

ABSTRACT

Constructing a Prime Minister: a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of newspaper editorials in Trinidad and Tobago

Rajendra Shepherd

The language operation of the newspaper editorials of my field reveal a number of strategies of criticism – delineating power through role/name descriptors; obfuscation of the critic through extrication, and the use of dual variables in a criticism such that the reason for them can be disguised. Using a particular matrix of analysis from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and grounded theory to examine power relations in media opinion discourse, I propose a novel technique “pivoting” as a means of understanding an approach to criticism – using equivocation, questioning, metonymy and euphemism in structurally significant places, so augmenting understanding of the genre. Further, pivoting and other manoeuvres can be considered as linguistic markers of writer conscious persuasion to reveal a pattern of writer behaviour. Pivoting is accounted for by deference to the role of Prime Minister in Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) and a specific criticism of the latitudes of power within the role and so highlights a relationship between T&T media and the society.

Further, CDA as a tool for examination of power is critiqued for its ability to account for the T&T situation where an elite is vilified, unusual for the CDA situation where the power analysis typically examines how the disempowered are created. The writer entity was also examined and it was found that the writer-critic added institutional and perceptual layers between himself and the actual criticism as a means of writer empowerment, and that linguistic markers of consciousness persuasion can be identified to indicate where the genre itself exerts a pressure on the manifestation of an idea.

Keywords: newspaper editorials; media; opinion discourse; Critical Discourse Analysis; CDA; politics; pivoting; extrication; Trinidad and Tobago