

Critical Discourse Analysis Of William Wordsworth's *The Table Turned*



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Abstract: *This study tries to conduct a CDA analysis of William Wordsworth's The Table Turned to reveal the power dynamic rooted in the text. The three-dimensional model of Norman Fairclough's, which is also known as socio-cultural approach, is used as a theoretical framework in the present study. The present study utilizes a qualitative approach based on interpretivist paradigm. The data is analyzed through closed reading and textual analysis. The result of the study reveals that through his language and diction, William Wordsworth is trying to create a specific ideology which invites people to the world of nature and challenges the dominant discourse of reason and enlightenment, which emphasis the power of rationality over nature.*

Keywords: CDA, *The Table Turned*, Three-dimensional model, Fairclough, William Wordsworth, Interpretivist paradigm

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study:

According to Noam Chomsky (1968), one important characteristic that differentiate human beings from animals is that they use language to communicate with each other. However, an important linguist, James Paul Gee, claims in his writings about language that language has another vital purpose besides communication, which is to enable people "to engage in actions and activities" and "to do things and to be things" (Gee, 2011). Individuals utilise language differently depending on the context. Jorgenson & Phillip (2002) state that language is arranged differently and follows distinct patterns in various spheres of social life. They refer to this linguistic arrangement as 'discourse.' Any use of language, whether spoken or written, is considered discourse. Discourse analysis (DA) examines the variations in these patterns' arrangements and functionalities.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA), in contrast to discourse analysis (DA), takes a distinct stance on the examination of these linguistic patterns. In CDA, the word 'critical' refers to the linguistic context. Important pioneers in the field of CDA, Wodak and Meyer (2001), contend that speech can only be understood in light of its environment, and as a result, CDA recognises extralinguistic variables including society, culture, and ideology. The main purpose of CDA is to comprehend and evaluate the ways in which language is employed to establish and uphold social hierarchies, power dynamics, and disparities. According to Van Dijk (2003) CDA focuses on the way in which a particular text or talk is used in the social and cultural context to oppose, reproduce, and ratify social power abuse, domination, and inequality.

Ruth Wodak (2001) states that the main purpose of CDA is to investigate critically the way in which a language or discourse is used to express,

constitute, signal, and legitimize social injustice. According to Meyer (2001), the purpose of CDA is to reveal socioeconomic disparities and inequities that are typically concealed by language. The researcher attempts to perform a CDA analysis of Mr. William Wordsworth's poems *The Table Turned* in order to reveal the underlying ideologies and power dynamics, keeping in mind the goals and viewpoints of CDA academics in the current study.

1.2 Problem of the Statement:

The Table Turned (1798), which is in the form of a dialogue between two friends, one who advocates book learning and the other who discusses the importance of nature and direct experiences, is one of William Wordsworth's significant poems in the Romantic movement. Despite its significance in the Romantic movement, the poem has been analyzed only from a traditional point of view and a CDA analysis of the poem's language and structure has not been conducted. The current study is an effort to fill this gap. By applying CDA to *The Table Turned*, this study tries to uncover power dynamics and ideologies present in it.

1.3 Research Objective:

- To investigate the underlying ideologies in William Wordsworth's poem *The Table Turned* by employing Fairclough's model as a research framework.

1.4 Research Question:

1. What kind of philosophy does William Wordsworth present in *The Table Turned*?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is the combination of three words: Critical, discourse and analysis. The word 'critical' has been defined differently by different scholars. According to Lock (2004), under the CDA perception, the term 'critical' does not mean being negative or criticizing something. Roger (2004) believes that with the CDA framework, the term 'critical' means unveiling power relationships and demonstrating inequalities embedded in society. Ruth Wodak (2001) claims that 'critical' means opening up complexity and

being creative in one's research. The word 'critical' thus does not mean being negative in CDA.

The second term in CDA is 'discourse.' According to Fairclough (1999), in CDA 'discourse' is a form of social practice or action. Wodak (2001) and Van Dijk (2003) also view 'discourse' in CDA as a form of social action. According to Fairclough and Wodak, discourse is "socially constitutive as well as socially shaped: it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of relationships between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it contributes to transforming it" (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997).

The third term in CDA is 'analysis', which means breaking down something into its parts in order to understand it better. According to Teun A. Van Dijk (1993), analysis in CDA involves; examining the linguistic features and structures of texts, considering the political, social, and historical contexts in which texts are created and uncovering hidden ideologies, power dynamics, and social implications embedded in texts.

CDA is described as "a form of critical social science geared to illuminating the problems which people are confronted with by particular forms of social life, and to contributing resources which people may be able to draw upon in tackling and overcoming those problems" (p.125) by Fairclough (2001). "A type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the ways in which social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context," is how Van Dijk (2003) defines CDA.

From the above explanations, it can be said that CDA is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of text and talk that aims to understand and critique the way in which a language is used to create and maintain power relations, social hierarchies and inequalities. It involves the analysis of language in its social, cultural and political contexts and focuses on issues of power, ideologies, identity and social change.

RESEARCH METHOD

The current study is qualitative in nature and is based on interpretivist paradigm. Descriptive research design is used in the present study. The text of Mr. William Wordsworth poem *The Table Turned* is used as a primary source data for the analysis. The data is analyzed through closed reading and textual analysis. Norman Fairclough's three dimensional approach is used as theoretical framework in the present study.

3.0 Norman Fairclough's Three Diemnsional approach to CDA

The CDA method used by Norman Fairclough is based on a number of earlier methods. The novel aspect lies in its foundation, which is derived from multiple contemporary theories related to society and the interplay between discourse, society, and language (Fairclough, 2003). His CDA paradigm considers the conversation in parallel. Every communication event has three dimensions, in his opinion. It is a text in the first place (either writing, speech, or a mixture of these); it is also a discursive practice that involves producing, distributing and consuming text; and last, it is a social practice. The three levels of discourse are as follows: Textual analysis, discursive practice, and social analysis are the three steps or levels of analysis in CDA that Fairclough (2003) created in response to these three discourse levels.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 William Wordsworth as a Poet (1770-1850):

William Wordsworth's poetry constructs a romanticized view of nature, reinforcing a dominant ideology that separate the natural world from human society. Their emphasis on personal experience and emotion reflects and shapes cultural values, promoting a bourgeois individualistic perspective that obscures collective and social aspects. By naturalizing social and political issues, Wordsworth's poetry obscures human agency and responsibility. Through his poetry, Wordsworth constructs and reinforces social values and power dynamics,

maintaining a dominant discourse that influences how we perceive the natural world and how we interact with it.

4.2 Selected Text:

The Table Turned is one of the famous poems of William Wordsworth which was published in 1798. The poem consists of eight ballad stanzas with 32 lines in total. The poem is a dialogue between two friends, one of whom is urging the other to focus on science and reason, while the other argues from the importance of imagination and nature. Through these dialogues the writer is trying to challenge the dominant ideologies of classicism and creating a new and power ideology about nature.

4.3 Textual analysis:

4.3.0 Textual analysis at lexical level:

In *The Table Turned* William Wordsworth uses symbolism, imagery, metaphor and over-lexicalization to create a new ideology about nature and natural World and to challenge the prevalent ideology of industrialization and urbanization. This poem is full of symbols. In the very title, *The Table Turned*, the word 'Table' is used for a symbol of change representing a change in ideology from book learning to the world of nature, which can teach more than books. Throughout the poem the word 'nature' is used as a symbol for wisdom, truth and moral guidance. The word 'book' represents limitation of learning because there are things which can be learned from nature only and one impulse of nature can teach more than many books. 'Eyes' symbolizes insight and perception, 'light' stands for illuminating Enlightenment, and 'clouds' represents the divine force that connects human experiences to nature.

In order to challenge the predominant ideology of industrialization, which favors reasons and books and ignore emotions, feelings and natural world, the poet uses imagery in this poem to create his own power ideology about nature, emotions, feeling and imaginations. The poem starts with visual images such as, 'Up! up! My friend and quite your books', which challenges the dominant discourse of book learning and

intellectual activities and promoting direct observation and experiences. Images of nature such as “gently flowing streams” and “the sun shines” reinforce the discourse of nature as a source of truth and wisdom.

Over-lexicalization and metaphor are used in this poem to subvert the mainstream discourse. In order to emphasize the power of nature Wordsworth uses a variety of adjectives and verbs, such as “beautiful,” “majestic,” “sublime” and “powerful.” William Wordsworth through these adjectives and verbs attempts to create a particular ideology about nature that views nature as the source of wisdom, truth, and knowledge.

4.3.2 Textual Analysis at Phonological Level:

In order to challenge the dominant discourse of industrialization and to promote the romantic discourse of nature as a source of beauty and truth the poet includes phonological devices, such as alliteration and assonance. The use of alliteration in “Higher! Higher! My friend” creates a feeling of urgency and stresses on the need of changing discourse about book learning. The poet uses assonance in “Light of Nature” and “Flowers Are Blooming” to emphasize on the beauty and wonder of nature and contempt the noisy and polluted environment of cities.

4.3.3 Textual Analysis at Grammatical level:

Wordsworth uses imperative phrases such as “Up! Up! My friend” and “close your books” to challenge the dominant discourse about book learning and emphasize the necessity of action and change. These phrases give the message and sense of urgency and directness. He also uses simple phrases such as “the eye sees” and “the light of nature” to promote a sense of clarity. Active verbs such as “Bend,” “See,” “Bloom,” and “Subvert” are used throughout the poem to emphasize on the passive understanding of books and idealized narrative that see nature as a source of beauty and truth. The use of possessive pronouns, such as “my friend” or “your books,” create a sense of ownership and warn about the risk that are involved in choosing to learn from books.

4.4 Discursive Practice:

The Table Turned which was published in 1778 is one of the famous poems of Mr. William Wordsworth. In this poem he questions the prevalent discourse about book learning and knowledge. In eighteenth century it was believed that books are the only source of learning the poet is challenging this perspective of eighteenth century by using words like “up” and “turn.” Words like “close your books” and “clear your looks” challenge the predominant intellectual discourse, which gives priority to books learning, and create his own discourse which says that nature is the source of beauty, truth and wisdom. By using adjectives such as “beautiful,” “majestic,” and “sublime” William Wordsworth portrays nature as a source of guidance and inspiration. He uses words like “flourish,” and “grow” which describes nature’s ability to make someone’s knowledge flourish and grows it. Hence, Wordsworth is producing a discourse in this poem which highlights the value of nature and natural world. The consumer of this discourse, which Wordsworth is creating, is of course not only the eighteenth century readers but it is for all ages and times.

4.5 Social Analysis:

The Table Turned belongs to William Wordsworth’s famous collection of poem known as the “Lyrical Ballad.” This collection of poem was published in 1778 and is considered to be the beginning of Romantic Movement. This movement was against the classical discourse of reasons and intellects. In eighteenth century books were considered the only source of knowledge, reasons and intellects. The institutions and power dynamic of that time was focusing on the book learning only. They had ignored the nature and the society of that time was the society of industrial bourgeoisie class only. In this poem Wordsworth is criticizing the industrial bourgeoisie class of people, the dominant social and economic class of society, who prioritize urbanization and industrialization over the environmental concerns and the well-being of the poor working class. Through his emphasis on nature and natural world as a source of knowledge and truth Wordsworth opposes the predominant ideology of progress that was

prevalent at that time. The relationship between individual and society is also challenged and reflected in this poem. In this poem Wordsworth uses words such as “friend” and “mine” etc. which create a sense of familiarity and intimacy and challenge the prevalent societal relationship of that time which would prioritize authority and hierarchy over personal relations.

Conclusion:

The analysis of the poem *The Table Turned* using Fairclough’s 3D model presents profound ideology of the poet in this poem. The CDA analysis of this poem reveals that through his language and diction William Wordsworth is trying to create a specific ideology which invites people to the world of nature and challenges the dominant discourse of reason and enlightenment, which emphasis the power of rationality over nature. The speaker argument for the importance of nature and emotion can be seen as a resistance to the hegemonic ideas of reasons and rationality, subverting the traditional power dynamic between reason and nature and elevating nature to the position of authority. Through this poem the writer is trying to create his own discourse about the nature.

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