Holistic Process On Critical Discourse Analysis In Qualitative Research Design: A Proposed Model

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Abstract
Research is divided into two main approaches, namely quantitative and qualitative. The application of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in qualitative approach is scantly searched by previous scholars. Generally, CDA is directed towards the role of understanding the meanings of the data being explored. This research attempts to propose a holistic process on qualitative research design, focusing on CDA. CDA involves general processes, namely macro-level analysis and micro aspect covering content analysis.
Keywords: *Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), discourse, qualitative, research design, macro-level, micro-level.*

I.   Introduction

Qualitative research is used to gain knowledge and understanding of the nature of the phenomenon under study (such as the meaning, attributes and characteristics); and the true value, applicability, consistency and neutrality of the research which are critical to the evaluation and the worth of the research (Krefting, 1990, p. 214 – 222). The variables to be used in the conceptual research framework will be decided by the researcher and the questions asked will be based on the pre-determined variables within the research framework. Qualitative research is carried out intensely and/or continuously. The role of the researcher is to get a systemic, comprehensive, and integrated picture of the research focus (Miles et al., 2014). Lim (2024) affirmed that qualitative method is an indispensable tool for collating astute complex phenomena.

A discourse is a system of meanings. The understanding in a discourse depends on different cultures, and can depend on whether the discourse benefits or disadvantages the people. Parker (1992, p. 7) also says that in terms of discourse analysis, things such as "speech, writing, non-verbal behaviour …" can all be forms of text. Discourse paints a picture of reality, and this forms statements about reality. It can be presented as a narrative, in accordance with hermeneutics. Ideas are structured by discourse in a community, so the ideas of knowledge and social practice come from a particular discourse. A 'discourse community' creates discourse representing the particular knowledge, interests, goals, cultural belief systems, trust and norms of the organizations studied in the research. A discourse is used by a discourse community who agree on a meaning. Language is organised into 'discourses' and these are able to influence how we experience and behave in the world. When people talk about a phenomenon, for example an organizational strategic goal, the people must make use of shared patterns of meanings. The discourse analysis approach can examine how discourse is constructed in the discourse community. The reality for the community is assumed to be a social construction in discourse analysis.

According to Fairclough (1992) and Lim (2023), the specific detail about a particular kind of discourse is the social situation in which the discourse is a part. Therefore, research projects using discourse analysis must first look at forms of social practice and their relations to social structure (a macro-approach). The disciplines of sociology, political science and history are used to do this. The ideal analysis of discourse is however interdisciplinary, and is how it is used here. To specifically analyse the discourse, the signs and symbols of the discourse are then categorized for analysis (a micro-approach). Discourse analysis then further examined as to how discourse is constructed and implemented in the discourse community. Fairclough (1992) provides a summary of the three dimensions of analysis used in the practices of discourse analysis; firstly, at a macro level, secondly at a micro level, and finally the analysis of the social practice in which the discourse is used. The three dimensions are:
1) Discourse Practice at the macro level looks at the relationship between texts and the relationship between discourses in terms of interpretation.
2) Text at the micro aspect is the analysis of individual texts in terms of description.
3) Social Practice is the analysis of the situation in which the discourse is embedded or set in terms of the interpretation of both of the above dimensions to interpret how it is implemented.

In macro-level analysis is of the context and critically extends literature review study of the context of the case, drawing upon contextual data provided by the key documents that are derived from historical approach.

The micro-level analysis is content analysis and is structured according to key themes. The themes will be determined through a close study of key documents in light of the research framework as well as the critical context analysis. The data will be analysed according to both the frequency of occurrence of terms as well as position within system structures. Sheer frequency of terms was not considered significant, but repeated terms that formed consistent patterns were considered significant. The determination of the actual themes involved a further interpretation and grouping to ensure that the themes that were constructed provide a critical perspective with which to engage with the research framework.

The social practice is analysis of how the discourse is applied in practice, and carried out in relation to both the context and content analysis. There are four facets to this. The first is the consideration of the internal coherency of key themes identified in the content analysis of the key document. The second is consideration of the fit of the key themes determined by the content analysis in relation to the context analysis. The third is elucidation of tensions that arise within and between key themes due to lack of internal coherency. The fourth is elucidation of tensions that arise due to lack of fit between the themes of the content analysis and the context analysis.

The interpretation of the meaning of the themes, however only started in the interpretation of the discourse in practice, and only completed in discussion of the results, where further literature is brought to bear with and which is to help interpret the challenges to the research framework and how they relate to the aims of the research.
This is where the role of the topic being researched becomes particularly visible.

II. Literature Review

Critical discourse analysis (CDA)

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is another methodology that is functional to apprise scholarly literature (Wall, Stahl, & Salam, 2015; Lim, 2023). CDA was earlier described as the primary studies of the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context, which is a type of discourse analytical research (van Dijk, 1998). Wodak (2010) described CDA's "discourse-historical approach" as: "(i) the approach is problem-oriented, not focused on specific linguistic items; (ii) the approach is inter-disciplinary; (iii) the approach is abductive: a constant movement back and forth between theory and empirical data is necessary; (iv) the categories and tools for the analysis are defined according to all these steps and procedures as well as to the specific problem under investigation" (Wodak, 2010, p. 7). First, CDA enables the problematic relationship of the variables to be addressed. Second, the synthesized inter-disciplinary conceptual research model can be addressed. Third, the interaction between the synthesized conceptual research model and the comparative case study methodology can be explicitly addressed.

Wodak's (2010) reference to the "abductive" approach of CDA needs clarification. 'Abduction" is a third type of reasoning that can be critically distinguished from "deductive" and "inductive". CDA cannot be described as either deductive or inductive, or even by both. Rather it is of a different type. Wodak (2010, p. 7) also defines the abductive approach of CDA as, "a constant movement back and forth between theory and empirical data". In other words, abductive reasoning is recursive, and so it is the type of reasoning modelled by the research as it involved the interactions between organizations and their environment. The recursive nature of abductive reasoning can be defined by what is also termed the "hermeneutic circle" and also recognized as an important qualitative research tool for management (Myers, 2008). The hermeneutic circle can be summarized by the logical paradox that to know the parts the whole is needed to be known, and that to know the whole the parts need to be known. Thus, inevitably there is a never-ending recursive process of learning – also a feature of the research model. The similarity to, and use of hermeneutics in, CDA is clear.

Other definitions of abduction emphasize that it is an intuitive or creative hypothesis / proposition creating process (Aliseda, 2006; Magnani, 2009). As such, abduction is an intrinsic aspect of the scientific process. However, this is not commonly recognized, and more often a dichotomy of only two ways of reasoning is recognized: deductive reasoning versus inductive reasoning. Deductive reasoning is "top-down" from the more general to the specific; from theory to hypothesis to observation to confirmation. Inductive reasoning is "bottom-up" from the specific to the general; from observation to pattern to tentative hypothesis to theory. But from this perspective, abduction can be seen to actually be involved in both deductive and inductive reasoning, whether moving from the general to the specific or from the specific to the general. The difference is that in deductive reasoning the abductive process remains totally within the bounds of reason, whereas in the inductive process it has to involve creative imaginative leaps of insight.

Putting these different perspectives together reveals that CDA involves both deductive and inductive reasoning in the recursive movement between theory and empirical data, and that abduction is involved in both directions. So, the inductive 'grounded' dimension to CDA is clear, but also the deductive literature-based

synthesis carried out to develop the research model. So, all aspects of the research, from the original inter-disciplinary synthesis of literature, to intuitive insights from the cases and their juxtaposing, can be seen to be part of CDA.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), Lincoln et al. (2011), Myers and Klein (2011), the CDA approach relies deeply on values and ethics to guide research conclusions. Common values in critical research include equality, emancipation, and inclusion. However, the method is not free from bias, values, assumptions, and beliefs; but rather reflexive (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Thus, researchers using CDA must carefully examine how they influence the study and how their own beliefs and values guide their research conclusions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln et al., 2011).

Hermeneutical approaches in critical discourse analysis

Hermeneutics has long been recognized as a critical interdisciplinary approach. According to Giddens (in Shapiro & Sica, 1984, p. 15), "*Today . . . real and profound convergences of interest and problems are occurring across broad spectra of intellectual life*." Hermeneutics is at the "v*ery centre of these convergences, having both to contribute to and to learn from them*" (Giddens in Shapiro & Sica, 1984, p. 15). This approach is necessary in understanding issues that requires concepts from multiple disciplines, and their synthesis to be able to understand the complexity of contemporary PM. George (2020) defined hermeneutics as the study of interpretation. Hermeneutics has also long had a "real-world" orientation. According to Outwaite (1987, p. 108) the hermeneutic principle is that concepts and theories of the social sciences must make substantial reference to actors in the real-world, including the researcher. Hermeneutic methodology provides potential multiple insights from both the vertical and horizontal dimension.

For Shapiro and Sica (1984, p. 3), hermeneutics is precisely about this type of practice of interpretation, but as it does not give conditions to show the achievement or recognition of understanding, there is great flexibility in the approach. The hermeneutical process aims to "make such understanding meaningful for life and thought" (Shapiro & Sica, 1984, p. 4). This has made it suited to the study of the complex processes of acculturation in PM as it is practiced in organizations, using acculturation theory which analyses social identity, which is crucial and central to the case studies (Liu & Hilton, 2005). Moreover, hermeneutics seeks to "demystify cultural phenomena distorted by ideologies of class … or the will to power" (Gadamer in Shapiro & Sica, 1984, p. 5).

Hermeneutics also provides a synthesizing function, whereby meaning is constructed through the 'hermeneutic circle' recursive process of abductive reasoning. According to Guba (1990, p. 27) the process is one where "individual constructions (of meaning) are elicited and refined hermeneutically, and compared and contrasted dialectically, with the aim of generating one (or a few) constructions on which there is substantial consensus" Guba (1990, p. 27).

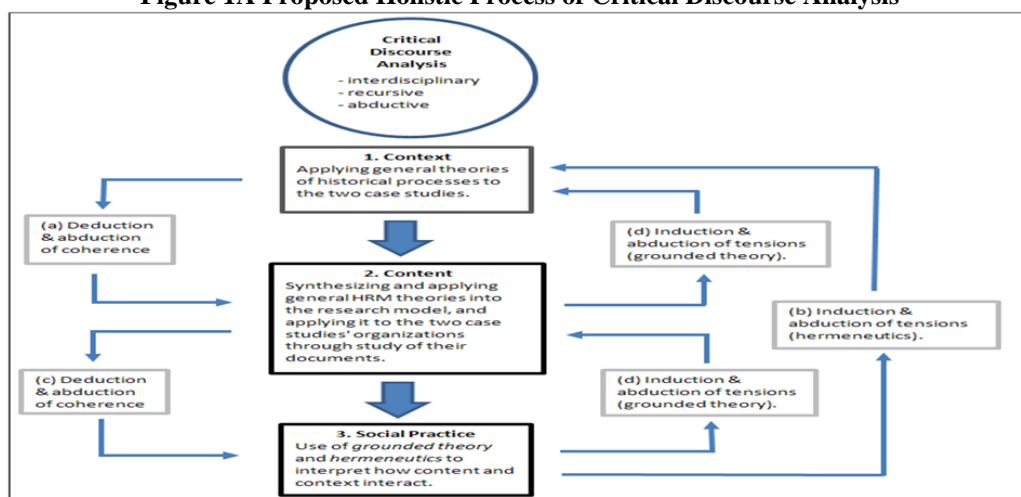**Figure 1A Proposed Holistic Process of Critical Discourse Analysis**

Figure 1 sketches the methods and recursive process involved in the critical discourse analysis carried out in this research. The general process of discourse analysis begins with the macro-analysis of the context of the documents of both the general literature and the documents of the case being studied – *Method 1*. Macro-analysis of the context is however, also implicitly the analysis of social practice; though only of the ideal social practice as it is expected to be through applying existing theories of historical processes – *Method 3*. So, it is a rational abductive process that is nevertheless deductive as it stays within the bounds of existing theories: it is analysis of the fit (coherence) of documents to actual historical events - *Method 3a*.

The next step is micro-analysis of the content of the documents of both the literature and the documents of the case being studied - *Method 2*. As for macro-analysis, the micro-analysis is however also implicitly the analysis of social practice, but once again also only of the ideal social practice, though this time according to the application of existing theories of the variables being studied. The first stage is the process of synthesizing the research framework. It is a rational and deductive yet abductive process – *Method 3c*. The second stage is analysis of the coherence of the documents according to the research framework- *Method 3c*.

The third and final step in the general process of discourse analysis is the analysis of social practice - *Method 3* proper. Both grounded theoretical approaches and hermeneutics are used. Both are used inductively and abductively to creatively add to existing theories. Grounded theoretical approaches are used to analyse the incoherence (tensions) in the content of the documents of the case being studied – *Method 3d*. This includes analysis of the tensions between the analyses of context and content. Hermeneutics is used to analyse the incoherence of (tensions between) deduced contextual processes and actual social practice implied by the documents – *Method 3b*. But as mentioned above, the third step of social practice is also implicit in the first steps in the general process of discourse analysis, and so the first and seconds steps of the macro-analysis of context and the micro-analysis of content respectively, are both implicitly involved in the third step of the analysis of social practice. The process is recursive: it is a hermeneutic circle of potentially never-ending reinterpretation.

The actual use of CDA by this research has an undefined number of recursions, but the presentation of the results idealizes the process as one process from the first to second to third steps of the general discourse analysis process.

Strengths of the Holistic CDA Model

The suggested model offers a systematic method for researchers at every level, which: improves the validity and reliability of CDA in qualitative research, making certain that the analysis is multi-level (textual, discursive, and social context), lowering researcher bias and promoting reflexivity', improving discourse analysis's ethical transparency, and connecting research to practical uses in order to bridge theory and practice.

III.   Conclusion

It is important to ensure that in addition to developing appropriate research instruments, it is also necessary to employ a suitable approach to administering the actual research. This includes deciding on the sample size, study location, and data collection and analysis methods (Sekaran, 2003). In brief, the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is mainly intended to explore the qualitative research design that requires primary data. Qualitative research is used to gain knowledge and understanding of the nature of the phenomenon under study (such as the meaning, attributes and characteristics); and the true value, applicability, consistency and neutrality of the research which are critical to the evaluation and the worth of the research (Krefting, 1990, p. 214 – 222; Lim, 2024).

Furthermore, this approach also allows an in-depth understanding of the ways in which data are used on a day-to-day basis. Its use in the field of management and has been primarily explorative of new issues, or to begin to look at issues in new ways (Gummesson, 2000). Significantly, most cases require in-depth studies of the particular research documents, data, and contexts. Moreover, the cases also require in-depth studies of how the research documents and data might have changed.

Thus, with CDA research design, the requirement for the research methodology can be met through the comparison of cases to critically compare the two (or more) sets of in-depth multi perspective studies to reveal: (a) similarities that seek to tentatively corroborate the synthesized general model that has been proposed; (b) differences that provide insights and the construction of new propositions for the general model; and (c) requisite similarity and difference in cases whereby there is only one main variable between the two cases, namely acculturation history.

To sum up, CDA is an essential instrument for comprehending ideology, power, and language in qualitative research. Researchers could, however, struggle with disjointed, inconsistent procedures in the absence of a systematic paradigm. By combining conceptualization, data collection, analysis, reflexivity, and application, the suggested holistic CDA paradigm provides a whole manual for scholars looking to do rigorous, significant discourse analysis.

Researchers can generate more dependable, morally sound, and socially relevant work that subverts prevailing narratives and gives voice to underrepresented groups by adhering to this methodical approach.

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