



A CRITICAL DISCOURSE APPROACH TO TEACHING ENGLISH IN ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS INSTITUTES

Muhammad Asad Habib

PhD Scholar (Applied Linguistics)
University of Management and Technology, Lahore.
Email; masadlhr29@gmail.com

Zafar Iqbal Bhatti

PhD Scholar (Applied Linguistics)
University of Management and Technology, Lahore.
Email; ravianz902@gmail.com

Sadia Ishfaq

Lecturer Institute of Communication and Cultural Studies
University of Management and Technology, Lahore.
Email; sadia.ishfaq@umt.edu.pk.com

Abstract

The aim of this article is to offer a framework for conducting classroom discourse analysis. This paper starts by explaining Saidian Post colonialism, Foucauldian post structuralism along with famous educator Paulo Freire's educational philosophy in order to develop a critical framework for understanding what actually is needed in the ESL class room in the religious institutions of Pakistan (madaras) to create a real learning environment and creating an understanding of what actually transpires in the English classrooms especially in Pakistani context. It also explains the inadequate prospects of recent models of classroom interaction analysis and classroom discourse. Taking a lead from these discourse traditions, this study endeavors to create a conceptual framework for Critical evaluation for discourse practices in class and present basic principles and procedures that might make CDA possible. The participants of this study are students and teachers from the madaras. This study also shows that when learners feelings, their reasoning, experiences and beliefs are not consider significant by the teacher the class room will be decontextualized. Suggestions for further exploration that CCDA might expose, are given in the last part of this paper

Key words: critical class room discourse, madaras, ESL, critical pedagogy.

Introduction

This study critically examines the role of discourse in the English class rooms in the religious institutions (madrasas). Based on the concept presented by Kumaravadivelu (1999) this study takes its insight from the critical class room discourse. The field of investigation takes into consideration the Pakistani student who are studying in the religious institutions locally called as madrasas. Students of the madrasas are seen lacking behind in the learning of English and they study English only to compete in examination. When these students come to urban areas for higher education they feel uncomfortable because the medium of instruction suddenly changes. English is taught at graduate and post graduate level. Medium of instruction is English; which, for most of the students coming from madrasas, is very difficult to comprehend. Smith describes the characteristics necessary for a language in order to be adopted as a medium of instruction (Smith, 1999). According to him medium of instruction should be understandable to students. It

should also enable them to attain comfort levels so that they can both deliver and receive messages using the chosen medium but in the case of these institution it lacks far behind.

An important factor which is observed in class room was that students are not taking an active part in class room discussion and the class remain teacher fronted. Against the instructions of the teachers, students do not read the text, and they were not able to take part in class discussions even those students who possess advance level in spite of their proficiency in English. After a long discussion with the students and teachers teaching them, it was clear that an important factor in students not getting interested in the class room work is the teaching material. Teaching material is comprised of text which is more west oriented and local context is not given any preference. Yu & Huang (2008) in their review of the books printed from the period of 1980's to first decade of 21st century in china, examined a persuasive inclination in the evaluation of textbooks and thus concluded that rigorous research is needed in this regard. They maintained that the issue of language ideology in EFL textbooks has not been adequately and clearly explored.

In recent years, Hanrahan have come to believe that the language practices of school are chiefly responsible for alienating and dispiriting such students and create discontent among them. Although much of earlier research in education was located in a psychological framework with concepts such as motivation and affirmation as major factors, He was also making connections with knowledge of language and second language teaching and beginning to notice the language and cultural aspects implication of the language in use (Marshall, 2015). According to Hanks the language to be used should be appropriate as whatever we use carries meaning, it is consider language as an entity having a reflexive relationship with its context. In this case, reflexive is taken as an idea that an utterance effects what we take the context to be and context also influences what we consider the utterance to mean. He further argues that context in this case refers to an ever broadening set of factors that take with it the language in use (Hanks, 1996). This set consists of the material setting, the persons present the social relationships among persons engaged and their ethnic background, their gender, and their sexual individualities, as well as cultural, historical, and institutional factors and most important the language that is being used before and after a certain utterance.

Teaching methodology is a major factor in Second language learning environment. It was found out that the students are facing problem partly due to available text and partly due to teaching methodology. Teachers in order to teach that text in accordance to the western norms ignore the fact that student's voices, feelings and sociocultural back grounds are not taken into consideration, students might feel themselves disadvantaged and ignored in the whole scheme. Chen (2010) investigation of the semiotic understanding of attitudinal curriculum aims in English as a foreign language (EFL) textbooks is an important effort to discern how multimodal discourses position the values of the give context in texts. It shows how "tutorial room are decontextualized from the students' point of view when their feelings, beliefs about what is significant, their reasoning and their experience are not part of the assumed context of the teacher's communication" (Young, 1992, p. 59). Students complained that whatever has been taught is about a culture which they do not understand. Students felt that their identities has not being given recognition and also that their expressions and voices were not being given respect. It seems that their disinclination to contribute in classroom discussions is a kind of quiet

resistance. Which according to French sociologist, de Certeau (1984) is an art of the weak. According to him 'these are clever tricks employed by the weak within the order customary by the "strong"'. (pp. 31). De Certeau calls it 'Tactics'. De Certeau explains tactics can be as ordinary as stealing something very ordinary or declining to collaborate with authority, or it can even be dispersing Wrong information (De Certeau, 1984).

From this we can assume that classroom is a place where teacher and students are equal stake holders and ignoring student's part can be catastrophic. It is a place where different elements like teachers and taught attitude, ideologies, policies, plans, methods, mix together to yield exclusive environments for learning and sharing that might aid or hamper the creation and utilization of educational opportunities. It is, therefore, very important to systematically determine, observe and analyze the desired classroom activities and events. What really occurs inside the classroom largely defines the degree to which anticipated learning outcomes are achieved.

Back Ground of the Study

There are different educational systems in Pakistan which comprises of mainly two categories: Private schooling system and public schooling system. Along with these two formal system there is another system which has no formal recognition i.e. Madrasa system (Ahmed, 2009). The word madrasa is an Arabic word which means the center for education. Conventionally, madaras has been the center of learning for the students in Islamic world. Throughout the history of Islam madaras (plural of madrasa) 'seminaries' are torch bearers of knowledge and have produced great Islamic Scholar. This system of education was successfully run by the Muslim world and generally these madaras were funded by the government.

Similarly, this system was farmed by the Muslims after they come to subcontinent. It was in the colonial period when the British government on the name of reformation introduced the schooling system. There were certain purposes behind this so called reformation the famous among them was 'British thinking in white skin'. These colonizers realized that the source of knowledge for Muslims were these madaras and hence, out of fear they discarded theses madaras (Zaman, 2010). Yet there were two famous school of thoughts and followers of that tradition namely Deoband and Brelvi who resisted the British invasion and retained their identity against all the odds.

After the partition of India and with the emergence of Pakistan a great number of Islamic scholars 'ulemas' came to Pakistan and formed their madrasa here. The study made by Rana (2009) suggests that there are five types of religious madrasas in Pakistan which include 46% of Deobandi, 27% of Braelvi, 12% of Ahl-e-Hadith, 9% of Shia and 6% of Jamaat-e-Islami. All these madaras have been working independently and their source of funding is their own raising of charity. Due to lack of interest from the governments these madaras remained the places for rote learning curtailing them to the cramming of Arabic text without the understanding if the real content. With the passage of time, these madaras became a place for the children of poor people who cannot afford their educational expenses and have no choice but to send them to madaras. Individual madaras selected their pedagogical content which propagated sectarianism rather than the knowledge of Islam.

The teacher in the madaras are generally the graduates from these madaras. Although these madaras are sensitized religiously and politically yet these teacher are marginalized in the society. They face certain restrictions and their mingling with other persons in social gatherings are thought as a taboo. Their interaction is confined to the religious gatherings like death, marriage and religious events. They are thought as Ulemas who have to maintain their distance with the common people. Hence, they are confined to study the literature concerning their own sectarian thinking. Similar is the case with the students studying there, they are also sanctioned from mingling with the other people and this has created a gap between these student and the common member of the society.

In the recent past, madrasas are thought to encourage militancy and sectarian violence. Rahman (2007) summing up the situation says that madrasas are formed taking into account the needs of society. But these institutions are thought to be conservative in this approach and thus used by the Americans to propagate Jihad. Interestingly, madrasas after being used become 'ideologically activist and sometimes militant. 'This put pressure on the siting government for the reformation. It was in the government of Pervaiz Musharraf when this reformation started. It was the outcome of the philosophy of 'enlightened moderation' (Musharraf, 2003). The policy of was proposed by Musharraf himself. The reforms are based on the factors which includes funding sources, recruitment policy, teaching material and curriculum which promotes sectarian literature. The most important thing was to provide a curriculum for studies which should create a balance and provide students a chance to come close to the real world rather than isolating them from the society. This policy was criticized by different religious institutions and they call it an American policy to dictate and repress Islamic traditions.

The purpose of the enlightened moderation plan was to introduce modern day subject like English, Mathematics, social sciences, Pakistan studies, economics and pure sciences etc. The program was intended to reach eight thousand madrasa across country effecting about a million students both male and female studying in madrasa. This program was also planned for some 3000 teachers teaching in different madrasas. Hence, the modern teaching methods were also inculcated to eradicate the sectarianism and extremism (Rana, 2009). Taking into consideration all the factors, the class room environment become crucially important and, therefore, it remained imperative to evaluate the outcomes of this program.

Methodology

The study is a critical analysis of the discourse used in the English classrooms in Pakistani madaras. The population of this study is the Pakistani students studying English in the madrasas located in province Punjab. For this purpose 11 institutions are selected. It was taken care that the selected madrasas have teacher qualified to teach English.

Purposive sampling technique is used to collect the data. The tools for data collection are interviews and classroom observations. Semi structured interviews are conducted in order to understand both students and teacher's stance. 43 students and 17 teachers were interviewed for

this purpose. Along with interviews, classroom observation are also conducted to get first-hand knowledge of the real classroom environment.

Data Analysis

This study aims at finding an appropriate approach towards the classroom discourse analysis for interaction which can be useful in finding a solution for the problem under discussion. Thus, critical discourse analysis approach is selected. For this purpose, two different yet interconnected discourse approaches were taken. The class room interaction approach and the critical class room discourse analysis. In addition to it, post-colonial and post structuralism stances in context of Pakistani religious institutions are incorporated to make available a latest dimensions in the field of second language acquisition. For this, Foucault's discourse approach (Foucault, 1970) is merged with Edward Said's postcolonial discourse convention (Said & Jhally, 2002). These provide a new understanding inside and outside classroom context. This study also give suggestions and dimensions for new fields for research in class room discourse.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is an interdisciplinary methodological approach to the understanding of the working of language in a given society with the agenda of social libretion. Language catalogs and exposes information about our beliefs, identities, cultures and histories, Therefore, for any analysts studying discourse, look for cruces tension points (Fairclough, 2013). Educational researcher has progressively applied all across the world to define, interpret and explain important problems in education. (Gee, 1999, 2008; Rogers, 2008). Barnard (2003) explores how war responsibility is minimized in Japanese high school history textbooks by taking a CDA approach. De los Heros (2009) conducts a CDA of language ideologies associated with linguistic prescriptivism in Peru's official language textbook for first-year high school. Liu (2005a, 2005b, 2005c) critically analyses the discursive construction of cultural knowledge and values in Chinese language textbooks. He calls for further studies that "critically analyze and demystify the discourses constructed in the textbooks" and argued this is the "most important aspect of a literacy that enables children to read the world" (Liu, 2005a, p. 319).

The earlier concepts of discourse

A remarkable amount of work in the field of discourse analysis has been done by the classroom discourse analyst. Yet there is a room for further research as previous work is limited in its content and implication. Some of the recent works in reconsidering race, culture and curriculum, proposes that by understanding discourse and language only in individual perspective and his developmental issues require methodical modification in education (McCarthy, 1990). Their work on discourse perspective is inadequate and restricted than other discourse perspectives, mainly those related with current cultural studies: Foucauldian poststructuralist and Saidian post colonialism. For this purpose I, therefore, briefly describe these discourse conventions after classroom interaction analysis. I begin by discussing the two overwhelming critical traditions and then focus on their instructive applications.

Discourse and Context

Discourse analytical studies are based on the concept of context driven production of discourse. Hence, both discourse and context are interwoven for the analysis and interpretation.

The work on discourse and discourse analysis, predominantly the work in the field of language teaching (e.g. Cazden, 1988; McCarthy, 1992; McCarthy & Carter, 2014; Walsh, 2006) introduced the term discourse as connected text not including the individual sentences. Thus, the field of inquiry related to discourse analysis becomes the study of the linguistic units which are connected and larger in magnitude, for instance conversational interactions or texts. Discourse creates a relationship between given social context for its usage and language structure. Hence, to distinguish the discourse with the text, Widdowson (1979) asserts that the main focus of the analysis of the discourse is to understand the cohesion in the text along with the apparent lexical items and grammar, and to analyze coherence in the given text which is crucial for the understanding of the underlying forms and functions.

By emphasizing social context has opened a new stance to the classroom discourse analysts. Now classroom is seen as a mini society and events in class room as social events with all the kinds of rituals attached to it. Breen (1985) explains it as a two-dimensional (a) individual subjective experience and (b) collective-subjective experience making classroom discourse a part of social context. Thus verbal interaction inside the class room not determine the context but also is determined by it (Van Lier, 1988). This kind of social context allowed the researchers and discourse analyst to study the patterns of turn taking, types of activities and methods of teaching (Chaudron, 1988).

Post Colonialism and Discourse.

The first comprehensive theoretical framework for the analysis of postcolonial Discourse was given by Edward Said (1978) in his famous work *Orientalism*. The use of the term *Orientalism* was mentioning the systematic discourse generated by the west to give positive self-presentation and negative presentation of the other which in this case is east. It creates a discursive field through which west "was able to manage and even produce the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively" (p. 3). He thinks that the Oriental discourse is created on the basis of us and them. Thus colonizes people were treated as indistinguishable mass. They were stereo typed and degraded. He further argues that the discursive framework allowed them to legitimize the power relation existing in the colonialism by stereo typical observations which were so many in number that they could be attributed to one man but to a widespread belief system.

Said (1978) give new understanding of the colonial system by showing how it is made functional by making a discourse about others. By grounding the analysis of Orientalism on Foucault's (1972) notion of inseparable existence of knowledge and power, he explained that text produced by the by writers, missionaries, legislators, artists, travelers, and colonial administrators accorded the authority posed by academic institutions thus creating a reality for the rulers which they seek to describe. Many post-colonial scholars objected to Said's stance for adopting Foucauldian model. Loomba (1988) mentioned his view of both colonized and colonizer inevitably constrained in the dichotomy of dominator and subordinator. Ahmed (1992) argues that this kind of dichotomy does not take care of varied historical context. The cultural and linguistic differences of postcolonial standpoints (P. Williams & Chrisman, 1994) has been a fabrication of political liberalism or political correctness. It is an effort by colonized and colonizers to explore and deconstruct imperialist past and their institutions (Dirlik, 1994a, 1994b).

Bhabha's (1984, 1985) observes that colonial discourse remains hybrid which is the symbol of shifting forces and productivity or setback from the practice of domination. He further points out that colonial mimicry is working as a kind of expression of suppression sometimes worked against them as an approach of rebellion. There is fundamental flaw in the colonial ideology which one hand is creating a gap between east and west and on the other hand try to bridge it which according to mill (1997) as mentioned in (McCloskey, 2008) further by saying "complex set of desire". Both colonized and colonizer are at each other's mercy and caught in the act of play of fantasy and desire. This play of fantasy and desire according to Bhabha (1985)) make colonial discourse hybrid which in fact created new opportunity to overthrow the superiority of colonizers discourse. The teaching of English in Africa and Asia enables them to challenge the west in their native tongue. So they used English education to coup the superiority of the English create a sense of equality and thus they are able to demand freedom (Loomba, 1998). (Chakravorty, 1999) appropriately points out that voices of resistance are created by those people who are educated in the west or in western way belonging to the strata of indigenous elites.

Poststructuralist discourse

Discourse according to Foucault (1970) is entire domain or a field where language is used. It encapsulate entire theoretical ground where knowledge is being generated ad regenerated. For him Language is itself part of discourse rather than taking it as the supra sentential feature of language. Foucault (1972) suggests three way definition of discourse. (a) "A general domain of all statements (b) individualized group of statements (c) regulated practices presenting number of statements ".(p.80). Counting language as part of whole organism that create discourse. Foucault (1970) outspreads the definition of idea of text which is generated by discursive practices rather than linguistic feature comprising of different ideologies and means of regulating power. Text are political because every discursive practice is political. So analyzing discourse or text means analyzing discursive formations that are content wise ideological and their character is essentially political.

Foucault (1970, 1972) argues that discursive field of power and knowledge controls every utterance. Power is not only manifested in top to down flow from upper to lower groups in any social order but spread in the form of capillary action. This power/ knowledge nexus is exposed in the form of *regime of truth* which undermines what is true or false. Combination of these three truth, power and knowledge is necessarily what establish discursive practices (mill, 1997) which systemically form discursive formation. Discursive formations do not allow any individual to think outside of them. Thus, these formations do not permit any discursive change in social hierarchy. Bourdieu (1990) argues further that by increasing their capital, individuals try to resist the domination. He says that capital can be a kind of power which may not necessarily be economic but can be cultural or social or symbolic.

Bourdieu (1990) uses a term "symbolic violence "to explain the working of forces in societies helping in the creation of knowledge that will legitimize inequality among different social groups. According to Bourdieu (1990) this kind of violence is manifested predominantly in academic discourse. In this regard Bourdieu (1990) says "there is a whole dimension of authorized language, its rhetoric, syntax, vocabulary, and even pronunciation which exists purely to underline the authority" (p. 76). Criticizing the work of Said and Foucault, (Bhatnagar, 1986)

observes that theories presented by Foucault or Bordieu or De Cerueau gave no attention to expansion of European colonialism and thus are limited in their focus yet their construction of text or discourse is effective.

Class Room Discourse

The concept of discourse presented by Foucault remains influential in many fields of applied linguistics including TESOL, Feminist Pedagogy, Critical pedagogy and critical discourse analysis. Fairclough (1995) in pointing the role of critical linguist in the field of language learning argues that the role of critical language awareness "can lead to reflexive analysis of practices of domination implicit in the transmission and learning of academic discourse, and the engagement of learners in the struggle to contest and change such practices" (p. 222). According to his view if the language learner learns to challenge the practices of the domination only then he will be able to understand the relationship between language and power.

By uniting the philosophies of Paulo Freire and Foucault the working of critical pedagogists is based on the notion that class rooms are not only places of teaching rather a crucible where different ideologies cultural forms discursive formation struggle for the dominant position (McLaren, 1992). Therefore, role of critical pedagogist is empowering of the participants so that they can look to the reality of the world which is beyond their immediate context. Giroux, Freire, and McLaren (1988) argue the importance of developing theories, "forms of knowledge and social practices "that can work by combining the experiences of these critical linguists in the field of education.

Educators like Freire taking a lead from Foucault calls for empowerment in education that can inculcate good skills by rendering personal development to public life, academic knowledge, critical inquisitiveness about inequality Power and change (Shor, 2012) which help students to identify and explore for themselves the understudy historical and sociopolitical context with a critical understanding of all these facts.

On the contrary postcolonial theorist gave a new and refreshing standpoint in the field of education and more specifically in English language education. It gives the notion that education is "massive canon in the artillery of empire" which Gramsci (1992) describe as by consent domination. In post colonialism no language is enjoying this kind of implication as English does. Viswanath in her famous study *Mask of Conquest* (1989) remarks English literacy served as a mask to camouflage the British activities in colonial Bharat. She is surprised at the ironical fact that English literature and literary text was taught in England way after being taught in colonial India. She also noted that Supremacy of English language rests on radicalized equation.

Pennycook (1989) in *English and the discourses of Colonialism* connects this thinking to the teaching of English Language (ELT) analyses and explains that ELT is embedded in the colonial discourses. He says

"is a product of colonialism not just because it is colonialism that produced the initial conditions for the global spread of English but because it was colonialism that produced many of the ways of thinking and behaving that are still part of Western cultures. European/Western culture not only produced colonialism but was

also produced by it; ELT not only rode on the back of colonialism to the distant corners of the Empire but was also in turn produced by that voyage". (p. 19)

Pennycook (1989) thinks that it is important to decolonize English language teaching by searching for alternative possibilities in English language classrooms.

By combining postcolonial and poststructuralist stances we can say that discourses are three dimensional construct (a) sociolinguistic (b) sociopolitical (c) sociocultural. In all three of them exclusive research is being conducted in the area of sociocultural aspect. Kramsch (1993) states that a true sociocultural aspect of discourses in classroom can be recognized by understanding the complex, interwoven realm of discourses inside the classroom. Learner. According to Kramsch Learners in ELT classroom question their own understanding of the meanings taken from the native culture and target culture. (p. 238).

Analysis of above clears the fact that border understanding of all three areas can be confined to two things (a) scope (b) methods its scope can be widened by the understanding that class room is not merely a self-contained, isolated insulated mini society rather a part of a larger society. Where the play of domination and resistance in the form of ethnic, religious, gender, race, religion etc. are common day activities. For preferred method for the discourse analysis remain Microethnography. This method enables the analysts to examine crucial issue of classroom that is form and function questions and replays, input and interaction and their interrelation. It enables the discourse analysts to look at the issues in the class room with greater depth. In recent past microethnography has received some criticism from educational ethnographers like Hymes (1996) and Cazden (1988). These ethnographers questioned the separation of general from particular. It is, therefore, worth noting that it is not important what has or has not been achieved rather what we can achieve by taking into consideration poststructuralist and postcolonialist traditions of discourses.

Critical Classroom Discourse Analysis

Although both the Discourse traditions mentioned above are unproblematic yet they offer a wide range of possibilities for the creation of methods and scope of CCDA. By combining the two a rich body of knowledge can be developed that can be of great help in conducting CCDA.

Fundamental Characteristics of CCDA

By recapitulating the above previously mentioned discussion we can conclude that CCDA is based on the following principal.

- Language teacher cannot ignore the needs of the learner either sociocultural or sociopolitical, or sociolinguistic.
- Language teacher cannot give lack of attention to sociocultural reality inside or outside the class room.
- CCDA aims at identifying probable incongruity between the interpretations and intentions of aims and events of classroom.

- Critical engagement should be the objective of language teacher rather than just promoting just use of language.
- CCDA should take into consideration the assessment of the extent of students being involved in critical engagement.
- Discourses in classroom are constructed socially, motivated politically and determined historically which shapes the life of teacher and taught.
- Classrooms are not isolated, self-sufficient minisociety, rather part of whole field of discursive practices and discursive formations. Therefore, classroom analysis include various discursive practices, resistance and its effectiveness in the teaching and learning.
- The analysis of discourse should not focus just learning and teaching or form or function or methods but it should take into consideration the complex arena of competing ideologies expectations beliefs voices and anxieties.

Conclusion

These principles are the base for formation of class room discourse. Class room discourse is different from different discourse approaches and class room interaction analysis as first is informative later is normative but CCDA can be viewed as transformative (Kumaravadivelu, 1999). Class room discourse with its transformative function enable teacher to reflect and cope the sociopolitical, and sociocultural constructs that build character and material of the class room discourse. Another benefit of criticalclass room discourse approach is that it will direct the class room discourse towards knowledge generation rather than knowledge transmission and eventually provide pedagogic independence. Analyzing critically postcolonial and poststructuralist gives an understanding of discourse and counter discourse that can shape practices in ELT classrooms. Either Foucault's notion of Power, Said's Orientalism, Bourdieu's Capital De Certeau's Tactics all manifest variation of single theme that is discourse represent power. By promoting CCDA can help language teachers to discern the hidden relationship between classroom interaction and broader sociolinguistic, sociopolitical and sociocultural constructs.

Marcus (1998) states "You can't really say it all; all analyses, no matter how totalistic their rhetorics, are partial" (p. 37). The transformative function presented by class room discourse analysis provides implication not only for the language teachers but also for the curriculum and instructional policy makers. Conceptual framework of CCDA provides a base for questioning of widespread beliefs regarding ESOL professional's methods of teaching language. With its multifaceted focus CCDA offers a rich representations of our ESL classrooms. Thus it can be a guide line for those teaching in the institutions based on the religious, social or any other type.

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