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A R T I C L E   I N F O

Critical Discourse Analysis of Meghan Markle's Identity in the Interview with Oprah Winfrey in 2021

A B S T R U C T

The current paper deals with a critical discourse analysis of the underlying ideology of Duchess Meghan Markle in her conversation with Oprah Winfrey in 2021 in one of the most important royal interviews since princess Diana's Panorama interview in 1995. The paper starts with theoretical information about the concepts of identity, ideology, race and critical discourse analysis (CDA). The researcher analyzes three selected extracts from this conversation by using van Dijk's (2004) framework to investigate how Meghan Markle tried to justify her ideas and persuade the audience by utilizing subtle ideological discourse structures in her speech.

تحليل نقدي للخطاب لهوية ميغان ماركل في المقابلة مع أوبرا وينفري في 2021

م.م.بان اسعد عبود/ المديرية العامة لتربية واسط
الخلاصة:

تتناول الدراسة الحالية تحليلا نقديا للإيديولوجية الدوقة ميغان ماركل في محادثتها مع أوبرا وينفيري في عام 2021 في واحدة من أكثر المقابلات الملكية أهمية منذ مقابلة الاميرة ديانا في عام 1995. تبدأ الدراسة الحالية بمعلومات نظرية حول مفاهيم الهوية والأيديولوجيات والعرق وتحليل الخطاب النقدي (CDA). تقوم الباحثة بتحليل ثلاثة نماذج مختارة من هذه المحادثة باستخدام نظرية (2004) Van Dijk من أجل التحقيق في كيفية محاولة الدوقة ميغان ميريكل تبرير أفكارها وإقناع الجمهور من خلال استخدام الخطاب الأيديولوجي في المحادثة.

1. Introduction

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a suitable area to perform an autopsy on all types of discourse whether spoken or written to examine the ideologies underlying it. CDA is considered an important branch of Discourse Analysis because it tries to focus on the relations between

ways of talking and ways of thinking. Moreover, it tries to highlight "the traces of cultural and ideological meaning in spoken and written texts" (O'Halloran, 2005 p. 1946). The paper tries to investigate the underlying ideology of Meghan Markle in the interview.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Identity

"Identity" in the OED (2nd edition, 1989) is defined as "The sameness of a person or thing at all times or in all circumstances; the condition or fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else; individuality, personality". This does not capture easily what is meant if someone mentioned "national identity" or "ethnic identity", for example. One may ask whether "ethnic identity" is the sameness of the feeling of belonging to a particular nation in all circumstances, cases, places and times, or it is the condition of belonging to this ethnic group and not another? Definitely, the idea of "ethnic identity" presupposes the idea of temporal and spatial continuity of an ethnic group, but this will not be what an essay on the "ethnic identity" of the African (for example) would be focused on. Ethnic identity is not the condition of being different from others, but it is something about the content of the differences. The definition of the dictionary fails to capture what is intended by the meanings of the form "my identity is [such and such] ... "; although "individuality" may come close here ("personality" is way off). There is a comparison between the OED definition and the social scientist's definitions. Nearly, there is no overlap with the dictionary meaning but there may be some among the social scientist's definitions.

Identity as a concept has been vigorously debated in the sociological, philosophical, political, logical and other different aspects. First of all, identity is a relational term. Castells (1997, p. 6) states that identity is "people's source of meaning and experience" while Wodak (2009, p. 11) defines it as a way of defining the relationship between the entities in the world in terms of their sameness or equality. This definition is faced with objections because they reject the idea that supports the total sameness between individuals or things in a specific group because both of them are under constant change. Thus, the term identity is never theorized to unchanging and static things. Alternatively, it is related to entities that are linked to a process and change constantly in the flow of time. The previous explanation applies to personal and social identities. Barth (1969) (as cited in Spencer & Wollman, 2002), points out that identity is neither

fixed nor inherited but it is formed and constructed by putting boundaries among groups and by taking these differences between the groups into consideration. The boundaries are the result of social interaction. In this case, national and ethnic identities are regarded to be "dynamic" and can be "produced and reproduced". Moreover, Zizek (1993) (as cited in Spencer & Wollman, 2002, p. 62) defines the nation as something that can organize the social life and bring order to it while the loss of this power has the power to create fear within the individuals (Spencer & Wollman, 2002, p. 58-62). Castells (1997, p. 6) mentions three types of identity which are project identity, legitimizing identity, and resistance identity. The identity of resistance is considered as the most important kind in the construction of identity as "it constructs forms of collective resistance against otherwise unbearable oppression usually based on identities that were, apparently, clearly defined by history, geography, or biology, making it easier to essentialize the boundaries of resistance"(Castells, 1997, p. 9).

Because of colonialism and oppression, black women as a homogeneous group face many struggles such as the belief that they are aggressive and non- resigned. Identity can be explored in many ways. The first one is born-with identity which is the innate part of individuals that appears through the course of life. The second one is a collective issue which is shared with others. The third one is a socially constructed matter that is shaped by institutional order but is susceptible change and resistance. Moreover, it is variable because it relies on gender, class and ethnicity. This heterogeneity lets many interpretations and theories, yet those remarked here can be associated with Adichie's (2013) work (Dias and Pinto, 2019, p. 235).

2.2. Ideology

The term "ideology" is mentioned by the French philosopher Destutt de Tracy (1796) (as cited in van Dijk, 2005) as a new field that can study ideas. Van Dijk (2005) says that the relationship between ideology, politics and discourse can provide a new perspective of study to each one of those domains. Political practice is represented discursively, at the same time, ideologies are embedded in any political practice; and discourse is regarded as a means of the reproduction of the political ideologies. He considers ideology as a concept that is mentioned in the media and the social sciences with negative connotations. It is mostly regarded as a system of ideas and beliefs that is related to others. Van Dijk explains this idea when he points out that "we have the truth, and they have ideologies". Because of the influence of social and political movements like Marx-Engels, ideology was reintroduced as "a form of false consciousness" and

contradicting "objective knowledge" (van Dijk, 2005, p.728-29). Scholars discussed this term from different points of view. Gramsci (1971) considers how ideologies authorize power abuse by a dominant group and make them seem legitimate and normal as hegemony. Bourdieu and Eagleton, (1994, p. 266-67) disagree with such meaning of the term ideology. As an alternative, terms like "symbolic power" and "symbolic violence" are presented to be used instead of "ideology".

Thompson's (1990) (as cited in Reisigl and Wodak, 2017) view is adopted by Reisigl and Wodak and they present another point of view about the diverse explanations and definitions of the term ideology since the emergence of the idea in France in the late Eighteenth century. In this regard, they identify ideology as a notion that "refers to social forms and processes within which, and by means of which, hegemonic symbolic forms circulate in the social world" (p. 88). According to the scholars of DHA, ideology is defined as a certain view of the world that consists of opinions, attitudes, mental representations and evaluations that are common between the members of the social group; or in other word it is a "one-sided perspective". One of the crucial roles of ideologies is that they are regarded as means that create unequal relations of power by discourse. Another essential role of ideologies is the radical transformation that they impose upon power relations. Therefore, linguistic practices receive much attention because of the way in which they serve as means of mediating and reproducing ideology in different social institutions. Reisigl and Wodak (2017, p. 88) say that "one of the aims of the DHA is to 'demystify' the hegemony of specific discourses by deciphering the ideologies that establish, perpetuate or fight dominance". According to the scholars of DHA, language does not represent a powerful means without the influence of those who use it. It is merely a tool that serves to maintain and gain power by the use of powerful people. Because of that reason, DHA deals mainly with the critical analysis of the language of those who use it and have the power to change conditions in the world by using it. Politics is regarded as a social field that can constitute a form of ideological functions which is known as political ideology. The classification of ideologies and discourses depends on their functions in different fields. Among the different social fields, politics is closely related to ideology. Many obvious reasons lead to this view such as the constant struggle between the various political groups and forces, along with their conflicts and interests. Political ideologies are "explicitly expressed and formulated" through discourse. Discourses make ideologies specific, concrete and influential (van Dijk, 2005, p. 731-34). The relationship between ideology and political discourse is complex because not all the

properties of political discourse have implicit ideologies. Van Dijk (2005) delimits the effect of ideologies on the characteristics of discourse that are "contextually variable".

2.3. Racism

As it is mentioned by Van Dijk, (1999, p. 147-8), racism is regarded as a controversial topic, and among the elites it is more often denied than recognized as a major problem. Instead of regarding this topic as an object of serious and systematic scholarly inquiry, many consider it as a political issue or as a domain of activist anti-racism. Thus, scholars who are accused of racism are tended to be ridiculed and also marginalized by the media, politics and also in academia. The interest in the study of racism and also in discourse analysis increased during the last years because of the prominence of certain topics such as immigration, racial inequality and ethnic relations. Thus, racism, ethnic relations and nationalism became prominent issues of critical discourse studies. The discourse and talk in any social interaction and in any society have an essential role in racism and in social inequality. Racism is an important issue which is related to power and dominance, to racial or ethnic inequality, and to institutions and groups and also it is related to the social arrangements of contemporary societies. Racism is challenged by minority groups just like any form of power abuse. It is necessary to investigate how thoughts and talk are reproduced throughout a particular group or between different groups. Moreover, it is necessary to understand the role of leaders or famous people in how they make such discourse credible. It is also necessary to study everyday routines of discourse making in the media, politics, or corporate business and so on.

2.4. An Overview of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Rash (2012, p. 1) says that modern discourse analysts deal with discourse. Foucault's (1969) view is "a social practice which involves language production beyond that of the creation of individual texts". Moreover, the analysis investigates the strategies and the linguistic realizations that are associated with a specific text. In general, discourse analysts are interested in investigating the texts and the developments of these texts in textual genres over time. The crucial aim of the development of CDA was interpreting political discourse. The essential goal of Critical discourse analysts is how discourse maintains and reflects the structures of power in society. Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl and Liebhart (2009, p. 8) preserve the belief that discourse symbolizes a form of social practice that implies a "dialectical relationship between discursive

acts and the situations, institutions and social structures in which they are embodied". Charteris Black (2004, p. 30) points out that the relationship between social practices and discourse deals with both ways because discourses are social practices, and social practices create discourses. Furthermore, analysts believe that people produce the discourse consciously in a way that suits their position and the impact they try to leave on the recipients and suits the relationship between producers and recipients. Rash (2012, p.2) clarifies how ideologies affect discourse, especially ideologies which are related to political control, domination and discrimination, and power. The main interest of the analysts is revealing the strategies that are used in discourse to manipulate and impose dictatorial views. Hence, CDA is criticized for the fact that analysts are interested mainly on the misuse of power and they focus on the signs related to them that lead to subjective and limited findings. O'Halloran (2007) mentions a more solid view about CDA which is that if CDA is not used merely to expose issues as social inequity; it can be used as an objective analytical tool. It can have a broader domain which is "concerned with highlighting the traces of cultural and ideological meaning in spoken and written texts" (p. 159). As Baker et al. (2008, p. 279) put it, CDA provides "a general framework for problem-oriented social research".

2.5. Van Dijk's Approach to CDA (1998, 2005)

In this approach, van Dijk (1998) says that texts are produced by the people to convey a particular ideology and to shape reality in a specific way. One of the essential aims of CDA is using text analysis in a particular society to uncover the sources of inequality in that society. Therefore, van Dijk pays attention to how the discursive strategies are employed in constructing bias and inequality in a particular society. Van Dijk focuses on mental processes. As for analysis, van Dijk suggests different levels in his approach as tools that are used to shed light on his ideas that are concerned with "Us or insiders" and "Them or outsiders" (van Dijk, 1998, p. 69).

Van Dijk (1993 b, p. 252) suggests that CDA does not follow a particular "paradigm" or "school". Thus, he presents an interdisciplinary view that refers to socio-cognitive discourse analysis. In this approach, van Dijk pays attention to the main role of cognition in CDA and other processes such as communication and interaction. He mentions that the limits of CDA contain many approaches to accommodate with people's needs and the problems of the real world. These approaches are historical, socio-economic, logical, cultural, philosophical and neurological. According to van Dijk (2015, p. 472), there is no a direct relationship between social structures and discourse structures because their relationship is interfered by personal and

social cognition. Furthermore, van Dijk (2005) focuses on a particular perspective of ideology in order to distinguish between the systems of ideas and beliefs of people in groups. Accordingly, ideology is defined as "the foundation of the social representations shared by a social group" (p. 729). These systems of shared ideas can be viewed either positively or negatively depending on the perspective of the person which means that his/her membership in or out the group. Thus, van Dijk (2005, p. 729) regards ideology as a system which is monopolized by the dominant groups only but the dominated groups show a different type of ideologies that are known as ideologies of resistance or opposition. Ideological systems show different social and cognitive characteristics. Hence ideology is considered as one of the basic pillars in framing the identity of groups. Van Dijk (2005, p. 730) suggests that social representations which are based on ideology need to be related to certain mental models. Being specified in mental models, the social representations need to be associated with "concrete social practice and discourses" and then, need to be contextualized. There is an interrelationship between mental models and discourse. Mental models govern different social practices and also discourse and interaction. Furthermore, these mental models can give the means to discourse to influence and to reproduce the social representations and ideologies.

3. Research Questions

The current paper will answer the following questions:

1. What is the underlying ideology of Meghan's identity?

2. Based on van Dijk's (2004) framework, how does Meghan in the interview tries to justify herself and persuades the audience to sympathize with her?

4. Data Collection and Analysis

4.1 Data Collection

The researcher takes the data for this paper from parts of the conversation between Opera Winfrey and Prince Harry with his wife Duchess Meghan in 2021. It was the first interview with the couple after they had withdrawn from their duties as part of the British Royal Family and moved to the United States. In this interview, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex explained the reasons for their decisions and presented their version of the events of life at the royal court. In

their conversation, they made accusations of indifference, racism and perpetuating lies against Buckingham Palace. The researcher selects extracts from Meghan's talk in this conversation.

4.2 The Modal for Analysis

van Dijk (2004) pays attention to the ways of employing the discursive strategies in order to maintain or construct inequality or bias in a particular society. Van Dijk focuses on mental processes and ideological strategies such as "self positive-representation" and "other negative representation". "Positive self-representation" or "in-group favouritism" is regarded a semantic macro- strategy which is used for the purpose of "impression management" or "face keeping" (van Dijk 2004). "Negative other-representation" is considered as another semantic macro-strategy which is concerned within-groups and out-groups. For example, their division between "good and bad", "superior and inferior", "US and THEM". Van Dijk (2004) presents these two major strategies in the form of an "ideological square":

Emphasize Our good things

Emphasize Their bad things

De-emphasize Our bad things

De-emphasize Their good things (p. 18).

Besides the strategies of "positive self-presentation" and "negative other presentation", van Dijk (2004) presents 25 ideological discourse structures.

Actor description: The way in which the speaker describes the members of a particular society either negatively or positively.

Authority: Mentioning authorities in order to support the claims of the speaker.

Categorization: classifying people to different groups

Consensus: Creating agreement and solidarity

Disclaimer: Presenting a particular idea positively and then rejecting it by using terms such as "but" in the following sentence.

Evidentiality: Using hard facts in order to support the ideas of the speaker.

Hyperbole: Enhancing and exaggerating meaning.

Implication: Deducing implicit information.

Irony: The speaker Says something and means something else.

Lexicalization: An ideological strategy for negative other-representation through the semantic features of the words.

National Self Glorification: creating positive self-representation by glorifying one's country and ethnic group.

Number Game: Using numbers and statistics to appear credible.

Presupposition: The shared knowledge between people or the ideas taken for granted in a proposition.

Vagueness: Creating uncertainty and ambiguity.

Victimization: The speaker tells bad stories about other people.

5. Data Analysis

Extract 1: "*Separate from that, and what was happening behind closed doors was, you know, we knew I was pregnant. We now know it's Archie, and it was a boy. We didn't know any of that at the time. We can just talk about it as Archie now. And that was when they were saying they didn't want him to be a prince or a princess — not knowing what the gender would be, which would be different from protocol — and that he wasn't going to receive security*".

Meghan started this turn with the ambiguous clause "Separate from that, and what was happening behind closed doors" to imply that what was happening in the palace is something harmful to her. She uses ambiguity in order to let the listener imagine what was happening to her is bad. The whole paragraph is a negative other presentation, with this "Other" being the Royal family. She does so by using such lexicalizations as "behind clause doors". In fact, by using this expression, she wants to show her suffering. She continues presenting the Royal family negatively through her son Archie. She presupposes that he will not receive security because of

them. She uses exaggeration to make the audience believe her and sympathize with her. She employs positive self-presentation by referring to her situation as a pregnant woman at that time. She uses these strategies to introduce and persuade the audience about her ideas regarding inequality and racism since she is from the common people not from the royal family and different from them in color.

Extract 2: "*But I can give you an honest answer. In those months when I was pregnant, all around this same time . . . so we have in tandem the conversation of 'He won't be given security, he's not going to be given a title' and also concerns and conversations about how dark his skin might be when he's born*".

Again, she employs a negative presentation of the Royal family and a positive presentation of herself. She tries to make the audience sympathize with her because of her pregnancy and to create solidarity with them. She tells those facts and topics of conversations that happened between Prince Harry and the Royal family in that period such as Archie won't be given security and he won't be given a title. She says these things in order to support her situation and ideas. Then, she raises sensitive issue directly which is the color of the expected baby. She does that intentionally and explicitly because at the time of the interview, the issue of colour was very sensitive because of the black man George Floyd who was killed by the white policeman. Therefore, it was very easy to have people's sympathy if they knew that the Royal family is worried about the skin colour of the expected baby. She uses victimization because she told the audience bad stories about the Royal family.

Extract 3: "*This wasn't a choice. This was emails and begging for help, saying very specifically, 'I am concerned for my mental welfare'. And people going, 'Oh, yes, yes, it's disproportionately terrible what we see out there to anyone else'. But nothing was ever done, so we had to find a solution*".

She continues telling the audience bad stories about the Royal family. She mentions her mental state and her need for help. She uses the hyperbolic expression "begging for help" to exaggerate her situation in the palace. She uses the strategy of implication to make Harry and the audience believe that the history of Princess Diana, who was suffering from feelings of deep loneliness upon joining the Royal family, repeats itself. In this case, Prince Harry is on her side because he sees the same thing is happening to his wife. Like Diana, Meghan uses the press in

order to revenge. In the last line, she uses a vague phrase which is "to find a solution "to make the audience guess what is that solution. She does not mention suicide or harming herself but she refers to it implicitly. However, during the conversation, Oprah guesses the solution and she refers to it several times.

6. Conclusion

A close examination of the transcript of the conversation between Meghan and Oprah through van Dijk's (2004) comprehensive framework revealed that Meghan tends to be against the Royal family. To justify her claims in the conversation, she utilized different subtle ideological discourse structures all of which can be classified into two major strategies of "positive self-presentation" and "negative other-presentation". Van Dijk's (2004) framework is considered as a cognitive approach out of which the 27 ideological discourse structures arise. Meghan uses many techniques to control and penetrate into the mind of the audience to reach her goal. By these techniques, She plays the role of victim by using her skin colour as a weapon to make people on her side. She uses these techniques to focus on the issue of ethnicity.

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