Critical Discourse Analysis of Business Academia on the Role and Status of the National Language

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Abstract

This qualitative case study is an exploration of the phenomenon of the ways in which Urdu as the national language is represented in discursive practices of senior business academia. The research design, built on Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model (2009) is of dialectical-relational approach. The participant in this single case study is a senior member of the academia from a business school. Methodologically, the analysis trailed four stages and followed CDA's transdisciplinary traditional methods of social practices in three semiotic categories: genre, discourse and style. Findings of the study indicated that despite strong emotional links with the national language, the participant recognized the utilitarian value of English in academic and in professional domains; additionally, his perspective was that Urdu was largely marginalized due to its perceived lack of utilitarian value. The participant also expressed the viewpoint that this social injustice was needed by the social order because the business school requires English for academic and professional purposes. The study recommends a more inclusive addition of Urdu courses in business studies.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, en-textualzation, intertextuality, orders of discourse

Introduction

National language is a language spoken by the people of a nation and represents their national identity. Urdu as the national language of Pakistan fulfills the need of nationalism as it is a unifying symbol for the people of Pakistan. It has been a mark of identity and consolidation for the Muslims of the subcontinent regarding their religious, ethnic and cultural ideologies even before the independence of Pakistan in 1947 and continues to date. Urdu is the link language between all the four provinces of Pakistan as it is spoken and understood more than any other language by the majority in different regions of Pakistan (Akhtar, 1989). As Karachi is a cosmopolitan mega city, the usefulness of Urdu is even more realized (in Karachi) as a connecting language among people of different ethnic origins. However, at the official level, the Urdu language does not enjoy the same prestige as the English language (Mansoor, 2005). Although on the ideological level, people have emotional links with Urdu, nevertheless for utilitarian purposes, Urdu has a restrictive role. It is an established fact that people who have higher English language proficiency are able to get better jobs in all four provinces of Pakistan as compared to those who have a high level Urdu language competency (Rahman, 2002). Rahman asserts that though people in general may speak very highly of Urdu, they learn languages for pragmatic reasons. This attitude suggests a voluntary shift in the learning of languages. Market conditions are such that one's language becomes deficit in relation to what Bourdieu (1991) would call 'cultural capital.' Instead of being an asset it becomes a liability as it prevents one from rising in society.

The focus of this study was to explore the national language

policies of Pakistan, medium of instruction dilemma, and academia's discourses about Urdu-English controversy in seminars, talks and informal dialogues. The National Education Policy (2009) realizes the significance of English as an international language, while also recognizing the importance of Urdu as a link language which connects Pakistanis. Clause 73 of the National Education Policy (NEP) mentions the factors that lead to the differences between elite and public schools, the main divide being that of English versus Urdu as the medium of instruction. Elite schools follow the Cambridge or London University O/A levels systems in which the medium of instruction is English; whereas, public schools follow Matric/Intermediate system with Urdu as the medium of instruction. This difference leads to professional implications of acquiring white collar jobs for those who have high English language proficiency. Thus, English language has become one big source of economic and social stratification in the Pakistani society.

This study is built around the discursive practices of a senior member of the academia of a business school to look at the ways discourses as social practices become a means of transferring beliefs about languages. The study was designed on the methodological framework of Fairclough's (2009) Critical Discourses Analysis on dialectical aspects of meaning-making through recursive patterns of intertextuality, extextualization and orders of discourse. Fairclough defines intertextuality as the presence of various discourses, texts and ideologies in different contexts to be represented in a given discourse. He defines entextualization as lifted text and a person's treatment of the text, through self-correction and explicit qualifications like: 'but as I said…'; 'I mean'; 'that's beside the point.' Fairclough's main conceptions are the orders of discourse which are particular ways in

which people mould and use different genres, discourses or styles in a given context; for example, the order of discourse of a business school is different from that of a medical university.

Since little is known about the discursive practices as orders of discourse on the status of Urdu as the national language, a critical analysis of discursive practices at institutional level would help in understanding how a senior member of a business school views Urdu. Focusing specifically in the context of a business school of Karachi, the purpose of this study was to find out:

1. What is the senior academia member's stance on the role of the national language?
2. How is the national language positioned in reference to the 'official' English language?
3. Whose interests are served by this positioning?
4. What are the consequences of this positioning in terms of power and authority?

Based on the background information, the overarching research question is:

In what ways is Urdu, the national language of Pakistan, represented in discursive practices of senior business school academia?

Literature Review

Language ideology

Language ideology refers to a shared body of common beliefs, views and perceptions about language which include cultural

assumptions about language, nature and purpose of communication and patterns of communicative behavior as an enactment of a collective order (Woolard, 1992). Furthermore, Tollefson (1999) postulates that it is through language ideology that one can discern implicit and latent assumptions about reality, as it informs us how people analyze situations and events.

Among other factors, the field of language ideology focuses on socio-political and historical processes of standardization of languages. A language is purposefully selected by those in power and made the standard language which Rahman (1999) terms as standardization of a language. This process becomes political, as it creates inequality and devaluation of other languages. At the academic and social level, using one language in power domains makes this the language of the elites, a mark of superiority and privilege (Kroch, 1978). Through this process certain languages are given the status of standard language, national or official language. Such processes create a sense of authority emanating from a centre, marking particular forms of speech as emblematic of group belonging and identity and introducing a sociopolitical evaluative stratification in language usage, with better and worse forms of usage (Blommaert, 2004; Gal & Woolard, 2001; Kroskrity, 2000).

The elite or those in power justify the use of the variety of a language, as it is in their interests to promote it as the single model of correctness (Cooper, 1989; Rahman, 1999). According to Blommaert (2005) it is through stratification that power uses language by ascribing big and small varieties of language in order to attain a desired social order, which is the order of indexicality or the social meaning of language. Blommaert (2006) talks of

capillary power which Foucault refers to as "Power … producing people-as-subjects acting on a topic in a particular regimented mode and so becoming somebody" (p. 5). Currently, power is related to the instrumental value of language such as what it can buy in the market. All the machineries of the state serve the purpose of creating inequality in the masses by denial of access to an elite language and education.

Language ideologies are formed through the combination of particular discourses and registers, institutional structures and professional practices. Silverstein (1979) suggested that linguistic forms are indexical, indexing context through ideological inferences; a particular form stands for a particular social and cultural meaning (Silverstein, 2006). We continuously show social meanings through grammatical forms, lexical items, phrases and sentence structures to achieve a particular social purpose. Meanings are also suggested through entextualization as "Discourse is lifted out of its interactional setting and transmitted together with new suggestion of context" (Bauman & Briggs, 1990, p 73). That is, original pieces of discourses comprising original texts from social, cultural or historical unique events are lifted out of their original context and transmitted into another context or discourse (Blommaert, 2006). Intertextuality is another strategy used by the participants to transmit language ideologies through their discourses. Intertextuality is the use of various references suggestive of other texts present in the discourse of a person as people pick references and ideas from different professions and disciplines like history, politics and others to add value to their discourses. Language ideologies are also interested in studying the orders of discourse, referring to the way people speak or write in a particular organization, and, it is this discourse that

suggests their identity as a director or a clerk. However, in language ideologies, hybridity is a particular area of interest. Language ideologies look at the issue of identity which is two dimensional (Blommaert, 2006): inhabited identities (identities we ourselves construct and articulate) and ascribed identities (identities others attribute to us). The politics of identity is often between both of these dimensions: the identities we claim for ourselves clash with identities others attribute to us.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is situated within the critical theories paradigm and mainly focuses on analyzing linguistic artifacts (Fairclough, 2001; Gee, 2005; van Dijk, 1993) with the aim of examining the relationship of power, language, and society (Gee, 2005; Rogers, 2004). According to Fairclough and Wodak (1997) the basic tenets of CDA are the views of discourse as a means of addressing social problems, acknowledging power relations as discursive, constituting society and culture and furthering ideological work. CDA focuses on the critical knowledge that enables human beings to free themselves from structures of domination and power according to Bourdieu's (1989) concept of violence symbolique. CDA tries to create awareness among the partners about their own needs and interests. It is interested in more hidden and latent everyday beliefs which often appear disguised as conceptual metaphors and analogies; furthermore, it tries to find out the veiled meaning or read between the lines as participants in a discourse create meanings, which Fairclough (1995) refers to as intertextuality of discourses. The main interest of CDA is to look at institutional practices in terms of power and control. It looks at how

the choices are made about what to present, what to emphasize and equally what to exclude. In this way, the institutions through their main actors seize unlimited control in deciding norms, standard practices or ideologies of an institution.

Methodology

This research design was built to analyze data from three semiotic categories: the orders of discourses including genres, discourses and style. It also looked at the discursive strategies of entextualization, intertextuality, and orders of discourses. In the process, the role of the researcher is clearly displayed and specified as the principal participant for data collection, analysis and interpretation of results. Throughout the data collection and analysis process, personal assumptions and biases were bracketed to achieve reliable results.

Sample

To study this phenomenon, a senior member of academia from a business school was invited to participate in the research and to share the perceptions and practices of the institution from the stance of his senior position. The senior educator of the Institute was taken as the centre or main actor around whom other associates of the academic community revolve; the centre is also responsible for creating and transmitting ideological norms in the academic community of the institution. In this paper Mr. Iqbal has been used as a pseudonym for the senior member of academia who was interviewed.

Data collection and analysis

Data was collected via a semi-structured interview with a member of senior academia. The interview was transcribed verbatim and analyzed adapting Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) Model of Discourse Analysis, focusing mainly on the speakers' high and low tones, pauses and flow of speech.

The study followed CDA's transdisciplinary tradition and studied hybrid methods including insights from business education, literacy, teacher education, with references from sociology, history and politics as components of social practices. The data was analyzed using Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis Model (CDA 2009) of dialectical-relational approach, using Fairclough's four stages of analysis given below:

Stage 1: Focus upon relations of power and hegemony in its semiotic aspects
Stage 2: Identify obstacles for addressing the power relations
Stage 3: Consider whether the social order needs the power relations
Stage 4: Identify possible ways past the obstacles

Findings and Discussion

The first stage of analysis looked at the ways in which Urdu, as the National language is represented in discursive practices of senior business academia. It looked at the relationship between the national language and the official language and how they are positioned in this discourse. The discourse of the participant was suggestive of specific socio-cultural, historical and educational

realities. The following themes were extracted from the interview: (a) language ideology; and (b) role of the main actor.

Language ideology

According to Fairclough (2009), a text is a part of discourse analysis which combines particular discourses, institutional structures, and specific linguistic forms for studying language ideologies. The research participant employed certain linguistic choices such as, proverbs and adjectives to achieve this ideological effect. When talking about the role and status of Urdu the participant said: "Treatment to Urdu has been very bad in this country." Linguistically, the use of the adjective 'bad' and the intensifier 'very' is for the effect of accentuating the importance of the national language and is also highlighted further by code switching of a proverb from Urdu to English, saying: "A crow tried to walk like a swan and forgot its own gait." Phillipson (1999) stresses that code mixing and switching is a resource for the learners of English as they extend their repertoire of English in formal and other contexts. The participant's discourse became specifically intensified when talking about the dismal situation of education and students and he achieved this by using labels: "functional illiterates," "literates who are functionally illiterate." His tone became derogatory and loud when deliberating on our educational system. Lamenting the loss of the national language, the participant adopted a rapid, machine-gun style:

> "Our education system, our own education system…. So, and we have forgotten our own language… so, we have forgotten Urdu and we have forgotten our own language."

Both the interviewer and the interviewee were involved in meaning making.

Researcher: We have treated Urdu very badly. Do you think it was done on purpose in this country?

Mr. Iqbal: I think it has been done systematically. The situation has deteriorated over the last 30 years.

The research participant quoted authors like Khurram Ali Shafique, Iqbal, Ibne-Saffi, and magazines like Urdu Digest, Subrung Digest and others. The participant nostalgically visualised the era when Urdu books were read at all levels, an ideal scene of the Pakistani society which thrived on literary texts and reading habits of pedestrians, vendors and men of knowledge. Mr. Iqbal picked references from history, sociology and literature to narrate the romantic picturization of bygone days when education-as-knowledge was valued rather than today's instrumental value of education as political-economy. He used contrastive socio-cultural beliefs about literacy as knowledge rather than literacy as a commodity that can help people achieve money or position. Such changes have been referred by Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton (1999) as 'globalization,' post- or late-'modernity,' 'information society,' 'knowledge economy,' 'new capitalism,' 'consumer culture.' Another ideological effect is produced by the contrast with the older textbooks, the participant stated:

"I remember when I did my intermediate. There were at least 40 poets and for each major poet there were four ghazals and poems and the level of that book was really hard. And

I am talking about 1979, and the book that my eldest sister used some 13 or 15 years earlier was even more difficult than that."

From CDA's perspective, it is an unequal subscription to people and time for regarding a situation or people better than the other. The strategy of othering continues in the participant's comparison with US where everyone reads. According to the participant:

"Even Obama (former US President) reads 7 to 8 books per week. So being the president of the super power he has time to read and we don't have time in Pakistan."

This tendency of compare and contrast is building up the ideological effect of comparing the worse according to him with the best standards. This strategy could be adopted because of his position as the head of academics and his order of discourse could be arranged so as to cater to the institution's needs and create a motivational message for the staff and students. Language ideologies related to Urdu can be seen when the identity of the participant comes out as an Urdu speaker.

"Urdu is something else. You see, Urdu has that vast appetite and flexibility of applicability. Urdu has the capability to incorporate English words. That is the beauty of Urdu. It can absorb words and constructs from other languages very easily and quickly."

Language identity is a special area of interest for language

ideology, where participants ascribe identities to themselves and to the others to achieve an ideological effect. It shows links with one language and distancing from another language. Mr. Iqbal incidentally, is an Urdu speaker and it seems to have affected his view of Urdu as a language and his association with it. At the inception of Pakistan, a very powerful section of the bureaucracy spoke Urdu as a mother tongue (being an immigrant from India- the mohajir) and there was an element of cultural hegemony about the privileging of Urdu. The Mohajir elites' position, stated or implied, was that they were more cultured than the speakers of the indigenous languages of Pakistan (Rahman, 2002). He goes on to express his association with Urdu:

> *"My Urdu is very strong also. And when I have to recite a phrase it will be in Urdu poetry which I enjoy so well."*

Here the artifactual view of language could be seen when a language is referenced as an object or commodity to be achieved (Blommaert, 2006). Hybrid or multiple belonging is another important theme in language ideology. He supports his position as head, academia and says:

> *"In public speaking I conduct trainings in big organizations in Urdu and the moment I do that I see relaxation on their [audience] faces."*

Mr. Iqbal also flags his identity as an Urdu speaker and talks about the standardization of Urdu:

> *"If you don't use English, people will be talking in Urdu."*

He is setting standards as an academic leader. In this context, the voice becomes important. Agha (2005) points out that the typifiability of voices (whether as individual or social) presupposes the perceivability of voicing contrasts, or the differentiability of one voice from another (Agha, 2005). Mr. Iqbal in his discourse on various aspects related to language deploys diverse social identities. His voice is volatile and signifies his various identities, from a nationalist to an Urdu speaker, to an academic head, to a social scientist.

As mentioned earlier, analysis was conducted using Fairclough's Critical Discourse analysis model (2009). As data was examined, the following features emerged that were comparable to Fairclough's four stages of analysis:

Stage 1: Focus upon relation of power and hegemony

In the interview, the discourse of Mr. Iqbal as an academic lead is emblematic of certain beliefs and ideas. Firstly, the ability of a discourse to influence social practice or vice versa is dependent on the dynamics of power. Thus, having an understanding of the power relations of a discourse is indeed important. Foucault (2009) argues that the power to define terms determines the outcome of a discourse. For example, the power of an institution, a group or an individual can influence social actions and relations. According to Titscher, Meyer, Wodak and Vetter (2000) (extending Foucault's arguments to a dialectical moment),"power relations have to do with discourse….Society and culture are dialectically related to discourse: society and culture are shaped by discourse, and at the same time constitute discourse" (p. 148).

Mr. Iqbal's discourse set norms or standards in education, which indexed power and authority as the head of an academic institute:

> *"That's how I was taught and that's the way I want them to learn."*

This is the order of discourse that Mr. Iqbal follows as the academic head which defines his role as a social actor – as someone who can (or cannot) bring about a change in a condition or as those who are (or are not) knowledgeable. Norms of social practices shape discourses and discourses shape social norms. Mr. Iqbal added:

> *"The culture of reading has deteriorated which is to the credit of O and A levels system of education as they prescribed Simple Urdu General or Urdu Simple."*

Stage 2: Identify obstacles to addressing the power relations

However, at this point in the interview a sudden twist came in the approach towards Urdu. In Mr. Iqbal's discourse, there is a sense of realization of the utilitarian and pragmatic necessity.

> *"Generally, when I use Urdu there are some difficult words that people can never understand. So if I have to use Urdu these are very difficult and people say you use very heavy words…."*

Mr. Iqbal realized the operational need of English at the official level:

"Actually, when I'm explaining a complex concept I will turn to English somehow…. I am very strong in English… I'm not boasting …."

Mr. Iqbal is now reverting to his original official identity of an academic head. His proclamation of himself as a proficient speaker of English presents a strong case for English. He wanted to be associated with the English speaking community because English is the language of power; it can get academic and professional opportunities and a better social image. According to Fairclough (2001), such processes 'neatly map' people and in this process other groups [Urdu] are compartmentalized and marginalized further.

Stage 3: Does this social order need power relations

Discourses are ideological, and as discussed above, Mr Iqbal, as the academic head, has created meanings dialectically which are recursive. Ideologies are ideational as well as practical, as it is demonstrated in his discourse. The institution needs this social wrong, that is, the marginalization of Urdu is acceptable but the significance and role of English cannot be dislodged. Though his emotional links were with Urdu, Mr Iqbal realized the utilitarian value of English in his institute and as an academic head; he elaborated on its operational need:

"Actually when I'm explaining a complex concept I will turn to English somehow. However, generally when I use Urdu there are such difficult words that people can never understand. So if I have to use Urdu these are very difficult and people say you use very heavy words."

The operational difficulty of putting Urdu into practice at the official level came out clearly, which surpassed his whole argument in favor of Urdu. Urdu is a good language but in the hierarchy of languages in Pakistan, it holds a secondary position to that of English. The institute as a part of reality needs this social wrong to impart good business education and wants the students to become proficient in English. English has actually become a source of marginalizing other languages.

Research on the role and status of different languages in Pakistan shows that English has remained a dominant language for all official purposes especially in higher education and employment (Abbas, 1998; Rahman, 1999). The learning of English and achievement in education or professions is thus seen as synonymous. This relationship seems to be strong in Pakistan and has persisted despite efforts aimed at nationalism and promotion of Urdu to replace English for official purposes (National Educational policies: 1970; 1972; 1979; 1992; 2009).

In a multilingual speech community like Pakistan, despite a number of languages available to speakers for their linguistic interaction to perform particular social roles, English is becoming more and more of a common language. Linguists like Canagarajah (1999) recommend that rather than rejecting English as the epithet of colonialism, we should be reconstituting it so that English can be used as the language of empowerment. Since the element of universality or internationalism runs parallel to local contexts and in order to avoid miscommunication, an acceptable level of generality or commonness needs to be adopted among the employees (Crosling & Ward, 2002).

Stage 4: Identify possible ways past the obstacles

At the last stage of the analysis, the study tried to inquire from the informant if there were ways to address the social wrong of marginalizing one's own national language. Mr. Iqbal's response was:

> *"Since it is obvious that the operational and utilitarian issues superseded the emotional aspects, because given the educational set-up, it is required that academia should be engaged in English communication. In this way, Urdu language is sidelined and marginalized due to the utilitarian need of English in academia and business. In this way English language becomes powerful."*

The order of discourse of the centering actor adopts the role of an academic head; as the head of academics, Mr. Iqbal was of the view that it was not possible to use Urdu for formal or official purposes. However, business studies could focus on more arguments and problem solving in the undergraduate and graduate programs of sustaining dialogues bilingually (English as well as Urdu), so as to include agents (students) from the under privileged backgrounds, those with lesser exposure to such scenarios and to include contexts and cases from service, production and business industry.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study analyzed the discourse of a senior member of academia through Fairclough's (2009) Critical Discourse Analysis around the construct of language ideology on the status and role of the national language (Urdu) in a private business school of

Pakistan. Data was collected through a semi-structured interview and the information available on the institute's website revealed the ideological procedures of language preference and hierarchy building as social processes. Both data and information from the website demonstrated that English has a higher status than Urdu. Ideological touches were prevalent in the discourse of the participant which were expressed through CDA's orders of discourse including the effects of the genre (interview), discourses (way of representation) and style (way of being - hybrid identities). Through the discursive strategies of entextualization and intertextuality of texts, the participant created an ideological effect of his emotional links with Urdu, yet realizing the utilitarian value of English, he gave a hierarchical arrangement of languages, where English has the supreme position and status, followed by the national language Urdu.

In the light of such insights, the study recommends that instead of perceiving English as a legacy of the colonial masters or elites, it should be seen as an opportunity for capacity and skill building. Better English language courses should be offered at the institute to keep teaching/learning processes up breast with latest knowledge and technologies. Concurrently, the study also argues for a fair placement of the national language by including it as a resource for the academics. Urdu should also be included in classroom discourses and dialogues to facilitate student inclusion and participation. The study's design does not consider generalizability as its goal. Rather, the insights gained through the critical discourse analysis of the research participant and his context will be able to guide the future researchers in understanding the language ideologies about their specific contexts.

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