لتقييم العروض الشفهية لمتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

## مستخلص

كان هدف الدراسة الإمبريقية الحالية هو تقديم التحليل النقدي للخطاب كأسلوب بحثي جديد لتقييم العروض الشفهية لدارسي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بالجامعات. تشكلت عينة الدراسة من ثلاثة من طلاب المستوى الثامن بشعبة اللغة الإنجليزية، وأعطيت لكل منهم عشرون دقيقة لتقديم عرض شفوي عن موضوع قد تم الاتفاق معهم بشأنه من قبل. تم تسجيل المشاركات وتدوينها وترميزها وتحليلها ومن ثم تفسيرها في ضوء أبعاد الخطاب الاجتماعي: تحليل الكلام وتحليل المعالجات والتحليل الاجتماعي - المرتبطة باللغة والقوة والأيدولوجيا - على التوالي. أظهرت النتائج أن التحليل النقدي للخطاب يمكنه أن يكون أسلوباً بحثياً جديداً وأداة تحليل، بل طريقة إجرائية تساعد على القيام بتقييم يتسم بالقوة للخطاب الاجتماعي وما يعنى به عند الوصف والشرح، خاصة وأن اللغة تستخدم كشكل من أشكال الممارسة الاجتماعية. وقدمت الدراسة خريطة معرفية ذات خمس خطوات وبطاقة تحليل نقدي للخطاب بمعيار تدريجي للتحليل لكي يساعد الباحثين المهتمين في هذا المجال باتباعه عند إجراء دراسة مماثلة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الخطاب الاجتماعي - التحليل النقدي للخطاب - العروض الشفهية - تحليل الكلام - تحليل المعالجات - التحليل الاجتماعي - البطالة

## Introduction

Social discourse is seen as a specific form of language use, and a specific form of social interaction, interpreted as a complete communicative event in a social situation. When it is in practice, it focuses specifically on phenomena beyond the sentence. Uttered words or sentences are integral parts of discourse in general and in social discourse in particular, since the use of language is a form of social practice (Janks: 2014), and as a means of social control and resistance (Mayer: 2000). At the same time, that social discourse includes cognitive representations and strategies involved during the production and comprehension of such a type of discourse. Besides, the processes of social perception, communication, attribution, attraction, impression management and intergroup contact are seen by most sociolinguistics as basic notions of social discourse.

Since EFL university learners as producers of social discourse, like other sectors of every society, they own their discourse, have knowledge and opinions about the actual self and other selves, goals of interaction, and the important social dimensions of the current situation. They, therefore, are involved in a way or another in forming impressions, translating social norms and rules, and above all, transforming their perspectives to others. And depending on the notion that the social discourse is a way of protection of people's own interests, and the interpretations of their social frustrations, critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA) emerges as a new research tool and a technique to analyze current events in their social contexts.

## **Context of the problem**

Departing from the constructive role of language in social reality, analysis and interpretations of social views and perspectives are interminable or open. And in case that interpretations give a meaning to a text within the framework of the interpreter's experience, knowledge, time, culture and history, hermeneutics – on which interpretations stand – lacks interest in modern sociolinguistics/language methodology research. People can only think in language, and in order for them to be involved in a dialog or engaged in an oral presentation, they present their inner language or hidden thoughts in this form or another. What is

expressed orally needs to be attentively listened to, critically analyzed and interpreted and then statements formed. In our case, EFL university students are daily encountered by various social issues that are open to critiques and discussions. But no mediation is there between what is going on in their minds, what is really happening, and what should be done, due to the lack of a specific technique to analyze their social discourse in order to identify their perspectives on social issues.

### **Statement of the Problem**

There is a research gap in the Arab context – to the best knowledge of the researcher – as for assessing EFL learners' oral presentations to identify their perspectives on some social issues.

### **Questions of the study:**

The current study tried to answer this main question:

*In what ways do EFL university learners use language to express their own perspectives?*

Sub-questions:

1. Why is the social discourse appropriate for EFL university learners in their oral presentations?
2. How far does the social context affect the social discourse of EFL university learners in their oral presentations?
3. How far is *language* – as a dimension of critical discourse – reflected in EFL university learners' oral presentations?
4. How far is *power* – as a dimension of critical discourse – reflected in EFL university learners' oral presentations?
5. How far is *ideology* – as a dimension of critical discourse – reflected in EFL university learners' oral presentations?

### **Objectives of the study**

1. Surveying the various definitions of CDA, its tenets, characteristics, reasons, requirements and practical steps to undertake in social issues-based contexts.
2. Developing an assessment rubric against which CDA is done.
3. Developing a cognitive map for undertaking CDA.
4. Assessing EFL university learners' oral presentations on the social issue in focus using CDA.

### **Significance of the study**

Conducting such a study:

1. Introduces CDA as a new research technique to the field of EFL methodology.
2. Can help EFL university teachers understand social discussions of their students.
3. Can help EFL course planners and designers to inject some social events in English in order to help teachers to shape their students' minds – not to take things for granted, but to objectively examine an issue from different sides.
4. Provides researchers in EFL methodology field with a research technique and an analytic tool – with its practical procedures – for analyzing oral discourse in social issues-based contexts.

### **Delimitations of the study**

The current study was delimited to:

1. One voluntary group: 3 Saudi EFL university students
2. One social issue: *Unemployment in Saudi Arabia*
3. Oral presentations of 20 minutes each

### **Instrument of the study**

A critical discourse analysis sheet constituted the instrument of the current study, with a rubric for assessing oral presentations of the study participants. ( Appendix 1)

### **Review of Literature**

Critical discourse analysis has developed rapidly over the last seven or eight years, and it is still rapidly revolving. For researchers, scholars, and teachers of speaking, CDA is believed to offer a rich form of critical speech analysis that builds on techniques and concepts already familiar to most sociolinguistics. But it offers new things as well, and blends them all together in a way that is unique and fruitful. Besides, CDA is understood to be critical in a number of different ways: its commitment to the analysis of social wrongs such as prejudice, or unequal access to power, privileges, and material and symbolic resources, (Fairclough, 2009/2014); its interest in discerning which prevailing hegemonic social practices have caused such social wrongs, in developing methods that can be applied to their study.(Bloor and Bloor, 2007)

Many researchers ( e.g., Clouliararki and Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 1995/2003/2004; Fairclough and Wodak, 1997; Rogers,2002/2004/2008/2014; Ruiz,2009; Van Dijk,1993/2004; Wodak and Meyer, 2001; Woodside, 2014) claim that CDA subsumes a variety of approaches towards the social analysis of discourse. Others elaborate how CDA works and how it does its function.

- a. To Hucken ( 2002), CDA is “ an approach, a way of looking at texts, not a rigorously systematic method of analysis ... In other words, CDA is not a discovery mechanism per se, rather it serves to confirm, explain, and enrich the initial insight and to communicate that insight, in detailed fashion, to others.” (p.153)
- b. CDA is “ a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse , dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text, and talk in the social and practical context”(VanDijk,2008:p.352).

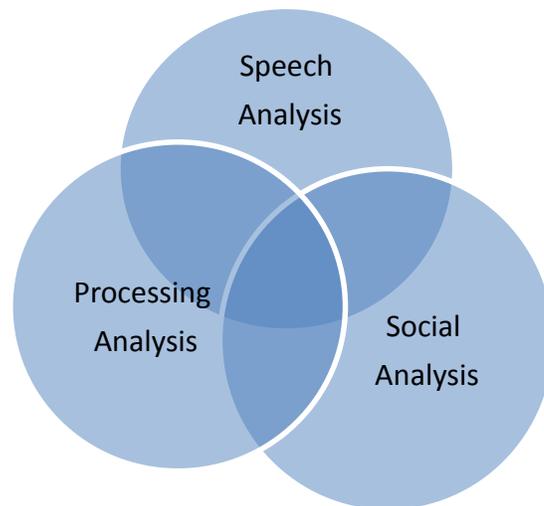
- c. CDA is a field that is concerned with studying and analyzing written and spoken texts to reveal the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality and bias, ( Buie& Wright,2010; Cooper,1996; Lewis & Ketter,2014; Schegloff,2002; Van Dijk cited in Shelyholislami, 2014).
- d. CDA is a way to describe, interpret and explain important educational problems. It is an interdisciplinary set of theoretical and analytic tool applied to the study the relationship between texts (spoken, written, multimodal and digital), discourse practices ( communicative practices), and social practices (society-wide processes). (Blommaent and Bulcaen,2000; Caldas-Coulthard & Coulthard,1996; Collins,2004; Fairclough, 1993/2001; Kress,2014; Lieu,2005; Luke, 1995/1996; Rogers, 2004/2008/2009 ).
- e. CDA is “ a principled and transparent shunting back and forth between microanalysis of texts using various tools of linguistic, semiotic, and literary analysis of social formations, institutions, and power relations, that those texts index and construct,” (Luke,2002:p.100)
- f. CDA is “ a discipline designed to question the status quo, by detecting, analyzing and also resisting and counteracting enactments of power abuse as ‘transmitted’ in private and public discourses. For some, to be critical might imply to be judgmental ... CDA is an example of research aiming for social intervention,” (Terorio,2012:p.187:188)
- g. CDA is a form of discourse that studies the relationship between discourse and ideology – a set of beliefs, attitudes and behaviors that constitute a perspective on the world. (Chtistie,2002; Deetz,2014; Johnstone,2008; Kress,2014; Magalhaes,2005; Richardson, 2007)
- h. CDA is “ an appropriate method for the detection of a biased and manipulative language , and can be used as a powerful device for deconstructing the texts to come up with their intended ideologies. It is a methodological approach for those involved in socio-cultural studies. Also, it can be a theory for

finding the manners in which attitudes, political powers and identities cause socio-linguistic variations in different communities,”( Rahimi and Riasati , 2011:p.111)

- i. CDA is “ a methodology that enables a vigorous assessment of what is meant when language is used to describe and explain ... [It] examines the form, structure, and content of discourse, from the grammar and wording employed in its creation to its reception and interpretation by a wider audience.” (Gordon,2013:p.1)
- j. CDA is “ an infant discipline gradually maturing. Curiously, several of its strengths can be taken simultaneously as the source of its weaknesses.”( Tenorio,2012:p.206)

From the previously mentioned definitions of CDA, it can be induced that it is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of discourse that views language as a form of social practice and focuses on the ways which social and political domination are reproduced in text and talk. Its scope , then, seems not only be language-based. It is problem-oriented as well, rather than focused on specific linguistic items. Language is not powerful in its own; it gains power by the use powerful people make of it. This explains why CDA often chooses the perspective of those who suffer, and critically analyzes the language use of those in power who are responsible for the existence of inequalities and who have the means and the opportunities to improve critical conditions. CDA revolves around analyzing social problems. This means that social problems are the items of research, which of course are and could be studied from manifold perspectives. And CDA is “an example of research aiming for social interventions ... It seeks to expose the manipulative nature of discursive practices, and improve communication and well-being by removing the barriers of assumed beliefs legitimized through discourse,” ( Tonorio,2012:p.188)

In his article entitled *Discourse as Interaction in Society*, Van Dijk (1997) points to the social dimension of discourse, which he understands as a sequence of contextualized, controlled, and purposeful acts accomplished in society, namely, a form of social action taking place in a context (i.e. physical setting, temporal space plus participants). Therefore, in order to best analyze discourse critically, studying texts in their full social and historical context is a must. (Johnstone, 2008), and it would become essential for the researcher to examine some aspects related to the processes of analysis tied to the three inter-related dimensions of discourse: speech analysis (description), processing analysis (interpretation), social analysis (explanation).



**Figure 1 : Dimensions of critical discourse analysis interrelated**

Stressing that CDA is problem-oriented, Fairclough and Wodak (1997:p.271) summarize the main **tenets** of CDA as follows:

- a. CDA addresses social problems.
- b. Power relations are discursive.
- c. Discourse constitutes society and culture.

- d. Discourse does ideological work
- e. Discourse is historical.
- f. The link between text and society is mediated.
- g. Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory.
- h. Discourse is a form of social action.

Critical discourse is, then, **characterized** by addressing contemporary societal issues, seeking to show how people are manipulated by powerful interests through the medium of public discourse, giving special attention to underlying factors of ideology, power and resistance, linking together analyses of texts, discursive practices, and social texts, and incorporating intertextuality, interdiscursivity and other poststructural conceptions of discourse, (Huckin, 2002). Another characteristic of CDA referred to by Gee (2014) is that: it is realist and dialectical-relational theory of discourse, a methodology which is oriented to constructing objects of research through theorizing research topics in dialog with other areas of social theory and research.

There is a number of **reasons** behind studying CDA. One is taking an interest in social and cultural issues, and how those issues affect society as a whole, looking at how social injustice is portrayed, and how certain social groups may be misrepresented in discourse ( Ashworth,2010; Kirkham,2012 Price,1999). And although there are different aims of CDA, still remains there the social problems/social actions expressed in language. To Rahimi and Riasati (2011), CDA aims at “developing an insight into the discursive structures of various texts and genres long with their socio-political effects. Moreover, it aims at raising awareness of the readers and listeners to hidden parts of discourses”(p.111). They, then, insist on reflecting on what beyond lines of discourse. Van Dijk (2008) talked about the aim of CDA describing its processes resulting in the change of mode or perspective. To him, CDA aims to offer a different ‘mode’ or ‘perspective’ of theorizing, analysis ,and application throughout the whole field” (p.352). Hyatt (2005) took another direction, which focuses on the content of discourse rather than its form. He

claims that CDA has a concern with representations of societal issues, hidden agendas, texts that impact on people’s lives; it, therefore, takes an ethical stance in addressing power imbalances, inequities, social justice agenda to spur readers into resistant and ‘corrective’ social action. Other researchers determined the aims of CDA in terms of interrelations that exist in discourse. To Fairclough (1993), CDA “aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power, and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society itself a factor securing power and hegemony”(p.135). In 2001, Fairclough suggested an interpretative analysis framework showing the relationships and integration between the components of the social discourse. For the specific aim of the current study, the researcher presents an adapted form of Fairclough’ framework.

**Table 1 : Fairclough’s Interpretative Analysis Framework**

<b>Content</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Relations</b>	<b>Connections</b>
<b>What’s Going On?</b>	<b>Who’s Involved?</b>	<b>In What Relations?</b>	<b>What’s the Role of Language in What’s Going On?</b>
Activities, Topics & Purpose ( e.g., verbs, modalities, voice)	Subjects (e.g., institutions, actors, organizations), Types( e.g., female, male, elite, lay people, old, young)	Composition (e.g., angle, distance) & sequence( e.g., top, bottom, center)	Themes & Genres that connect to larger social structures

**Source:** Adapted from Fairclough, N. (2001). *Language and power*. (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). New York: Longman .

But according to Sheyholislami (2014), CDA aims at making transparent the connections between discourse practices, social practices, and social structures, connections that might be opaque to the layperson”(p.1)

In order for CDA to achieve its aims effectively, Van Dijk (2008) set a number of **requirements** for critical research on discourse. Among them are:

- a. It focuses primarily on social problems and political issues, rather than on current paradigms and fashions.
- b. Empirically adequate critical analysis of social problems is usually multidisciplinary.
- c. Rather than merely describe discourse structures it tries to explain them in terms of properties of social interaction and specially social structure. (p. 353)

## **Method**

In order to practically carry out the new research technique, CDA, the researcher developed a cognitive map that included five constructs:

First: Operationalization. It is the key factor in conducting such an empirical study; the researcher adopted what can be called the “voluntary oral presentation protocol”. The researcher developed some sort of social rapport with the sample in order to voluntarily participate in the study and to reach a verdict as for the most prominent social issue/problem they are facing , or may face one day.

Second: Sampling. Sample size is not usually a main issue in discourse analysis as the interest is in the variety of ways the language is used ( Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Besides, large variations in linguistic patterning can emerge from a small sample of people. So, a larger sample size may just make the analytic task unmanageable, rather than adding to the analytic outcomes. For those reasons, the researcher selected concerned oral presentations related to the social issue considered by the

sample which consisted of one voluntary group of 3 EFL university learners.

Third: Delivering Oral Presentations. They were carried out informally in College of Arts, KKU, Saudi Arabia and used to aim at producing colorful interactions, getting diversity in opinions and perspectives, and stimulating insightful conversations afterwards. Each participant had to deliver his oral presentation on the topic assigned in 20 minutes (*Unemployment in Saudi Arabia*).

Fourth: Transcription. Oral presentations were tape-recorded and transcribed. The records represented only words, self-repetitions and self-corrections. The sense, lexicon and ideology about the social issue were in the center of transcription. The researcher did not follow what is called “member check” in which feedback is gotten from the respondents on the correctness of the transcriptions lest they should hide their first reaction towards the issue they were talking about. Besides, they were given a one-week period of time to prepare themselves for performing oral presentations before their due time. Such a period was seen enough for the participants to construct their perspectives and opinions. Furthermore, the researcher aimed at keeping the spontaneous discourse that is produced by the participants in their everyday lives.

Fifth: Analysis. After all oral presentations had been transcribed, they were read three times to get the overall impressions and bridge any cultural barriers that might exist. The text units of transcripts were codified and given labels. Besides, additional insightful notes along the margins were set in a qualitative way. The components for the dimensions of CDA were identified. To do that, the researcher analyzed significance and linguistic presentation of every text for revealing different semantic features (excluding grammatical or other properties), power representation as well as ideology representation as previously

described in the CDA sheet. Finally, the interpretations of the empirical data took place for getting common understanding. The main focus of the researcher was on the induced discourse that enabled him to maintain a relatively high level of control over the conditions in which social discourse emerges.

## Results and Discussion

### 1. Speech Analysis

#### \* Lexicalization

In order to get correct information and proper representation of what study participants think about *Unemployment in Saudi Arabia* as a reliable source, the researcher counted the frequencies of the *nouns* and *adjectives* describing and/or appreciating the situation of unemployment in Saudi Arabia. The results are given below in table 2 & table 3 .

**Table 2: Highly frequent nouns representing lexicalization in study participants' oral presentation**

Noun	Freq.	Noun	Freq.	Nouns	Freq.
jobs	29	foreigners	22	domination	15
labor	27	opportunities	20	power	15
nationals	26	graduates	20	sponsor	15
work	23	income	16	outsiders	15
natives	23	wages	16	economy	15
inequality	23	youth	16	insurance	15
problem	23	Saudisation	15	injustice	13

**Table 3: Highly frequent adjectives representing lexicalization in study participants' oral presentation**

Adj.	Freq.	Adj.	Freq.	Adj.	Freq.
unemployed	18	social	14	necessary	12
private	18	selective	14	wealthy	11
unskilled	16	unconcerned	14	economic	10
educated	16	decorative	13	important	10
lost	16	unavailable	13	financial	10
absent	15	unqualified	13	high	9
trained	14	governmental	13	minimum	9

As can be seen, most of the nouns and adjectives are negative or used in the negative sense, and the highly repeated ones might

have been used more than once by specific participants. These findings illustrate quite clearly how unemployment is not something which people invent stories for or pass time talking about in mass media, in formal meetings, or wherever, but an authentic critical issue that should be seriously discussed, and resolved on the long run.

\* Transitivity ( the use of passive )

According to Fairclough & Wodak (1997), transitivity refers to the agent-patient relations in an utterance, or how the main action of an utterance is encoded. It answers the question: *Who is doing what to whom?* In most cases, the semantic agent (or actor) in an utterance is depicted as having more power than the patient. ( e.g. *A. Different elites [ political, social, economic ] are seen and treated as masters. B. Children of people in power are given job opportunities immediately after they are graduated. Justice is wanted. C. We are required to work for 50 hours in the private sector every week. D. The problem can be solved. E. The unemployed Saudis are seen as a burden. F. We have been taught to have things done by outsiders.* ). It seems that the passive voice is overused (34 times) in order for the speakers to hide behind lest they should be blamed or trapped, although employing Saudis to fill the labor market and serve their country *is a national demand* according to the study participants' claims.

\* The choices of mood

Because it is not possible for the researcher to investigate the prevailing mood nation-wide as for unemployment , detecting the participants' moods – as an important growing sector in the community - seemed to fulfill the goal. The researcher, consequently, counted the frequencies of the adjectives expressing the participants' moods. The results are given below in table 4.

**Table 4 : Highly frequent adjectives representing the study participants' mood in their oral presentation**

<b>Adj.</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>Adj.</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>Adj.</b>	<b>Freq.</b>
unfavorable	19	helpless	13	illegal	10
unattractive	19	futureless	13	serious	10
unavailable	16	immediate	13	optimistic	9
dark	15	decorative	13	effective	9
despaired	15	increasing	12	changing	9
hopeless	15	frustrated	12	involved	8
suffering	14	difficult	11	confident	7

What is interesting here is that most adjectives express the negative overall mood that the study participants have. Such a result can be attributed – in the researcher’s belief – to many things. Some of them are :

- a. Some current negative social practices might have matched the participants’ mood.
- b. Few practical steps have been taken towards activating Saudisation which might result in mood altering.
- c. Violating the law from the part of some citizens - because of them *Nazah* [ a Saudi national organization for fighting corruption] was formed - might have boosted the participants’ perceptions that there are a lot of investments, but seized by few people.
- d. Participants might have seen themselves obliged to be recipients of discourse of different economic and social policy makers - namely Ministers of Labor, Economy, Social Affairs - since ordinary people including study participants are more or less passive targets of talk of those authorities who may simply tell them what (not) to believe or what to do.
- e. Study participants – as discourse recipients – may not have the knowledge and beliefs needed to challenge the discourses or information they are exposed to. They, therefore, resort to their taken-for-granted personal beliefs and experiences as trustworthy, and credible sources.

\* The choices of modality:

It is the use of modal verbs and phrases like might, will, should, must, we think. Modal constructions facilitate various forms of manipulation including the hedging of claims in social or political issues. Sometimes, there are strong commands to project a certain authorial ‘voice’ or attitude (Simpson,1993). This is what really happened when the study participants overused the modal ‘must’ (39 times) (e.g. A. *The government must give all Saudis jobs. B. Most jobs must be Saudised by force. C. Illegal acts by sponsors [kafeels] must be stopped. D. The private sector must train the unemployed Saudis , then employ them. E. We must participate in developing our country. F. They must listen to us.*). On the other hand, the total use of other modal verbs and phrases are 18 times ( e.g. A. *Unskilled nationals should have training in a profession or two. B. They should give us more wages than the outsiders. C. Social values towards some professions should change. D. Unemployment insurance should be given for only two years. E. I think that our country can solve the problem. F. I think that we can reduce the numbers of the outsiders to save jobs for the natives. ).*

\* The information focus

The study participants seem to have *right* perceptions concerning unemployment due to correct information from reliable sources. Those sources tended to show off their privileges and supremacy in the media or in daily life situations. Their spoken rules and traditions might have been regulating some aspects of the Saudi life since passive social norms seem to prevail as for applying for governmental jobs. To them, *Wasta* [ someone’s recommendation through his good offices ] is the only way to get a job. . The major norm states, roughly, “ If I do something for you, then you are obligated to return the favor and do something for me.” By this norm, participants might have expected not to practice justice only, but to acknowledge that the unemployment

will continue for a long time owing to the fact that the private sector firms and companies still insist on paying low wages for long working hours in unsuitable working conditions . And it was so easy for them to form an opinion on the matter of unemployment in Saudi Arabia and to be truly objective when they were able to understand all of the issues from all of the different sides. So the logic of the participants' response works like this:

MAJOR PREMISE: “ To be truly objective, it is important to understand all of the issues.”

MINOR PREMISE: “ We are carefully analyzing both sides of the issue ( the spoken rules of the Saudi officials or the private sector calls versus the actual practices as for the unemployed natives).

CONCLUSION: We are truly objective ( and thus cannot have “false perceptions”).

## **2. Processing Analysis**

Departing from the notion that power is a central condition in social life, a theory of language should be developed revolving round competing discourses in that life. Wodak (2002) stresses that “ power is about relations of difference, and particularly about the effects of differences in social structures. The constant unity of language and other social matters ensures that language is entwined in social power in a number of ways: language indexes power, expresses power, is involved where there is contention over power and where power is challenged. Power does not drive from language, but language can be used to challenge power, to subvert it , to alter distributions of power both in the short and the long term.” (p.11). The same notion is stressed by Schmidt (2010) in that there is always the recognition that ideas and discourse can provide power, as actors gain power from their ideas at the same time that they give power to their ideas

Looking at the transcriptions of the participants' public speeches, it can be noticed that the ideas and discourse of the participants provided them with power, and at the same time, they

gave power to their ideas. That power seems to be in a position of estrangement or helplessness they felt because of their critical, unappealing position in the society. They do not even see themselves as human capital for their own country. They see that they are not engaged in solving or tackling their own problem, and how it is seen in reality. Besides, they consider the absence of care, support or engagement is a form of submission to the power of the people in power – those who control labor supply for the government sector jobs as well as the private sector employers . And such estrangement or a hesitating situation without engagement can be a refusal to leave the confines of their own subjectivity. Another possible interpretation might be that when the participants drew comparisons between ‘we’ and ‘they’, they shifted the discourse from being seen as unqualified job seekers who need to be cared for or need to receive high wages with little productivity to be seen serious in being employed with average wages and better working conditions , since all are Saudis and deserve to have jobs in their gigantic economic country in the Middle East.

### **3. Social analysis**

Holding the view that ideologies are the basic frameworks for organizing the social cognitions shared by members of social groups, they are both *cognitive* and *social*. Social cognition, is therefore, the system of mental representations and processes of group members who share evaluative beliefs – knowledge and opinions – organized in social attitudes. That type of sharing takes time to construct points of departure towards putting the mental representations into action. That is why it is said ideologies are gradually acquired by members of a group and they are usually self-serving.

At the time Saudi Arabia seems to be still in a period of high economic growth , unemployment continued its climb to alarming levels. The situation is clearly unstable. Therefore, it is possible to

see the workings of ideology. Ideology is at its most powerful when it is invisible, when discourses have been naturalized and become part of Saudi everyday common sense. This is what results in the study participants' – as Saudi citizens – using a discourse of dissatisfaction, suffering, frustration and fear of future, because they seem to be available there due to unemployment. Besides, in a time of the existing wage inequality between the government sector and the private sector even for Saudi youth, new discourses become available offering new positions from which to speak and read the world. New beliefs, consequently, are constructed forming new ideologies.

Furthermore, the prospective unemployed seem to share attitudes with the real unemployed about unemployment as a social issue in Saudi Arabia, because both of them have similar identities, goals, norms, positions, and even similar university certificates. The unemployed young people, for example, represent the situation in Saudi Arabia basically in terms of Saudis and Non-Saudis in which positions and resources of Saudis are threatened by the Others (non-Saudis, expats, non-nationals, foreigners, outsiders). They do so by representing the relations between themselves and the Others in terms of *us* versus *them*, in which we are associated with positive properties and they are associated with bad properties. When the participants of the study expected to join the queue of the unemployed waiting for job openings in the governmental sector or good job opportunities in the private sector, they took a proactive step and showed their ready-made ideology in that urged the members of the group to coordinate their social actions and goals, to protect their privileged resources. Many statements support such a view: *We must replace the outsiders. The private sector should train, then employ the Saudi unemployed. The unemployed must not be paid the allowance for ever. They must work. Ministers of Labor and Economy must listen to us. We should participate in developing our country.*

## **Conclusion**

Studies in critical discourse analysis have made it clear that people who share the same social issues display similarities in the use of language. As a result, CDA can show whether language has been positively or negatively. Referring to the results of the current empirical study, one can find that those results are in line with Fairclough's notions of language, power and ideology. The participants' language in oral presentations reflected power, either the power of their situation - in that they are worth to be employed immediately after their graduation replacing the Non-Saudis – or the power of their language towards the people of power. At the same time, the awareness of the prospective unemployed made them share attitudes with the actual ones showing an ideological component of their critical social discourse. This study, thus, may not only be used a research technique or an analytic tool or a methodology in sociolinguistics, but also help researchers evaluate others' social discourse critically, and their social influence more correctly.

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## Appendix (A)

### Critical Discourse Analysis Sheet

#### I. Speech Analysis

##### A. Lexicalization:

- nouns ( related to the issue under discussion) – adjectives  
( describing /appreciating the situation)

B. Transitivity : passive voice ( indirect semantic relations  
between agent- patient)

C. The choice of mood: adjectives expressing the  
participants' mood related to the social issue in focus

D. The choice of modality): modal verbs and phrases expressing  
commands and voices for or against points related to the issue in  
hand

E. The information focus : correct information from reliable  
sources, analyzing both sides of the issue

#### II. Processing Analysis

Phrases/sentences interpreting how the social issue in focus  
arose, the circumstances or the context in which that issue  
appeared , and the reactions of the parties involved.

#### III. Social Analysis

Phrases/sentences explaining the social effects caused , and the  
beliefs constructed owing to the issue in focus, then the changes  
hoped .

## Appendix (B)

### Excerpt from a Participant's Oral Presentation Partially-analyzed Using Critical Discourse Analysis

#### Unemployment in Saudi Arabia

( ... many young people in Saudi Arabia who are graduated every year do not have jobs. They increase the number of the unemployed. They take money from their fathers to live . I myself will not find a job when I get my certificate. I feel I am futureless, I mean without a future. You know, Saudi labor market depends mainly on foreign laborers. More than six million outsiders are working in our country. We, Saudis, do not have jobs. Aren't we nationals? Aren't we natives? We must be given jobs. Many jobs for Saudis must be there. People abroad say that Saudi Arabia is a wealthy country with a lot of oil and rich people. Really, it is the biggest nation in the Middle East and a key player in the world-wide market. But believe me, some people suffer, especially the unemployed. The number of the unemployed is increasing every year. By the way, unemployment constitutes 12% and 89% of the unemployed are under the age of 29. They are suffering. They are helpless and hopeless. We hope they don't go to wrong doing. Young people have no responsibility, no money. Sometimes , they feel on the margin. Don't they have needs, hopes or future? Their life is black, black and dark. We know that outside workers cost less. I mean take low wages and work in difficult conditions. They do specific professions Saudis do not do. There are, in my opinion, social values as for those professions. We have been taught to have many things done by the outsiders. We should change. We know that non-Saudis work for 40 or 50 hours a week in unfavorable conditions. They are qualified and skilled. Yes, that's true. And we know that what we call

An example of lexicalization ( noun)

An example of feeling of estrangement

An example showing contrast between we and they

An example of modality

An example of information focus

An example showing information

An example of the choices of

An example of lexicalization ( adjective)

An example of showing ideology.

Saudisation [ a plan called *Nitaqat* enforcing a 50 % rate in all private sector jobs for Saudis] is trying to solve the problem. This is seen to decrease the unemployed number. Another problem appeared. It's called *Tasator* private sector firms pay compensations to Saudis who don't really work.]. Both must be punished. The private sector, instead, should train the unemployed, and then employ them. We also know that the education system in Saudi Arabia does not prepare the graduates for the needs of the labor market. Therefore, the private sector says : "the Saudis are not talented and every one boasts of being *mudeer* [ manager] or *kafeel* [sponsor]. Most the unemployed are unemployed by their own choice, or by decision. There are a lot of jobs. They can find jobs. But the jobs they find may not meet their expectations of pay and working conditions. Outsiders are skilled and work hard. " Most of the unemployed say that pay is not worth the effort. Another point is that the government sector wages are more three times greater than the average wages in the private sector. All graduates from secondary schools or university are waiting for government job openings, or they seek *Wasta* [someone's recommendation through his good offices]. And national youth prefer to remain unemployed rather than accept jobs of the private sector. Our government invented *Hafiz* [ a welfare program by which a person without a job could apply for a monthly allowance of about 1800 SR ]. In fact , I think the Saudi unemployed must not be paid this allowance for ever. They must work. And Ministers of Labor and Economy must listen to us. They must Saudise most jobs. They must enforce the private sector firms to pay high wages to Saudi nationals. They did their wealth from nationals. In fact, *Wasta* is there. I know someone beside my uncle, his neighbor, I mean. He employed his three sons in *ARMCO*. High wages, very high wages...)

An example of shift of discourse, i.e., expressing power.

An example showing how the social issue arose

An example of processing power

An example of transitivity