

A Pedagogic Approach to Media Text Analysis

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to sketch out a pedagogic approach to media text analysis with a particular focus on argumentation tactics from the perspective of critical language awareness. In creating four-dimensional instructional procedures applicable to EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom settings, elicitation is used as an analytical tool through a critical review of arguments on the approaches, objectives and validity of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

Keywords

critical literacy instruction, critical discourse analysis, argumentative discourse

1. Introduction

This inquiry aims to sketch out a conceptual framework for critical literacy instruction using an analytical model of argumentative discourse applicable to Korea's collegiate EFL education. To enhance the students' critical media literacy in classroom settings, the instructor is initially required to help them to better understand the interactive processes between argumentative discourse and its social effects.

So it would be, as crucial steps, useful to investigate key approaches to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and to formulate a well-integrated method of Critical Literacy Instruction (CLI) in an effort to map out directions suitable for this enquiry. As CDA-based classroom instruction available to the nation's EFL education, I would propose a set of four-dimensional procedures for students' heuristic learning – (1) identifying the surface features of the text, (2) exploring the multiple interpretations of the text, (3) examining the rhetorical constructions of the text, and (4) elucidating the ultimate goals of the CLI procedures above.

2. CDA-based Critical Literacy

Given the benefits of CDA-based critical literacy education, such an approach to discourse analysis serves as a proper analytical method designed to work out the instructional goal of this research work – to foster the student's mental and emotional capacity for explaining the ideological implications that discourse represents and underlies in relation to the power structures of society. With this purpose in mind, the research study aims to develop a practical model for analyzing argumentative media text suitable to a college level. The instructional model will guide the student to figure out and put into practice the fundamental principles of critical literacy.

3. Critical Analysis of Persuasive Discourse

It is obvious that CDA practitioners take the form of combining aspects of social theory and sociopolitical argumentation. By means of critical approaches for discourse analysis, they tend to focus central attention on important social issues arising from the unequal power relations between the privileged and the underprivileged. Considering the need to show relevant examples, I think it helpful to take a look at an actual advertisement text in accordance with the CDA-based instruction procedures above as given in the following:

Seventy-three percent of the doctors surveyed said they would, if asked by a patient, recommend Lite Cigarettes with their low tar and nicotine for patients who smoke.

This kind of tobacco advertisement, one which we, as consumers in a capitalism-oriented society, often encounter in newspapers and magazines, is designed primarily for the sales promotion of Lite Cigarette brand. The short written discourse carried in the cigarette advertisement is extracted for this analytical purpose from the multimodal designs

including visual means of signifying in the real ad coverage. Based on linguistic features in the ad text, let me demonstrate a conceptual approach to CDA-based instruction tailored for critical literacy development:

(1) Identifying the surface features of the text

At this fundamental stage, first of all we need to pay attention to the copywriter's lexical, syntactic and other grammatical choices. At a lexical level of the text given, we can notice a series of carefully selected words arranged to build up a reasonably good impression on the quality of the cigarette brand. A whole array of the lexical choices is characterized by a statistical survey presumed for objective data collection, a possible interpersonal contact and a subsequent recommendation between medical doctors and patients who smoke. Such an interaction is, however, restricted to only a certain proportion of medical doctors among those surveyed on an indefinite condition of being asked about by a patient. What is far more problematic here is that a wide range of important details – forms, contents, methods, subjects (e.g., age, nationality, residential / practicing areas, smoker / non-smoker, practicing experiences), sample size, time-frame, and, etc. – of the survey in question are not specified in their entirety.

In this connection, at a syntactic level the past subjunctive form led by an *if*-clause referring counterfactually to an uncertain present context is embedded in the complex sentence containing a subject and a predicate. Noticeably, this subjunctive form occupies a key semantic component in constructing a full sentence beginning with a fairly high percentage of medical doctors surveyed.

(2) Exploring the multiple interpretations of the text

The first identification procedure leads us to search for how many different versions of interpretations can be drawn up from the ad text, making it worthwhile to define the scope and limits of such multiple pragmatic meanings. In the first place it is accessible to present an imaginary spectrum of pragmatic meanings, of which two poles on both ends may circumscribe the range of plural interpretations deriving from denotative and connotative meanings. On the one endpoint, the most positive interpretation based on a copywriter's ideological motivations may be placed in consideration of all textual facts and contextual factors available; on the other, we are able to place

the most negative interpretation derived from doing so by relying on the analyst's critical viewpoints. And, a neutral perspective can be positioned at the center of the continuum as a median baseline, drawing a demarcating line between the two contrastive perspectives by classifying all the other interpretations into a positive or a negative domain.

(3) Elucidating the ultimate goals of the CLI procedures above

In terms of ideological motivations, the tobacco company manufacturing Lite Cigarettes takes advantage of the advertisement text as a major instrument to attract potential consumers for their commercial profits. To secure the maximum number of faithful customers, they make every effort to gain a good reputation for their products within the scope permitted by the nation's applicable laws and regulations. As a statutory restriction for free commercial activities, unfair competition among economic entities is prohibited in the contemporary democratic nations. This entices enterprises to pursue all kinds of means available, thus to rely on a wide variety of commercial tactics designed to influence potential customers' desires for purchase and lines of thinking.

4. Conclusion

The advertisement text demonstrates one of the persuasive techniques exploiting linguistic devices, which is virtually tolerable under the relevant laws and regulations. It is, however, deplorable in terms of social justice that the tobacco manufacturing enterprise is tolerated to manipulate the ordinary people's individual preference to its specific commodities. It is antisocial for the company to carry on with such immoral commercial practices supported by linguistic devices exploited to disguise their original intent. Therefore, there are two important learning outcomes the student needs to attain and internalize through these instructional procedures:

- (a) One is the notion that CDA is a socio-politically motivated approach to the study of language in use that generally assigns ideological significance to texts based on their linguistic features, of which the central tenets focus on promoting social justice; and
- (b) The other is the fact that the CDA-based critical literacy pedagogy here aims to inspire the student to perceive the inequitable commercial activities of the tobacco enterprise, thus to take a moral posture and necessary actions for coping with the far-reaching social problems.