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LANGUAGE AS A HEGEMONIC TOOL: CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF A COSMETIC SURGEON'S MEDICAL DISCOURSE

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ABSTRACT

This research paper tries to survey the persuasive strategies of a cosmetic surgeon to convince his patient/friend to undergo aesthetic surgical procedure. The paper intends to unveil the covert consumerist ideology hidden in the commonsensical socio-linguistic conventions enshrined in a cosmetic surgeon's discourse. The study is stranded in Norman Fairclough's model asserting that sociolinguistic conventions are the outcome of power relations and power struggle and it is impossible to segregate ideologies from discourse that apparently seems apolitical (Fairclough: 1995). The chosen corpus' socio-political and persuasive constituents are evaluated disclosing the surgeon's persuasive strategies as well as the motive behind the discursive trap he sets on his client/girl friend. The dialogue selected for Critical Discourse analysis is from an American novel *Beauty* written by Brian D'Amato who exposes through these novel ramifications and coercive strategies to force women to adhere to beauty norms erected by white/supremacist/capitalist/male elite who has a vested interest in dissemination of cosmetic surgery.

INTRODUCTION

Consumer culture with neo-liberal discourses crafts consumer identity for people. People are enticed to buy the latest commodity and service available in the market. At the turn of the century Market has become the ruling power colonizing the subjectivities of people by using a host of tactics. Brands and products have become the yardsticks to measure the worth of people. Consumer

culture, however is not gender blind, it drafts a feminine identity for women and dictates women to embrace an identity founded on appearance. Western Culture Industry is playing a substantial role in proliferating a Caucasian standard of beauty through its models and celebrities. These celebrities however are coerced to conform to a standard appearance which does not include non-Caucasian appearance. White colour has become the standard complexion and appearance. With a standardized appearance, cosmetic surgery has become the fast burgeoning industry in west, where medical practitioners from every other field are entering to make money over the bodies of women, particularly those working for mass media. Victoria Pitts Taylor writes in *Surgery Junkies* that cosmetic surgeons are changing women into surgery addicts by promoting psychological disorders. Such ladies get preoccupied with smallest blemish on their faces and rush to cosmetic surgeon to get treated. The surgeons offer packages and sales on various surgical procedures e.g. cheek implantation is offered with chin implantation, eye lid correction surgery is offered with nose uplifting these sales on surgical procedures bring the maximum women client into the clinic. The postmodern rhetoric erected by cosmetic surgeons considers a pre-given body as a plastic slate on which any text can be inscribed. The American novel *Beauty* deals with the persuasive discourse used by a cosmetic surgeon to bring wealthy clientele into his clinic.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

Discourse

According to linguists, Discourse is a wide term with large number of definitions which incorporates a complete palette of connotations (Titscher et.al. 2000: 42) stretching from linguistics to social science, philosophy and other fields of study. However, in the context of this paper the definition given by Van Dijk (1977: 3) is used and his broad idea of discourse as script is realised as information that is pertinent for empirical investigation (Titscher et.al. 2000: 44) with emphasis on discourse as accomplishment and course of action. What we understand from it is that “discourse” is a broader term than “text” only. The term is used as a reference to the complete procedure of communal interface of which a text is just one fragment (Fairclough 1989: 24).

Critical discourse analysis (CDA)

It is a strategy to examine discourse which considers language as a social phenomenon and addresses the course of actions through which philosophies and power relations are articulated by means of language. Critical discourse analysts investigate the issues of language keeping in mind the question: ‘who benefits from a particular discourse’ while carrying out the analysis.

Unlike many other forms of linguistic analysis, CDA doesn't address the written words on pages but also encompasses investigating social setting e.g. they ask the question addressing the way words took written or spoken form and what else is being referred by them. This approach was first given by a Marxian linguist Norman Fairclough (1989) who adopted a three dimensional framework to analysis. CDA target is to perceive language usage as a social practice. The

operators of language don't operate in isolation but within a framework of ethnic, social and mental fabrics. CDA accepts these societal setting and examines the relationship between textual systems and admits this social setting into consideration and discovers the associations between textual structures and their role in communication within the culture. Such an investigation is a multi-level task, which seeks the evident lack of direct, one to one communication between text structures and occasions. Particularly it matters while creating and sustaining divergences in power relationship. The connection of compound mechanism of conversational drills and their social utility is often and willingly left smoky, particularly when there is a requirement to produce and sustain differences in power relations. One of the aims of CDA is to construct such a framework for lessening this said opaqueness. According to Fairclough (1993: 135), CDA is such a discourse examination which targets to methodically discover frequently opaque relations of causality and purpose between (a) discursive training, happenings and texts, and (b) broader communal and ethnic constructions, relations and procedures; to examine how these practices, happenings and texts originate and are ideologically moulded by relationship of power and efforts to grab power; and to discover how the opaqueness of these relations between discourse and society is itself an aspect acquiring power and supremacy. The important thing here is that this relation is bi-directional. Language use doesn't influence the framework of cultural or social practice but also the usage of language affects and conditions the societal and cultural context in which it discovers itself. To conclude, it may be asserted that discursive practices are constitutive of societal constructions, the same way as the social structures determine discursive practices. CDA identifies both directions, as well as the conflict between these two positions of language usage, the socially formed and socially constitutive" (Ibid: 134). Language is an essential component of the society on various levels. A separation suggested by Fairclough (Ibid: 134-136) is that of social uniqueness, social relationship and schemes of cognition and belief. All these levels get influenced with a variance as far as the intensity is related. The question of understanding of these levels in the perspective of discourse prototypes and social perception will be talked about in the concluding portion of this work.

The one component of CDA through whom it is distinguished from other practises of discourse investigation lies in its characteristic of 'critical'. Critical denotes presenting relations and reasons which are unknown and secret. It also suggests interference for example providing means for individuals who may be deprived through transformation (Fairclough 1992: 9). It is necessary to reveal the things which are secret so far and not known to concerned persons. That's the reason that they can't fight against those unknown things. According to Van Dijk so many research papers and books which have helped to set up CDA as a mode of research, and targeting force for different dimensions of authority are the work of Norman Fairclough (1989, 1992). It is he who has taken CDA as a research strategy rather than an idea or concept or prototype of examination.

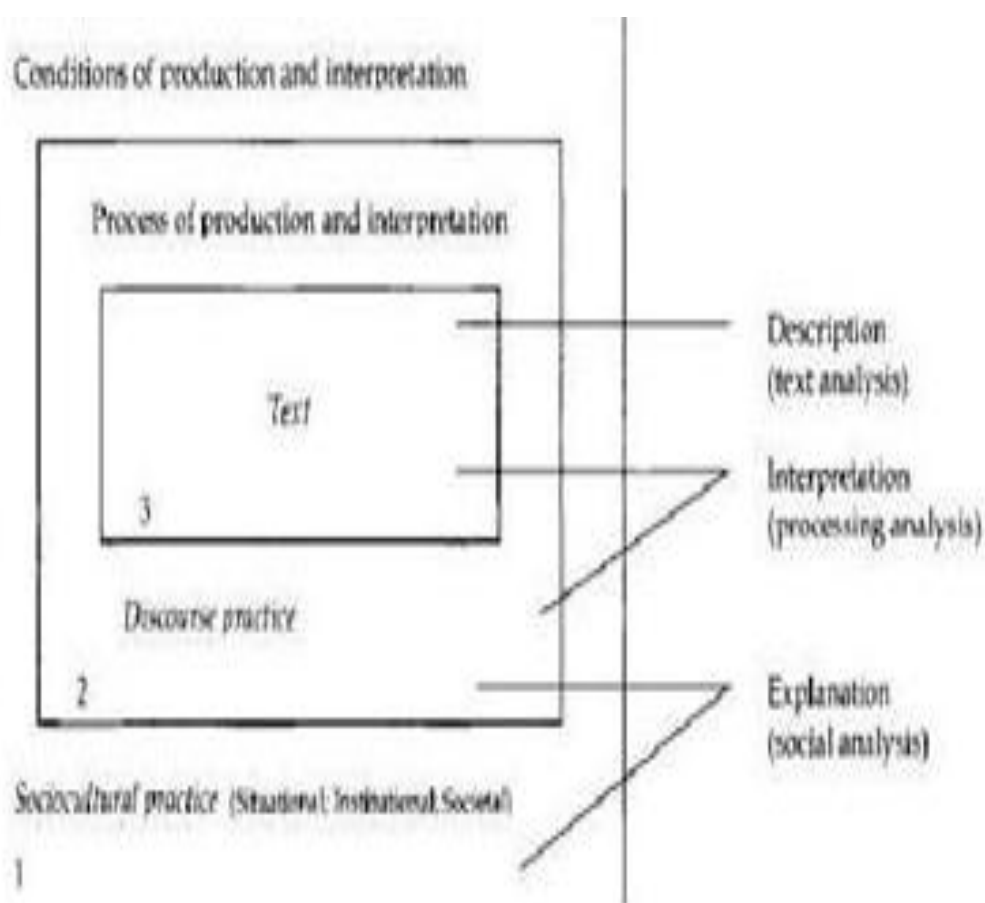
Norman Fairclough mentions in his book titled *Language and Power* (1989) that different forces of society in which we live restraint the means of communications (Fairclough 1989: vi). In the same work, he has proposed different processes to analyse texts. Fairclough (Ibid: 24-26) gives his opinions

on the actual nature of discourse and text analysis. According to him, there are three basic levels of discourse. First is the social relation of production i.e. the societal aspects, which contributed or guide to the beginning of a text, and, simultaneously, how these constituents influence explanation.

Second is the means of production i.e. how the texts are produced and how their interpretation get effected. Third is the text, as an outcome of initial two stages. Fairclough further suggests three stages of CDA which are in conformity with the three already discussed levels of discourse as following:

- a. First is **Description** which deals with formal attributes of the text. It encompasses examination of text and associating with Functional Linguistics which was acquired out of Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar.
- b. Second stage is **Interpretation** association between text and interaction – with taking the text as an outcome of a process of production, and as a resource in the course of interpretation.
- c. Third stage is **Explanation** which deals with the relation between interaction and social context –with the social determination of the methods of production and interpretation, and their social affects (Fairclough 1989: 26).

The following diagram can best explain the multilayered model of Fairclough:



Conceptual Basis

The conceptual basis is taken from Norman Fairclough's thoughts on discourse and power and discourse and hegemony. The effort has been made to relate social practice and linguistic practice on one hand and micro and macro investigation of discourse on the other hand (Fairclough 1989: 97). Simultaneously, analytic portion of the paper deals with potential interrelationship of textual characteristics and power relationship which is also corroborated in Fairclough's conceptual work. Major analytic instrument of this paper contemplates over "three dimensional scheme of discourse analysis", presented by Norman Fairclough, explicitly as "language text, spoken or written, discourse practice (text production and text interpretation), and the socio-cultural practice" (CDA: 97). These concepts of Fairclough alter into an investigative mode, comprising the "linguistic narrative of the language text, elucidation of the connection between discursive procedures and the text, and description of the association between the discursive procedures and the social procedures" (Fairclough 1989: 97).

Norman Fairclough pens in his book titled *Language and Power* that language in any communication two or more participants are involved, with control lying with powerful contributor. It is quite beneficial to differentiate generally among three categories of such restraints. These restraints are:

1. Constraints on subject matter which is stated or completed;
2. Constraints on relationships, the social relationships where individuals arrive at a discourse;
3. Constraints on subjects, or the 'subject situations' which individuals may inhabit.

Constraints on subject matter and relationship are inherently related and these intersect and co-occur in practical course of action. For instance, in a classroom, usually teacher is in control. As concern subject matter, the pupil needs to carry out whatever the teacher orders as per requirements of learnt routine. Functioning in a specialised relation, the student is in a subordinate relationship to the teacher and in terms of subject position, the teacher is holding and asserting the subject position, whereas the student is in the object position to carry out the orders. However, these constraints do not appear to be directly controlling. According to sociolinguistic conventions the teacher can order his student, whereas the student is duty bound to obey and response in conformity with dependent relationship of a pupil to his instructor. However, the pupil is not under direct control of his teacher. Rather, the restraints stem from the agreements of discourse which is being drawn upon. Yet, in a secondary logic, the trainer is controlling as it is his privilege of authoritative contributors to govern which discourse category may be lawfully drawn upon. Thus, the powerful participant can indirectly compel the participation through selection of category of discourse. The extra authoritative groups may be in position to care for sociolinguistic agreements in a more highhanded manner. Moreover,

the powerful groups or people allow or disallow changing degrees of latitude to less potent players.

Outline of the conversation:

The dialogue for analysis has been taken from an American novel *Beauty* (1993) where a cosmetic surgeon Jamie Angelo practices aesthetic surgery on the faces of female media icon. The patient who turns up in his clinic is his own friend Jashiree who is represented by J in the dialogue.

1. A: 'What have you done to your skin?'
J: 'I played tennis in the sun a lot, it aged my face three fold.'
2. A: 'Didn't you wear sunscreen?'
J: 'I didn't at first, and then I got all dry feeling, so I did, but you know, I m dark skinned, it seemed natural to me.'
- 3.A: 'But really, sweetheart, you are in display professions, it's important, you should always wear sunscreen.'
J: 'But I don't want my career to depend on my looks. That'd be a stupid career. Anyway, my face is bouncing back.'
- 4.A: 'I just got such a shock when you said this. What about your career? How could you damage your career like that for no reason? Are you out of your mind? It is like trying to hurt our relationship or something. How could you do this?''
J: 'I'm tremendously disaffected with the entertainment industry. It just isn't based on quality or talent. I don't want to deal with it anymore at my edge. And I plan to go to graduate school next year. I want to write and direct plays''.
- 5.A: 'And what about the performance career and everything? Why are you just getting off the ground''
J: "Jamie, I really love doing it, but it's just not happening. It's not going to go anywhere because it's just too rare a thing for it to go anywhere. I'm practically thirty, I'm too old to really hit in Hollywood.'
- 6.A: 'What if you were twelve years younger?'
J: "You don't like the way I look?"
- 7.A: "I'm thinking about face-job and change your complexion."
J: "Let's not discuss it. I find it insulting".
- 8.A: "Don't you want to look ten or fifteen years younger?"
J: "That's not the point. In fact..."
- 9.A: "Look! If you want to appear younger and become an instant hit, you're lucky that we can do that."
J: "I want to join Lit- Crit Grad School next summer and I..."
- 10.A: 'I couldn't take the lit-Crit grad school thing because I just knew the whole syndrome too well, and as much as I love the literature, it was fundamentally a drag, I knew the whole routine. Becoming an academic, the little petty department squabbles, the scrounging around for thesis topics that were obscure enough, the teaching position and obscure mid western liberal arts colleges, the faculty dinners, the university press publications, the department politics, the closing-in- on-oneself- In academies, even if you became the next Harold Bloom, you were essentially going to have every aspect of your life mapped out for you.
J: 'I'm feeling strange about this surgery thing. I think you'll do something that won't have anything to do with me at all and'

11.A: 'Well, we're going to collaborate on the design that I made for you.'

J: 'That's not just the idea of getting designed. It does not seem natural, it isn't going to be me. I think it's more...'

12.A: 'You mean it's not going to express your personality?'

J: 'No, it won't, it's rather...'

13.A: 'You know, for all I know, the new design's going to express your personality much more. I mean, you were born with your name and your face, and may be they've influenced you, but they don't really express you. You've just grown into them. And come on, think of it as an adventure, it's a new thing, you are the first person who'll ever have this experience. Isn't that exciting?'

J: "May be you are right, but I like my face. It's not perfect by the male standards, but it's really nice because I got it from my mother and father and they love me and also..."

14 A: 'But really, Jaishree, sweetheart, your career's important. Just imagine, everyone's just so thrilled to go to your movies after a hard day at work. I want you to be both the epitome and the ground- zero of beauty. Everything else has to be measured by you. And that something I went to get at. And your not caring for my desire is a kiss of death to our relationship.'

J: "Okay. What does it cost and when should I be there?"

15 A: "I knew that you are an intelligent girl and you would realize the importance of your surgery for your career enhancement as well as for our relation. I knew you care for that."

Three Levels of Discourse:

Norman Fairclough's approach to discourse analysis sees any text as the product of the social and material conditions. Hence in critically analyzing it we cannot overlook the process involved in the production of this discourse.

Social Conditions of Production and interpretation:

Politics can be defined as a struggle to acquire authority to implement definite political, economic and social philosophies into practical form. In the course of this struggle, language has a pivotal function starting from preparatory phase to implementation. The paper analyses discourse of a cosmetic surgeon, who professes to be an artist who loathes ugliness, old age and black, brown skin of women. According to him, ladies sole role is to give pleasure to males' gaze and he affirms to change every female into a "sex object". He meets an Asian American woman Jashiree Manglani who is brown in complexion and who is a performing artist, a director of stage plays and singer. Jamie Anglo, the cosmetic surgeon wants to excel in his field, for that purpose he needs to transform Jaishree into a young, white model. Actually he started with burn victims to engraft their wasted skin with plastic skin, but he found that practice not very interesting or economically rewarding. He learns quite early in his career that reconstructing the faces of models and media icons is rewarding. Being an inventive individual he is well aware of market trends and knows that cosmetic surgery is making very fast progress and it is getting ahead of any other industry because of affluent class women belonging to mass media prefer to restructure their bodies and faces. He gets to know that for models and media icons their

bodies and faces are asset and they can pay any amount to arrest any flaw in their faces and bodies.

The field provides him a good number of customers mostly from field of elderly stars and unconceivable financial profits which can give a luxuriant life in Loss Angeles. He wishes to have a fantabulous hospital which would function just like an art gallery beautified by appealing receptionist and a superb office which would be clustered by well-known Hollywood celebrities.

Jaishree is very important to him as her coloured face augmented with surgery will guarantee her designer more fame and wealth. She will become ‘a walking commercial’ advertising his mastery of surgery to beautify aging and ugly faces. After surgery, she would be a source of alluring other ladies to undergo surgical transformation. He wants his skills to be acknowledged by the media and desires to trail his “face art” as a profession. After Jaishree’s transformation, more and more women will be interested in his “designer people” like clothes and apartments.

The research paper focuses on persuasive strategies of Jamie Angelo to persuade Jaishree to offer herself for surgical procedure. The paper also intends to unearth the ideological component as well as ‘the power in discourse’ that goes unnoticed by his friend/ client.

The Procedure of Production and Interpretation:

The text was produced in this manner and the discourse took place in the surgical office of the cosmetic surgeon Jamie Angelo. He receives the heroine Jashree in his clinic as a friend/ client. The discourse just did not born out of nowhere, the surgeon has been hatching a plan to trap his friend for minute skin problems to convert her into a supermodel, to make her into an advertisement of his art and skill. It must also be borne in mind that the surgeon is in a powerful social and professional context which he employs to get professional power through his language.

The Text as product:

In order to understand the text in its entirety and complexity, we cannot ignore the material relations involved in the production of the text. The dialogue between the surgeon/ male friend Jamie Angelo and the client/girl friend Jajsiree does not happen in vacuums. His material concerns are important in it’s production and Jaishree’s emotional involvement with the person and her material reality of occupied by the Display profession dictates her to bow in deference to his desire. We get to know from the dialogue that Jaishree’s coercion by the Caucassian beauty norm has been capitilized by the surgeon who persuades her in the name of career progression and professional achievement and also personal relation which she cannot ignore and hence she obliges him and is persuaded by the surgeon to undergo his knife.

Description:

According to Fairclough's model Description deals with the formal aspects of the text. In the dialogue selected for analysis, the language is simple English with an informal touch. The informality hints at not a very formal relation of the surgeon with the client. However most of the dialogue consists of questions. On a close examination of the text it becomes clear however that questions are frequently asked by the surgeon and the client is most of the times answering to the questions.

The text also shows that statements spoken by the surgeon are lengthy and uninterrupted whereas the statements of Jaishree are smaller, relevant and address the questions asked by the surgeon. Jaishree does not take an initiative in asking a question, she only answers the questions posed by the surgeon. The text also illustrates that interruptions are done by the surgeon frequently whenever the answer by the client goes a bit lengthy.

Interpretation:***Power in Discourse******'Power in Discourse':***

The discourse of the beauty surgeon demonstrates that the participants are not in an 'unequal encounter'. The speech, interruptions of the surgeon/ boyfriend can be seen frequent. He interrupts it to control the contribution of the other participant i.e. Jaishree., to stop her from thinking of joining her literary classes at the critical graduation school, to force her to stick to the profession which she does not like. Jamie Anglo starts the topic of breaking skin, haggard skin and he mentions the lack of care by her, irrespective of her desire to change the topic. Moreover, the questions he asks are strategically ordered sequence which leads Jaishree through the rigorous process of coercion to accept his proposition. It can be safely said that authority in discourse lies with authoritative participants who controls and constrains the contributions of feeble participants. There are three types of constraints in this conversation.

1. Constraints on subject matter which is stated or completed;
2. Constraints on relationships, the social relationships where individuals arrive at a discourse;
3. Subjects: 'which position the participants occupy in their participation

All the three constraints are interrelated and inseparable from each other. In terms of contents, Jaishree is required to speak out her troubles regarding her skin problems, her downsizing career and her frustration with her failure. She is obliged to share her ambition to take admission in lit-grad- School. In terms of relations, Jaishree is obligated by virtue of two positions; 1st being his friend, second being his client to operate in a specialised connection to him and a under

command relation to him in both the categories. In terms of positioning, she is in an object position.

These constraints apparently don't engage any straight control through the surgeon/friend. All the 'instruction of discourse' i.e. commands and queries come from the surgeon. It seems that the doctor has the privilege to pass an order and enquire questions to the client. Whereas Jaishree has the obligation to comply or answer, by virtue of her subordinate position in the participation. Apparently it seems that the surgeon is not directly controlling the client and restraints are being drawn from course of discourse being followed. However in an unintended way, the doctor is controlling as it is the privilege of powerful participant to decide about category of discourse. Therefore beside direct restraint of contributors, the surgeon, being the powerful participant (by virtue of his professional occupation as well as gender elite) indirectly constraints them by selecting the discourse type. The powerful participant treats and moulds the sociolinguistic conventions in a more high-handed way.

Explanation:

The surgeon exercises power over Jaishree within meetings basing on such type of discourse, in accordance with its conventions, which gives rights to the surgeons to control the patient. As part of his power, Jamie Angelo imposes the discourse type upon Jaishree, in a sense of pressurizing her to constrain herself in an object position, where as he himself reserves for himself subject position. When she enters his office, she has to encounter the medical gaze of the surgeon which pierces her face and detects flaws in her face, thus pathologizing her body as in need of rectification or radical changes. In his subject position, keeping in mind the socio linguistic conventions he assumes for himself technological/male/medico/professional gaze that subjects her body to scrutiny and surveillance. Jamie Angelo is not only the male/ friend of Jaishree, he represents, rather the institution which is empowered by him and which empowers him in return. His self confidence and assertive discourse points towards this power entrusted to him by his profession. One sign of this is the regulation of conventions. We see in the dialogue that Jamie Angelo stars the discussion and takes the lead in turn taking. He imposes his statement, which are mostly in the form of questions, he never allows her to complete her answers. He frequently interrupts her in the middle of the speech, whereby restricting her to complete her mind set. Whenever she expresses her will to attend lit graduation school, he discards the possibility on various grounds, which apparently seem to be her welfare, but they are more ignited by his economic and material concern with her face texture. The policing of the sociolinguistic conventions is strictly controlled by him because he is the institutionalized power-holder in his clinic. The very context, including the place where the encounter takes place points towards a professional local where Jaishree is enforced to compliance with the conventions. Thus she nowhere resists his interruptions and high handed questions.

CONCLUSION:

Hence the above analysis substantiates that the sociolinguistic conventions are cultural manufactured and are an effect of power in discourse. The analysis

shows that nature of power relationship in the way professionals like doctors and surgeons and clients are placed in relation to each other where the professional comes into contact with clients or friends who accept these conventions and adhere to them without questioning them. Jamie Angelo has his vested interest in his client/ friends' cosmetic surgery as a capitalist and his discourse has become the source of oppression of his friend, which she cannot understand because apparently his words are couched in benevolent and caring capsules. The conventions that operate between the surgeon and the client are not arbitrary; they are determined by the social and material conditions, particularly through the type of relation between the surgeon and his customer. As a medical practitioner Jamie Angelo hold the power and his clinical jargon becomes the source of hegemonic power over Jaishree.

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