

# Critical Discourse Analysis<sup>i</sup>

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According to van Dijk (1998a) Critical Discourse Analysis (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. It examines how these discursive sources are maintained and reproduced within specific social, political and historical contexts. In a similar vein, Fairclough (1993) defines CDA as

discourse analysis which 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 struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony. (p. 135)

To put it simply, CDA aims at making transparent the connections between discourse practices, social practices, and social structures, connections that might be opaque to the layperson.

## *Evolution of CDA*

In the late 1970s, Critical Linguistics was developed by a group of linguists and literary theorists at the University of East Anglia (Fowler et. al., 1979; Kress & Hodge, 1979). Their approach was based on Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). CL practitioners such as Trew (1979a, p. 155) aimed at "isolating ideology in discourse" and showing "how ideology and ideological processes are manifested as systems of linguistic characteristics and processes." This aim was pursued by developing CL's analytical tools (Fowler et al., 1979; Fowler, 1991) based on SFL.

Following Halliday, these CL practitioners view language in use as simultaneously performing three functions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions. According to Fowler (1991, p. 71), and Fairclough (1995b, p. 25), whereas the ideational function refers to the experience of the speakers of the world and its phenomena, the interpersonal function embodies the insertion of speakers' own attitudes and evaluations about the phenomena in question, and establishing a relationship between speakers and listeners. Instrumental to these two functions is the textual function. It is through the textual function of language that speakers are able to produce texts that are understood by listeners. It is an enabling function connecting discourse to the co-text and con-text in which it occurs.

Halliday's view of language as a "social act" is central to many of CDA's practitioners (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 1989, 1992, 1993, 1995b, 1995a; Fowler et al., 1979; Fowler, 1991; Hodge & Kress, 1979). According to Fowler et al. (1979), CL, like sociolinguistics, asserts that, "there are strong and pervasive connections between

linguistic structure and social structure" (p. 185). However, whereas in sociolinguistics "the concepts 'language' and 'society' are divided...so that one is forced to talk of 'links between the two'", for CL "language is an integral part of social process" (Fowler et al., 1979, p. 189).

Another central assumption of CDA and SFL is that speakers make choices regarding vocabulary and grammar, and that these choices are consciously or unconsciously "principled and systematic"(Fowler et al., 1979, p. 188). Thus choices are ideologically based. According to Fowler et al. (1979), the "relation between form and content is not arbitrary or conventional, but . . . form signifies content" (p. 188). In sum, language is a social act and it is ideologically driven.

### *Further development of CDA*

Over the years CL and what recently is more frequently referred to as CDA (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; van Dijk, 1998a) has been further developed and broadened. Recent work has raised some concerns with the earlier work in CL. Among the concerns was, first, taking into consideration the role of audiences and their interpretations of discourse possibly different from that of the discourse analyst. The second concern has called for broadening the scope of analysis beyond the textual, extending it to the intertextual analysis.

Fairclough (1995b) has raised both issues. He claims that the earliest work in CL did not adequately focus on the "interpretive practices of audiences." In other words, he claims that CL has, for the most part, assumed that the audiences interpret texts the same way the analysts do. In a similar vein, commenting on Fowler (1991), Boyd-Barrett (1994) asserts that there is "a tendency towards the classic fallacy of attributing particular 'readings' to readers, or media 'effects,' solely on the basis of textual analysis" (p. 31).

The other issue put forward by Fairclough (1995b) is that while earlier contributions in CL were very thorough in their grammatical and lexical analysis they were less attentive to the intertextual<sup>1</sup> analysis of texts: "the linguistic analysis is very much focused upon clauses, with little attention to higher-level organization properties of whole texts" (p. 28). Despite raising these issues with regards to earlier works in CL, Fairclough (1995b) inserts that "mention of these limitations is not meant to minimize the achievement of critical linguistics--they largely reflect shifts of focus and developments of theory in the past twenty years or so" (p. 28). The "shifts of focus and developments of theory" which Fairclough (1995b) talks about, however, have not resulted in the creation of a single theoretical framework. What is known today as CDA, according to Bell & Garret (1998), "is best viewed as a shared perspective encompassing a range of approaches rather than as just one school" (p. 7). Also, van Dijk (1998a) tells us that CDA "is not a specific direction of research" hence "it does not have a unitary theoretical framework." But, van Dijk (1998a) asserts, "given the common perspective and the general aims of CDA, we may also find overall conceptual and theoretical frameworks that are closely related."

### *Directions in CDA*

Among the scholars whose works have profoundly contributed to the development of CDA are van Dijk (1988, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1998b, 1998a), Wodak (1995, 1996, 1999), and Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1993, 1995a, 1995b, 1999).

*Van Dijk (Socio-cognitive model)*

Among CDA practitioners, van Dijk is one of the most often referenced and quoted in critical studies of media discourse, even in studies that do not necessarily fit within the CDA perspective (e.g. Karim, 2000; Ezewudo, 1998). In the 1980s, he started to apply his discourse analysis theory to media texts mainly focusing on the representation of ethnic groups and minorities in Europe. In his *News Analysis* (1988), he integrates his general theory of discourse to the discourse of news in the press, and applies his theory to authentic cases of news reports at both the national and international level. What distinguishes van Dijk's (1988) framework for the analyses of news discourse is his call for a thorough analysis not only of the textual and structural level of media discourse but also for analysis and explanations at the production and "reception" or comprehension level (Boyd-Barrett, 1994).

By structural analysis, van Dijk posited analysis of "structures at various levels of description" which meant not only the grammatical, phonological, morphological and semantic level but also "higher level properties" such as coherence, overall themes and topics of news stories and the whole schematic forms and rhetorical dimensions of texts. This structural analysis, however, he claimed, will not suffice, for

Discourse is not simply an isolated textual or dialogic structure. Rather it is a complex communicative event that also embodies a social context, featuring participants (and their properties) as well as production and reception processes. (van Dijk, 1988, p. 2)

By "production processes" van Dijk means journalistic and institutional practices of news-making and the economic and social practices which not only play important roles in the creation of media discourse but which can be explicitly related to the structures of media discourse.

Van Dijk's other dimension of analysis, "reception processes", involves taking into consideration the comprehension, "memorization and reproduction" of news information. What van Dijk's analysis of media (1988, 1991, 1993) attempts to demonstrate is the relationships between the three levels of news text production (structure, production and comprehension processes) and their relationship with the wider social context they are embedded within. In order to identify such relationships, van Dijk's analysis takes place at two levels: microstructure and macrostructure.

At the microstructure level, analysis is focused on the semantic relations between propositions, syntactic, lexical and other rhetorical elements that provide coherence in the text, and other rhetorical elements such quotations, direct or indirect reporting that give factuality to the news reports.

Central to van Dijk's analysis of news reports, however, is the analysis of macrostructure since it pertains to the thematic/topic structure of the news stories and their overall schemata. Themes and topics are realized in the headlines and lead paragraphs. According to van Dijk (1988), the headlines "define the overall coherence or semantic

unity of discourse, and also what information readers memorize best from a news report" (p. 248). He claims that the headline and the lead paragraph express the most important information of the cognitive model of journalists, that is, how they see and define the news event. Unless readers have different knowledge and beliefs, they will generally adopt these subjective media definitions of what is important information about an event. (van Dijk, 1988, p. 248)

For van Dijk (1988, pp. 14-16), the news schemata ("superstructure schema") are structured according to a specific narrative pattern that consists of the following: *summary* (headline and the lead paragraph), *story* (situation consisting of episode and backgrounds), and *consequences* (final comments and conclusions). These sections of a news story are sequenced in terms of "relevance," so the general information is contained in the summary, the headline and the lead paragraph. According to van Dijk, this is what the readers can best memorize and recall.

Van Dijk (1995) essentially perceives discourse analysis as ideology analysis, because according to him, "ideologies are typically, though not exclusively, expressed and reproduced in discourse and communication, including non-verbal semiotic messages, such as pictures, photographs and movies" (p. 17). His approach for analyzing ideologies has three parts: social analysis, cognitive analysis, and discourse analysis (1995, p. 30). Whereas the social analysis pertains to examining the "overall societal structures," (the context), the discourse analysis is primarily text based (syntax, lexicon, local semantics, topics, schematic structures, etc.). In this sense, van Dijk's approach incorporates the two traditional approaches in media education discussed earlier: interpretive (text based) and social tradition (context based), into one analytical framework for analyzing media discourse. However, what noticeably distinguishes van Dijk's approach from other approaches in CDA is another feature of his approach: cognitive analysis.

For van Dijk it is the *sociocognition*--social cognition and personal cognition-- that mediates between society and discourse. He defines social cognition as "the system of mental representations and processes of group members" (p. 18). In this sense, for van Dijk, "ideologies ... are the overall, abstract mental systems that organize ... socially shared attitudes" (p. 18). Ideologies, thus, "indirectly influence the personal cognition of group members" in their act of comprehension of discourse among other actions and interactions (p. 19). He calls the mental representations of individuals during such social actions and interactions "models". For him, "models control how people act, speak or write, or how they understand the social practices of others" (p. 2). Of crucial importance here is that, according to van Dijk, mental representations "are often articulated along Us versus Them dimensions, in which speakers of one group will generally tend to present themselves or their own group in positive terms, and other groups in negative terms" (p. 22). Analysing and making explicit this contrastive dimension of Us versus Them has been central to most of van Dijk's research and writings (1988, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1996, 1998a, 1998b). He believes that one who desires to make transparent such an ideological dichotomy in discourse needs to analyze discourse in the following way (1998b, pp. 61-63):

- a. Examining the context of the discourse: historical, political or social background of a conflict and its main participants
- b. Analyzing groups, power relations and conflicts involved

- c. Identifying positive and negative opinions about Us versus Them
- d. Making explicit the presupposed and the implied
- e. Examining all formal structure: lexical choice and syntactic structure, in a way that helps to (de)emphasize polarized group opinions

*Wodak (Discourse Sociolinguistics)*

Discourse Sociolinguistics is one of the directions in CDA associated with Wodak and her colleagues in Vienna (The Vienna School of Discourse Analysis). Wodak bases her model "on sociolinguistics in the Bernsteinian tradition, and on the ideas of the Frankfurt school, especially those of Jürgen Habermas" (Wodak, 1995, p. 209). According to Wodak (1996, p. 3):

Discourse Sociolinguistics...is a sociolinguistics which not only is explicitly dedicated to the study of the text in context, but also accords both factors equal importance. It is an approach capable of identifying and describing the underlying mechanisms that contribute to those disorders in discourse which are embedded in a particular context--whether they be in the structure and function of the media, or in institutions such as a hospital or a school--and inevitably affect communication.

Wodak has carried out research in various institutional settings such as courts, schools, and hospitals, and on a variety of social issues such as sexism, racism and anti-Semitism. Wodak's work on the discourse of anti-Semitism in 1990 led to the development of an approach she termed the *discourse historical method*. The term *historical* occupies a unique place in this approach. It denotes an attempt on the part of this approach "to integrate systematically all available background information in the analysis and interpretation of the many layers of a written or spoken text" (1995, p. 209). The results of Wodak and her colleagues' study (Wodak et. al., 1990) showed that the context of the discourse had a significant impact on the structure, function, and context of the anti-Semitic utterances" (p. 209). Focusing on the historical contexts of discourse in the process of explanation and interpretation is a feature that distinguishes this approach from other approaches of CDA especially that of van Dijk.

In the *discourse historical method* approach (similar to Fairclough's) it is believed that language "manifests social processes and interaction" and "constitutes" those processes as well (Wodak & Ludwig, 1999, p. 12). According to Wodak & Ludwig (1999), viewing language this way entails three things at least. First, discourse "always involves power and ideologies. No interaction exists where power relations do not prevail and where values and norms do not have a relevant role" (p. 12). Second, "discourse ... is always historical, that is, it is connected synchronically and diachronically with other communicative events which are happening at the same time or which have happened before" (p. 12). This is similar to Fairclough's notion of intertextuality, as we will see. The third feature of Wodak's approach is that of interpretation. According to Wodak & Ludwig (1999), readers and listeners, depending on their background knowledge and information and their position, might have different interpretations of the same communicative event (p. 13). Therefore, Wodak & Ludwig (1999) assert that "THE RIGHT interpretation does not exist; a hermeneutic approach is necessary. Interpretations can be more or less plausible or adequate, but they cannot be true"

(emphasis in original) (p. 13). This point has been raised by Fairclough (1995b, pp. 15-16), as well.

### *Fairclough*

The third main approach in CDA is that of Fairclough whose theory has been central to CDA over more than the past ten years. Fairclough, in his earlier work, called his approach to language and discourse *Critical Language Study* (1989, p. 5). He described the objective of this approach as "a contribution to the general raising of consciousness of exploitative social relations, through focusing upon language" (1989, p. 4). This aim in particular remains in his later work that further develops his approach so that it is now one of the most comprehensive frameworks of CDA (Fairclough, 1992, 1993, 1995a, 1995b; Chuliaraki and Fairclough, 1999). In this section, I will present a general overview of Fairclough's work in CDA, and a more detailed account of his framework for analyzing media discourse, because this will provide the basis for the framework that I use in this study.

For Chuliaraki and Fairclough (1999), CDA "brings social science and linguistics ... together within a single theoretical and analytical framework, setting up a dialogue between them"(p. 6). The linguistic theory referred to here is Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which has been the foundation for Fairclough's analytical framework as it has been for other practitioners in CDA (Fowler et. al., 1979; Fowler, 1991; Hodge & Kress, 1979). Fairclough's approach also draws upon a number of critical social theorists, such as Foucault (i.e. concept of *orders of discourse*), Gramsci (concept of *hegemony*), Habermas (i.e. concept of *colonization of discourses*), among others (Fairclough, 1989, 1992, 1995a, 1995b).

Chuliaraki and Fairclough (1999) posit that CDA has a particular contribution to make. They argue that, "the past two decades or so have been a period of profound economic social transformation on a global scale" (p. 30). They believe that although these changes are due to particular actions by people the changes have been perceived as "part of nature" (p. 4), that is, changes and transformations have been perceived as natural and not due to people's causal actions. The recent economic and social changes, according to Chuliaraki and Fairclough (1999), "are to a significant degree . . . transformations in the language, and discourse" (p. 4), thus, CDA can help by theorizing transformations and creating an awareness "of what is, how it has come to be, and what it might become, on the basis of which people may be able to make and remake their lives" (p. 4). With such an objective in mind, Chuliaraki and Fairclough (1999) claim that

CDA of a communicative interaction sets out to show that the semiotic and linguistic features of the interaction are systematically connected with what is going on socially, and what is going on socially is indeed going on partly or wholly semiotically or linguistically. Put differently, CDA systematically charts relations of transformation between the symbolic and non-symbolic, between discourse and the non-discursive. (p. 113)

In this approach of CDA, there are three analytical focuses in analysing any communicative event (interaction). They are *text* (e.g. a news report), *discourse practice* (e.g. the process of production and consumption), and *sociocultural practice* (e.g. social and cultural structures which give rise to the communicative event) (Fairclough, 1995b,

p. 57; Chuliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 113). These closely resemble van Dijk's three dimensions of ideology analysis: *discourse*, *sociocognition*, and *social analysis* [analysis of social structures] respectively. What seems to be the main difference between Fairclough's and van Dijk's approach is the second dimension, which mediates between the other two. Whereas van Dijk perceives social cognition and mental models as mediating between discourse and the social, Fairclough believes that this task is assumed by discourse practices--text production and consumption-- (Fairclough, 1995b, p. 59). In this case, these two approaches of CDA, are "similar in conception" (Fairclough, 1995b, p. 59).

- *Fairclough's framework for analyzing a communicative event*

#### A) *Text:*

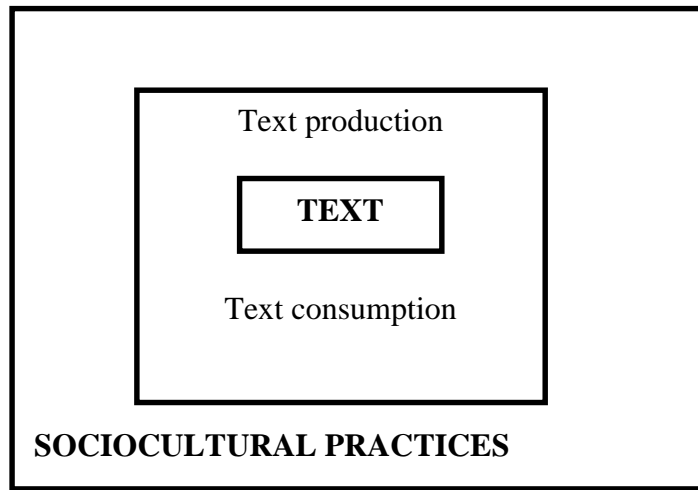
The first analytical focus of Fairclough's three-part model is *text*. Analysis of text involves linguistic analysis in terms of vocabulary, grammar, semantics, the sound system, and cohesion-organization above the sentence level (Fairclough, 1995b, p. 57). Linguistic analysis is applied to text's lexical-grammatical and semantic properties, two aspects that have mutual impact on each other (pp. 57-58). Following SFL, Fairclough also views text from a multifunctional perspective. According to Fairclough, any sentence in a text is analyzable in terms of the articulation of these functions, which he has relabeled *representations*, *relations*, and *identities*:

- Particular representations and recontextualizations of social practice (ideational function) -- perhaps carrying particular ideologies.
- Particular constructions of writer and reader identities (for example, in terms of what is highlighted -- whether status and role aspects of identity, or individual and personality aspects of identity)
- A particular construction of the relationship between writer and reader (as, for instance, formal or informal, close or distant). (Fairclough, 1995b, p. 58)

According to Fairclough (1995), linguistic analysis is concerned with presences as well as absences in texts that could include "representations, categories of participant, constructions of participant identity or participant relations" (p. 58).

#### B) *Discourse practice:*

According to Fairclough (1995, p. 58-59), this dimension has two facets: *institutional process* (e.g. editorial procedures), and *discourse processes* (changes the text go through in production and consumption). For Fairclough, "discourse practice straddles the division between society and culture on the one hand, and discourse, language and text on the other" (p. 60), as shown in the following figure.



A framework for critical discourse analysis of a communicative event (Fairclough, 1995b, p. 59)

Institutional process, in terms of media discourse, will be outlined further below when I discuss Fairclough's framework for analyzing media discourse. *Discourse processes*, however, can be best explained through discussing a core concept in his approach: *intertextuality*.

- **Intertextuality and intertextual analysis**

In this analytical framework, while there is linguistic analysis at the text level, there is also linguistic analysis at the discourse practice level that Fairclough calls "intertextual analysis" (1995b, p. 61). According to Fairclough (1995b),

Intertextual analysis focuses on the borderline between text and discourse practice in the analytical framework. Intertextual analysis is looking at text from the perspective of discourse practice, looking at the traces of the discourse practice in the text. (p. 16)

According to Fairclough, "linguistic analysis is descriptive in nature, whereas intertextual analysis is more interpretative" (p. 16). Fairclough (1992, p. 84) defines intertextuality as, "basically the property texts have of being full of snatches of other texts, which may be explicitly demarcated or merged in, and which the text may assimilate, contradict, ironically echo, and so forth."

Fairclough (1992, p. 85) identifies two types of intertextuality: "manifest intertextuality," and "constitutive intertextuality." The former refers to the heterogeneous constitution of texts by which "specific other texts are overtly drawn upon within a text." This kind of intertextuality is marked by explicit signs such as quotation marks, indicating the presence of other texts. Constitutive intertextuality, on the other hand, refers to the "heterogeneous constitution of texts out of elements (types of convention) of orders of discourse (interdiscursivity)" (p. 104). This kind of intertextuality refers to the structure of discourse conventions that go into the new text's production.

Fairclough (1992) provides several examples of these processes of intertextuality. He analyses an article published in a British national paper, *The Sun*, which is a report about an official document about drug trafficking produced by a committee of the British House of Commons. What he finds are two main points: (1) there are linguistic forms that do not explicitly represent the official document. They are sub-reports supposedly about the issue that are not present in the official document at all; (p. 2) there are linguistic and



semantic signs which indicate the merging of the voice of *The Sun* with the voice of the official document. This is evident in the fact that *The Sun* supports the recommendations that the official document makes to the House of Commons, as if they are *The Sun*'s recommendations. But at the same time, *The Sun* does not merely repeat the official document but rather rephrases things and expresses them in its own words and language. The paper manages to do this in two ways: (I) by shifting away from the formal language and legal jargon towards a conversational vocabulary and spoken language (e.g. "traffickers" becomes "peddlers"), (II) by converting the written monologue of the official document to a conversational dialogue. That is, the newspaper turns an official document into a popular speech that is appealing to its particular and loyal audiences. This example of intertextuality shows that while *The Sun* report is based on a previous text, it responds to the future utterances, expectations of its readers, by configuring the original text into its own discourse type.

Fairclough (1995, p. 189) claims that intertextual properties of a text are realized "in its linguistic features" since it is assumed that texts "may be linguistically heterogeneous." Nevertheless, Fairclough (1995b) asserts that,

linguistic analysis is descriptive in nature, whereas interpretative analysis is more interpretative. Linguistic features of texts provide evidence which can be used in intertextual analysis, and intertextual analysis is a particular sort of interpretation of that evidence . . . (p. 61)

#### C) *Sociocultural practice:*

For Fairclough (1995b, p. 62), analysis in this dimension pertains to three aspects of the sociocultural context of a communicative event: economic (i.e. economy of the media), political (i.e. power and ideology of the media), and cultural (i.e. issues of values). According to Fairclough, one does not have to carry out analysis at all levels but any level that might "be relevant to understanding the particular event" (p. 62). These key concepts of the sociocultural practice will be discussed in the following section as a part of outlining a framework for media analysis.

##### o *Additional considerations for analyzing media discourse*

Fairclough (1995b) posits that "an account of communication in the mass media must consider the economics and politics of the mass media: the nature of the market which the mass media are operating within, and their relationship to the state, and so forth" (p. 36). Among the aspects and properties of mass media that have attracted attention are *access* to the media, *economics* of the media, *politics* of the media, and practices of media text *production* and *consumption*.

#### a) *Access to the media:*

One of the issues of considerable importance is *access* to media: who has access to mass media and what implications the answer to this question has regarding the place of the media in society. As Fairclough (1995b) argues, there are many individuals and social groups who do not have an equal access to the mass media in terms of writing, speaking or broadcasting. Fairclough argues that this is because "media output is very much under professional and institutional control, and in general it is those who already have other forms of economic, political or cultural power that have the best access to the media" (p.

40). According to van Dijk (199?)<sup>2</sup>, access to discourse, for example, to that of the media, is important, because  
access to discourse is a major (scarce) social resource for people, and that in general the elites may also be defined in terms of their preferential access to, if not control over public discourse. Such control may extend to the features of the context (Time, Place, Participants), as well as to the various features of the text (topics, style, and so on). (p. 10)

b) *Economy of the media:*

Another important property of media to discuss is its economics, because according to Fairclough (1995b), "the economics of an institution is an important determinant of its practices and its texts" (p. 40). The mass media are no exception. Like other profit making institutions, the media have a product to sell. Their product is the audience of interest to advertisers (Chomsky, 1989; Fairclough, 1995b). As a result, according to Fairclough, the mass media "are very much open to the effects of commercial pressures" (p. 42). For the press, for example, these effects could be important in determining what is selected as news and in what ways such news is published (Fowler, 1991, p. 20). This issue of the effects of the economic aspects of media, particularly its advertising practices, has been the center of much discussion in critical media studies (Achbar, 1994; Chomsky, 1989; Hackett, 1991; Winter & Hassanpour, 1994).

Closely related to the issue of advertising, is the issue of ownership and more specifically concentrated ownership of the mass media, which according to many analysts has essential influence on media discourse (Fairclough, 1995b, p. 43; Chomsky, 1989; Hackett, 1991, p. 65; Winter & Hassanpour, 1994). According to Fairclough, a few large corporations own most of the commercial media in the West. For example, according to Winter & Hassanpour (1994),

two corporations, [Southam chain and Thomson corporation-the owner of the *Globe & Mail*], control 59 per cent of Canadian daily newspaper circulation, and they are corporations with extensive interest outside the newspaper industry, run by the corporate elite. (p. 15)

The impact of concentration of ownership "manifests itself in various ways, including the manner in which media organizations are structured to ensure that the dominant voices are those of the political and social establishment, and in the constraints on access to the media ..." (Fairclough, 1995b, p. 43).

c) *The politics of media:*

The politics of media, according to Fairclough (199b, p. 36), should be considered in media analysis as well. Many critics, (Chomsky, 1989; Fairclough, 1995b; Fishman, 1980; Fowler, 1991; Hackett, 1991; van Dijk, 1991, 1993), argue that the commercial mainstream media works ideologically and is in the service of the powerful, the elite, and the state. Fairclough (1995b) argues that media discourses "contribute to reproducing social relations of domination and exploitation" (p. 44). At the same time, he observes

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<sup>2</sup> This is from van Dijk's website, <http://www.hum.uva.nl:80/~teun/beliar.eng>, though without a date. However, a link has been made to this article in 1998 from <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Sections/textan02.html>, which indicates that the article was written in late 1980s. Nonetheless, I downloaded the article in 8/14/2000

that sometimes the interests of the media are in conflict with the state, for example in the case of the Vietnam war when American television, by showing images of the war turned the public opinion against the war (Fairclough, 1995b, p. 45). Gowing (1991) and Schorr (1991) also speak of the impact of television, in 1991, in convincing the Bush administration to intervene in Northern Iraq to help the Kurdish refugees.

Chomsky, however, believes that periodical criticisms of the state or major corporations by the media are a part of the doctrine of dominant elite groups to "aggressively portray themselves as spokesmen for free speech and the general community interest" (as cited in Achbar, 1994, p. 53). The same critics of the media, however, admit that the state in the West does not overtly dictate to the mass media. How is the media an instrument of the powerful then?

To explain this, Fairclough and other analysts such as Hackett (1991), following Gramsci, use the concept of *hegemony*. Similarly, Chomsky (1989) and van Dijk (1998a) point to the media's power of *manufacturing consent*. According to Fairclough & Chuliaraki (1999),

Hegemony is relations of domination based upon consent rather than coercion, involving the naturalization of practices and their social relations as well as relations between practices, as matters of common sense-hence the concept of hegemony emphasizes the importance of ideology in achieving and maintaining relations of domination. (p. 24)

The mainstream media, according to Hackett (1991), are "agents of hegemony" (p. 56). According to Hackett, no power could last forever through imposing force. As he observes, this is particularly true of democratic countries such as the U.S. and Canada where the public is mostly literate, has a history of experiencing the freedom of expression, and has a right to vote (pp. 56-57). In these countries, the ruling class needs to achieve the public's consent through persuasion in order to maintain its domination, and the mass media is one of the essential elements in manufacturing this consent (Chomsky, 1989; van Dijk, 1998a; Hackett, 1991; Fowler, 1991).

#### d) *Practices of media text production and consumption:*

Production and consumption of media texts are two other important dimensions of media and their institutional practices. Production involves a set of institutional routines, such as news gathering, news selection, writing, and editing (Fairclough, 1995b; Fowler, 1991; van Dijk, 1993). Consumption mainly refers to the ways in which readers, in case of the written text (i.e. the press), read and comprehend text.

Selecting news reports is one of the important practices of text production. Mass media always have far more material than space, therefore, not all news makes it to the newscast (Fowler, 1991, p. 11). This means that there is a process of selecting news, what to weed out and what to publish. In terms of criteria for such selections, according to Carruthers (2000, p. 16) and Eaman (1987, p. 51), newsworthiness is not an inherent characteristic of events and news items. It is rather determined by the news production and institutional practices. So, "events become news when transformed by the news perspective, and not because of their objective characteristics . . . news is consciously created to serve the interest of the ruling class" (Eaman, 1987, p. 51). As a result "the world of the Press is not the real world", rather a partial one, which is "skewed and judged" (Fowler, 1991, p. 11).

Selection by journalists and the media is also involved in choosing the sources of information, for example, who gets interviewed or who gets to be quoted or heard in news. According to Fairclough (1995b),

one striking feature of news production is the overwhelming reliance of journalists on a tightly limited set of officials and otherwise legitimized sources which are systematically drawn upon, through a network of contacts and procedures, and sources of 'facts' and to substantiate other 'facts.' (p. 49)

In contrast to officials, ordinary people, whenever they are used as sources, are mostly allowed to speak about their personal experience rather than expressing opinions on an issue (Fairclough, 1995b, p. 49). According to Fairclough (1995b) and Fowler (1991, p. 22-23), this heavy reliance on officials as sources of information is tied to the media's dependence on the status quo to keep their ownership, and continue their profitability. The consequence of this, according to Fairclough, is "a predominantly established view of the world, manifested textually in, for instance, ways in which the reporting of speech is treated" (1995b, p. 49).

Once a news item goes through the production process it becomes ready to be read and understood; that is, it becomes ready for consumption, but how it will be consumed has been the center for much debate in the analysis of media discourse in particular (Boyd-Barrett, 1994; Fairclough, 1995b; Fowler, 1991; Widdowson, 1998). Discourse analysts naturally make assumptions about how audiences read and comprehend texts. They even appear to interpret texts on behalf of the audiences. The issue at stake here is how a discourse analyst knows how audiences consume media discourse, how and what they comprehend or what sorts of impacts these reports have. I think it is safe to say that all analysts, including CDA practitioners, agree that different audiences may interpret texts differently. This, however, is one of the strongest arguments that critics of CDA have brought forward against discourse analysts who base their conclusions on their own interpretations, regarding the impact of media discourse on audiences (Fairclough, 1996; Widdowson, 1995). CDA practitioners are the first to acknowledge that different readers might read similar texts differently (Fairclough, 1995b, p. 15-16). In a similar vein, van Dijk (1993) states that "media recipients [are] active, and up to a point independent, information users" and they may form interpretations and opinions of news reports different from those the newspaper projected or implied (van Dijk, 1993, p. 242). This seems to indicate that it is not possible to say how people read and interpret a news report for instance.

However, CDA practitioners have reasons to believe otherwise. There are at least two reasons. First, readers usually are not trained to be critical readers of texts (Fowler, 1991, p. 11; van Dijk, 1991). Second, audiences interpret texts against their background knowledge and the information they already have about the subject in question (van Dijk, 1993, p. 242). Ironically, according to van Dijk, "for specific types of social and political events . . . the news media are the main source of information and beliefs used to form the interpretation framework for such events . . ." (van Dijk, 1993, p. 242-243). It follows that describing and analyzing the media discourse could help us in making assumptions about the impact of the media on audiences. Fairclough defuses the idea that texts have no meanings on their own, without the interpretations of readers (1995b).

He states,

It strikes me as self-evident that although readings may vary, any reading is a product of an interface between the properties of the text and the interpretative

resources and practices which the interpreter brings to bear upon the text. The range of potential interpretations will be constrained and delimited according to the nature of the text. (p. 16)

Fairclough, however, believes that reception studies (for example, asking the audiences about their actual interpretations of texts) could help discourse analysis in identifying meanings and effects of texts. Nonetheless, he believes that text analysis should be the central element in media analysis provided that it is accompanied by analysis of text production and consumption (Fairclough, 1995b, p. 16).

### *Principles of CDA*

By way of concluding this section, principles of CDA, outlined by CDA practitioners (Fairclough, 1995a; Kress, 1991; Hodge & Kress, 1993; Van Dijk, 1998a; Wodak, 1996) can be summarised as follows:

1. Language is a social practice through which the world is represented.
2. Discourse/language use as a form of social practice in itself not only represents and signifies other social practices but it also constitutes other social practices such as the exercise of power, domination, prejudice, resistance and so forth.
3. Texts acquire their meanings by the dialectical relationship between texts and the social subjects: writers and the readers, who always operate with various degrees of choice and access to texts and means of interpretation.
4. Linguistic features and structures are not arbitrary. They are purposeful whether or not the choices are conscious or unconscious.
5. Power relations are produced, exercised, and reproduced through discourse.
6. All speakers and writers operate from specific discursive practices originating in special interests and aims which involve inclusions and exclusions.
7. Discourse is historical in the sense that texts acquire their meanings by being situated in specific social, cultural and ideological contexts, and time and space.
8. CDA does not solely *interpret* texts, but also *explains* them.

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- <sup>i</sup> Excerpts from the author's MA Thesis, September 2001, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada:
- Yesterday's "separatists" are today's "resistance fighters": A Critical Discourse Analysis of the representation of Iraqi Kurds in *The Globe and Mail* and *The New York Times*