A Critical Perspective on Language and Ideology in the Society

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Introduction

In social sciences and humanities, ideological analysis of language is practiced by many scholars based on assumption that writers or speakers can be understood by systematic analysis and close reading when speakers convey explicitly their ideologies through discourse and language. Despite many assumptions and practices, the theory relating to discourse and ideologies is not explicit. Not only in discourse studies but also social sciences and social psychology, we are not fully aware of how ideologies are formulated by discourse or through discourse. Also, on the other hand, we do not know how ideologies influence or control discourse that is text and talk. Based on a few theoretical presuppositions, Dijk discusses a few issues in the exercise of ideological discourse analysis.

Firstly, based on the consideration that analysis of ideology and discourse is a type of socio-political analysis relates discourse structures with that of society. Social relations such as ethnicity, gender, or class are methodically related to strategies, structures such as levels, units of discourse in a social, cultural, and political context. This is also true for associations between power, groups, roles institutions, or social organization and on the other hand discourse structures (Fairclough, 1989, 1992; Ng and Bradac, 1993).

In such a way, members of organizations, groups, or institutions are defined as language users and they are expected to write, speak or interpret from a particular social position to support or defend that position by or through discourse. The ideological analysis investigates the ideologies related to such a position. In the dominant relation, ideological discourse is used to maintain social positions.

The lexical selection that is a selection of words is more indirect or uses moderate words to describe countries, parties, or groups that comply with their ideologies and do not oppose their interests (Herman, 1992). The ideological meaning inherent in such a chosen lexicon espouses a definite pattern, namely, members of in-groups, also their supporters, friends, or associates, often to describe themselves positively while members of outgroups opponents or enemies are often described negatively. We can find the same in theories of social cognition and stereotyping (Semin and Fielder, 1992).

Considering the positive presentation of self and negative presentation of others as the general strategy (Dijk) listed a few strategies and structures of discourse which are generally ideologically relevant for ingroups and outgroups:

Describing/attributing positive action

Ingroup	*Outgroup*
Emphasis	De-emphasis
Assertion	Denial
Hyperbole	Understatement
Topicalization	De-topicalization
High, prominent position	Low, non-prominent position
Detailed description	Vague, overall description
Attribution to personality	Attribution to context
Explicit	Implicit
Direct	Indirect
Narrative illustration	No storytelling

Argumentative support No argumentative support

Impression management No impression management

Examples of such ideologies strategies that present ingroup in a positive way or by disowning a negative structure at the same time negatively express outgroup are disclaimers and such example is "we have nothing against blacks but.." (Van Dijk, 1984, 1987). In such statements, it may seem that the first part expresses positive socio-cultural value but at the same time a strategy that allows managing impression and expressing prejudice.

Discourse structures functions in two-fold ways, firstly, they enact inherent ideologies, and secondly, they act as an influential medium of persuasion. In other words, it functions as a strategy to influence desired mental models and also indirectly influence specific ideologies and attitudes.

In addition to the general ideological statement, ideological discourse will deal with people, situations, and events with a certain fixed mental model representing group based general opinions. According to Dijk, ideologies and their structures usually are semantically directed towards the description of self-identity, norm, and value, goal, activity, position, and relation, and resource.

“Self-identity descriptions: who are We, where do We come from, what are Our properties, what is Our history, how are We different from Others, what are We proud of; but also: boundary statements concerning others: Who will be admitted, what are the criteria of admission, who may immigrate, etc.”

Typically, self-identity descriptions are relevant for groups whose identity is marginalized, insecure, or threatened for instance immigrants, minorities and women, etc. Also for the dominant group whose power and influence are challenged and threatened.

“Activity-descriptions: What are Our tasks? What do We do? What is expected of Us? What are Our social roles, etc.? “

These descriptions are relevant for groups who describe themselves by what members do for example activists and professionals. Therefore environmental, medical, and journalistic ideologies focus on protesting against violations of nature laws, treating the patients, and writing new reports.

Goal descriptions are by meaning ideological and any activity will make sense socially and ideologically when they have set goals. Therefore, discourse of such groups will focus on ideological goals for example professors on educating the students and journalists on informing the people.

The important thing in ideological discourse of group members are meanings that include values and norm about what they feel right or wrong. Women and minorities focus on values such as equality or justice. In describing those against them that are their enemies, they are expected to stress on failure to comply with such values and norms. Therefore, others will be described as intolerant, undemocratic, foolish, or incompetent.

Groups based on their relationship with other groups describe their identity, goals, and activities for example based on journalist-public relations, teacher-student relation will define their goals, activities, and identities. This category influences to have more focus on relations between groups, polarization, negative representation of others, and conflicts.

Certain groups are described based on whether they have access to resources for example the rich and the destitute. Therefore, such groups' ideological strategies goal will be to defend their restricted access to resources which stresses a normal control over resources. These groups can survive and sustain as long as they have access to privileged access to resources. When there is a conflict between groups, access to resources is threatened and then ideological discourse will be mainly emphasized on resources. The discourse of minorities and women in such situations will be mainly focused on the fact they should also have equal access to common resources such as status, jobs, respect, equal pay, etc.

Based on the analysis Dijk suggests ideological strategies and the structures used to describe others. Some of them are Negative lexicalization, Hyperbole, Compassion move, Honesty move, negative comparison, generalization, and concretization. Negative lexicalization is the selection of very negative words such as hatred, terrorism, destroy, poisoned, obsession, traumatized, extremism, etc. to describe the events or

activities of Others. In hyperbole, action or event is described in highly exaggerated words for example describing a bomb attack in comparison with nuclear holocaust. Another way is by showing empathy for weak or sufferers of other actions, to increase the cruelty of the others.

Conclusion

A popular way of disclaiming negative presentations or statements is honesty move. It is often done by using expressions such as 'Frankly saying…' along with other disclaimers, honesty included is thus rhetorical and solely strategic and there is no actual honesty. Negative comparison to highlight the wrong qualities of others by comparing them with outgroup commonly known bad persons, for instance, to emphasize terrorism of immigrants it is compared with more serious things such as the nuclear holocaust.

Generalization is another strategy, in which one person is generalized to a large group. Possible terror attacks of the small specific terror group are more commonly attributed to unknown immigrants. Often describing the negative actions of Others in much detail, visualizing and specific terms is also another strategy.

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