

The Notion of Discourse as ‘Power’ and ‘Resistance’ Revisited

Prof. Mohammed Said Negm

Faculty of Arts, Tanta University

Abstract

Studies in CDA focus exclusively on two major aspects or perspectives in the analysis of discourse: language as power and more recently language as resistance. This paper argues that unfortunately power struggle and power conflict end in capitulation or concession. Examples of discourse as power and discourse as resistance (Fairclough, 2001, 2003; Negm, 1997, 1998, 2015) can be found not only in political arguments but in other discursive manifestations such as doctor-patient interviews. This paper broadens the scope of the language and power relations. It examines a new area of study related to discourse as power: capitulation (or concession) in discourse. It investigates the notion of capitulation in three literary works: *Animal farm, 1984* and *A passage to India*. In *Animal Farm* by Orwell, the novella ends in despair and bewilderment on the part of the oppressed powerless animals. At the end of the novella, the animals feel powerless, bewildered and frustrated. The notion of ‘capitulation’ is pursued in *1984* since the main characters’ final choice is loss, surrender and betrayal. Similarly, a *Passage to India* by Forster ends in capitulation due to the fact that the Indian and the English people fail to integrate and be friends. Then, the paper proceeds to discuss the implications of the aforementioned analysis for discourse analysis and applied linguistics. Yet foremost, it postulates the roots of capitulation in literary genres in which power and power-resistance are not the only conceived concepts. In this regard, discourse should be seen and examined from a multiplicity of domains and perspectives, not only power and power-resistance, but also in terms of surrender and capitulation.

Keywords—Critical Discourse Analysis, power, resistance, capitulation

Prolegomenon:

Studies in Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth referred to as CDA), until very recently, have focused exclusively on one facet or aspect of the relation between language and power. This claim is applicable to the three main proponents of CDA: Fairclough, van Dijk and Wodak. The aforementioned studies have dealt with discourse as a locus or context for power to be enacted, exercised and perpetuated or maintained. They aimed at unveiling devices and sources of power. In this context, van Dijk (1998: 140) has cogently argued that CDA ‘targeted’ practices and sources of power, hegemony and dominance in political discourse.

CDA concentrates on the ways and structures of discourse reproducing relations of manipulation, power and suppression. As a form of social interaction, as Fairclough (1989: 22) has argued, language in discourse is an indispensable part of the social processes that exhibit relations of power and dominance. He offered the following features which are devices of manipulation and control: Instructions / Evaluating the other participant's verbal behavior / Questions / Interruption / Explicitness / Controlling topics / Reformulation / Repetition. Similarly, Blommaert (2005: 25) has asserted that CDA shows language as an instrument of power and that CDA makes the notion of power more 'visible'.

For the end of attesting the relation between language and power, exploring Negm's paper (1999) is of a paramount importance. This paper has attempted to show one possible facet of the relation between language and power in literary discourse, since discourse has been manifested as an instrument of power; rather than a neutral medium. In *A Doll's House*, Helmer succeeded in controlling and manipulating his wife (Nora) by means of linguistic strategies: orders, questions, evaluation and so on. In *Animal Farm*, Major dominated the rest of other animals by monopolizing the floor, giving himself the privilege of using questions, requests and commands. Similarly, Squealer used the same strategies along with repetition and reformulation to give prominence and focus to the indispensable role of pigs in running the affairs of leadership. In the same vein, Mc Niece has used repetition and appeal in his poem *Prayer Before Birth* to manipulate the emotion of the reader.

Very recently, Negm (2015) has broadened the relation between language and power; this is in accordance with Foucault (1981) who regarded discourse as a “focus for power to be resisted, contented and challenged.” He rightly argued that discourse is not that which translates struggle or systems of domination but that for which and by which there is struggle. He has argued that discourse is not only a context for power to be exercised and maintained but also a context for power to be challenged, defied, contested and more importantly resisted. Negm has asserted that the notion of discourse as a locus for resistance has been neglected. He has broadened the scope of power or spectrum of the language discourse relations. He

has affirmed that discourse is a dyadic two-way; interactive relation in which no agent is always more powerful than the other; no participant controls other participants all the time. Power cannot be monopolized by one participant. In other words, participants hold conflictual solutions in discourses; and power is never monopolized by one interlocutor. Thus, interlocutors have a dynamic changing access to power.

Negm (1997), in his paper entitled ‘The Notion of Language as ‘Power’ Revisited’, has examined fresh data from one genre of discourse, counseling; it looked at counseling as a dyadic process. In other words, an interactive two-way process between two interlocutors: the client and the therapist. By means of the meticulous investigation of the patient, the paper concluded that the patient reveals his/ her resisting, challenging and questioning the authority of the counselor and the relevance of the therapy. This offers further insights into the relation of the client and the therapist in the genre of counseling. The second finding relating to the therapist consolidates and further validates Fairclough’s (1989) conclusion that the therapist does not control or judge the client’s discourse but rather is in rapport with the client. The paper confirmed the representation of the therapist as an integrated person in the relation. His purpose is to bring the patient into awareness that he is aggressive, a trait that he has to eliminate to be a better person. Put it another way, the paper does not target changing Fairclough’s argument in its totality. Yet it only attempts to modify it.

In a further manifestation of discourse as resistance and conflict, Negm (1998) has broadened the scope of the language/ power relations. He cogently states that forensic discourse is not only a locus for power to be exercised but also a context for power to be resisted and contested. In Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*, Shylock and Portia engage in a relation of conflict which manifests the former to be resisting the authority of the latter. Hence, Portia is not the sole manipulator of the devices of power. Similarly, Shylock used all the devices Portia used. He poses questions, repeats his right to have his agreement fulfilled and attacks the whole trial.

Negm (2015) has argued that discourse is not only a context of power to be practiced but a context of power to be questioned, challenged and contested. Besides its prevalence in political and social contexts, the idea of power resistance further exists in literary texts. Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman* has manifested all the devices of power which his boss used and has challenge his authority. Both the employee and the employer share the devices of power like repetition, questions and evaluation; they have engaged in a verbal combat. Devices of power have been shown not to be monopolized by one participant; both participants had access to the devices of power.

Aims of Study

This paper unveils and attempts to reveal a third facet or dimension of discourse/power relation. It has shown that discourse can produce and end in surrender. Tannen has talked about verbal capitulation stating that “powerful people do the talking and powerless people are silenced” (1994, p. 39), in a clear indication to the capitulation mechanism. In other words, discourse can result in capitulation. In order to validate the claim of this paper, namely that whenever there is no resistance discourse can end in capitulation, the researcher is using the word “capitulation” as a pre-theoretical notion. Searches are still underway for developing a theory of capitulation in discourse.

Analysis

Three literary contexts are investigated in terms of the inclusive remarks of the surrender they manifest. George Orwell’s *Animal Farm and 1984* and E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India* have been selected to validate the theoretical claim of the paper. The author intends to discuss contextually the capitulation discourse to identify eventually its distinctive aspects that may interplay with other social, and even political communications.

Animal Farm displays the pigs having control over the rest of the animals. The pigs assume the role of the commander. They manipulate all the devices of power to control the animals as repetition, ambiguity, evaluation, reformulation and questioning. All the other animals obey the rules of the pigs, although they show doubt and uncertainty in some situations. They exhibit no form of resistance or disobedience. The pigs assume that they defend the animals against human aggression, but finally they reach a truce or treaty with humans. The animals cannot reconcile themselves to the new situation. As a result, they exhibit surrender and capitulation. Put in another way, the animals fail to reject the rules of the pigs; they show only capitulation. Bewildered and puzzled, the animals display utmost resignation and surrender as Orwell put it: “The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which.” Line references are to *Animal Farm* (2003: P: 165).

As the quotation shows the animals act in despair; they are completely powerless. They are incapable of speaking or uttering any question.

The second literary text which further manifest the notion of capitulation is the novel *1984* written by George Orwell. It is a dystopian novel in which Winston and Julia rebel against the dominating totalitarian party because she hates totalitarianism like Winston. They are captured and imprisoned by the regime. Winston is detained and tormented and he betrayed Julia as well. They both admit they had betrayed each other. Winston finally looks at the portrait of the Big Brother, the symbol of totalitarianism and accepts his full conversation admitting

that he loved Big Brother. Similarly, in part 3, chapter 3, O'Brien describes the party's vision of the future as surrender.

Now I will tell you the answer to my question. It is this. The Party seeks power entirely for its own sake. We are not interested in the good of others; we are interested solely in power, pure power. What pure power means you will understand presently... We know that no one ever seizes power with the intention of relinquishing it. Power is not a means; it is an end. One does not establish a dictatorship in order to safeguard a revolution; one makes the revolution in order to establish the dictatorship. The object of persecution is persecution. The object of torture is torture. The object of power is power. Now you begin to understand me. Lines reference are to 1984 by Orwell (2003, p: 234).

In *A passage to India*, the third literary text to be analyzed, the relation between the English (the occupants) and the Indians (the occupied) is delineated in the context of the novel. The British and Indians attempt to maintain a relation of friendship in most parts of the novel except for the Adele case and the trial scene. However, uncertainty wraps the novel which ends in a note of/ or atmosphere of uncertainty and doubt and finally in surrender and capitulation.

Because the Indians and the British do not strive to achieve and maintain real friendship, their friendship does not last. Their friendship has gone with the wind, since it was not based on true-friendship criteria. Hierarchy of power between the individuals undermines friendship- which main criterion is equity. The novel begins with the question of whether it is 'possible' for the Indians and the British to be friends.

"Why can't we be friends now?" said the other, holding him affectionately. "It's what I want. It's what you want." But the horses didn't want it — they swerved apart: the earth didn't want it, sending up rocks through which riders must pass single file; the temple, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the Guest House, that came into view as they emerged from the gap and saw Mau beneath: they didn't want it, they said in their hundred voices "No, not yet," and the sky said "No, not there." Line reference are to *A passage to India* (1969, P: 316).

The end is utter despair. both the occupant and the occupied have not exerted enough effort to be friends.

However, before analysis comes to an end, a distinction needs to be made between Orwell's works on the one hand and Forster's on the other. In Orwell's works, an entity or participants control completely an entity who surrenders in response. On the other hand, In Forster's work, both entities or participants in discourse surrender. Thus both the British and Indians surrender in their attempt to be friends by the end of the novel.

Conclusion: Summary and Implications

Summary:

What this paper has attempted to demonstrate is that discourse is not only a context for power to be manipulated and sometimes resisted but also a context for capitulation, submission and surrender. In Orwell's *Animal Farm*, the animals hardly ever resist the power of the pigs and eventually surrender to the power of the pigs and become silent and incapable of making any utterance. Similarly, *1984* investigates the same thought by stressing the human tendency to possess power. Orwell, in the novel, secures success in representing the ways despotic regimes dominate, control and desire to submit their people and how people resist such power, capitulate and surrender. Yet, *1984* ends in a complete loss of the main characters in the novel whose final choice was to surrender and capitulate. Likewise, in *A Passage to India*, the end is utter despair. Thus, the scope of discourse/ power relation has been broadened.

In sum, the three literary works` focus on power and how discourse structures social relations either among imaginary animals in *Animal Farm*, or between the colonized and the colonizer in *A Passage to India*, or between the despotic regime and its people in *1984*.

Implications:

A- Linguistic Implications:

Basically, discourse should be seen and examined from a multiplicity of domains and perspectives. The first and foremost implication of the study is that discourses is not only a context of power to be practiced and or resisted but also a context of capitulation and surrender when there is no resistance. Thus, the scope of the language and discourse power relation has been broadened. Consequently, discourse should be seen and examined from a multiplicity of domains and perspectives. It is a conglomerate of the notion or aspects and facets of power, resistance and capitulation. In other words, discourse could not be seen as a single monolithic construct but a composite structure combining different and distinct elements of discourse. Focus on one aspect to the exclusion of any other aspect is inadequate and misleading and can result in a reductionist approach to the study of discourse.

Discourse and pragmatics should not be limited or confined to the analysis of one facet of the discourse/ power relation; one aspect of the relation of discourse to power, resistance and capitulation should not be focused on without extending analysis of all the relations between discourse and power. The prevalent focus on the language/ power relation should be complemented and supplemented by a more comprehensive approach which deals with discourse as a conglomerate of diverse relations and dimensions.

A word of caution is needed before this paper comes to an end; this paper does not call for surrender or capitulation. On the contrary, it is a plea for struggle and resistance. The animals in *Animal Farm*, for example, surrender because they accepted from the very start to be controlled and manipulated. They should have rejected their role and oppressor. In the same vein, they could have struggled and resisted the conflict and manipulation of the pigs.

Another apparent example is Nora in *A Doll's House* by Ibsen who rebelled against the domination of her husband and her oppressive society. Eventually, she maintained her identity and survived by rejecting the control and oppressive society. She has shown a note of hope for the oppressed.

Finally, it is the responsibility of human beings to empower others and to urge them to resist the power of the oppressors. In the case of resistance, there will be no surrender or capitulation. However, there is a need for peaceful resistance. Violent resistance may not be the realm in many cases. Otherwise, surrender or capitulation resembles a solution by which the interlocutor maintains his existence through remaining submissive to some other person's (or entity's) power. Notwithstanding, this is not a plea of surrender rather than a peaceful resistance; in one the most historic moments of surrender, the Japanese emperor, Hirohito in the aftermath of the World War II implied in his speech (Ferrero, 2005) a redirected position towards the status quo. He gave extenuations for the surrender decision – e.g. “the enemy has begun to employ a new and most cruel bomb”, “how are we to save the millions of our subjects”. And further, he stressed the nation's solidarity and well-being – e.g. “to strive for common prosperity and happiness of all nations”.

However, the author sees in taking a non-violent path an effective method of resisting power an optimal compromise rather than a passive surrender. In his historic speech, M.L. King remarkably underlined the peaceful resistance of the Negroes in the US calling upon Ghandi's struggle in India to take back his people's filched rights (Nobel Prize, 2016). He literally said, “nonviolence is not sterile passivity, but a powerful moral force which makes for social transformation”. In this regard, on the other hand, neither a fierce resistance, nor a humiliating capitulation would achieve a genuine victory that maintain the self of possible harms.

B- Pedagogic Implications:

Let alone the classical debate between the opponents of the traditional approaches of teaching and the novice ones, the foremost pedagogic implication of this study is that the teacher should not be the sole monopolizer of power in the classroom; students should be given power in the classroom. They should be empowered by the teacher. They should be encouraged to take part in classroom interaction. This balance of power will result in multi-directional interaction and multi-directional communication. Equally important is that this kind of teachers who can create learners who are powerful and who will never surrender in real life situations.

The novels under investigation advocate those who are powerless and aim at giving them room for discursive reactions as resistance, negotiation for power, surrender or capitulation. Studying those literary works helps students defying their passiveness and seeking for more power.

C- Implications for Mass Media Communication:

This paper has implications for mass communication. For example, in talk shows, the interviewer should not monopolize the floor; he should leave space and floor for the person interviewed. In other words, the relation between participants in talk shows should reveal a balance of power. Out another way, one participant should not control or dominate the other participants entirely; thus there should be a balance of power in the sense that no participant should force the other to capitulate or surrender.

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