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Revisions to the theory of political discourse analysis

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This article describes classical approaches to understanding political discourse analysis as one of the most promising methods of political analysis. The article examines both the critical discourse analysis approaches proposed by G. Kress and L. Chouliaraki (socio-semantic approach), N. Fairclough and R. Wodak (socio-cultural approach), and T. Van Dijk (socio-cognitive approach), as well as the postmodern theory of discourse analysis proposed by M. Foucault and developed by his followers, in particular E. Laclau and S. Mouffe. The objective of this essay is to compare and contrast different methodologies for the advancement of political discourse analysis.

There are a number of factors that make this article relevant. In the first place, modern methods of studying political reality are in crisis. They are no longer as effective at comprehending the social processes of our time as they once were. Secondly, the popularity of interdisciplinary research methods is growing every day, and political discourse analysis is seen as a vivid example of such a method. Thirdly, consciousness, which is still considered an insufficiently studied phenomenon in the social sciences, can finally be replaced by language. Language or discourse is considered here as the bricks of which consciousness is composed and thanks to which it can perform in the social space. This approach allows us to ignore the physical and biological manifestations of consciousness in favor of social ones, which allows us to interpret the socio-political reality of our time as accurately as possible and predict future changes.

As a result, we define political discourse analysis as a kind of general political analysis based on postmodern discourse theory. We are sure that this type of analysis has the greatest prospects for the study of such social processes and social relations as power, conflicts, inequality, political identity, etc.

This article will be interesting for those who are engaged in political discourse analysis and developing it, as well as for other scholars who study the philosophy of science, methodology, political psychology, and quantitative and qualitative research methods in the social sciences.

Key words: *discourse, political discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis, postmodern discourse theory, methodology.*

Introduction. The theory of discourse, introduced by Foucault and developed by his followers, opened the gates to a new interdisciplinary approach – discourse analysis. In the scientific world, it was seen as a challenge, a criticism, a new way to look at old things, and a set of problems that needed to be solved right away. The theory has been talked about a lot, and it has found a place for itself. It went from being on the edge to becoming a possible paradigm, and then the dominant paradigm.

Modern discourse analysis is a very promising way to look into social problems that show up in the way people talk and interact with each other. Discursive signs can be just symptoms or pieces of how big social problems like inequality, class differences, racism, political power, etc., are put into action. Discourse is a big part of how these problems are framed ideologically, how they are presented, how they are communicated, and how the right social and political procedures for making decisions are made [4, p. 7]. Language and communication are not only a reflection of social reality, but they are also always changing to keep up with it.

Despite the noted perspectives of political discourse analysis, we argue that it is still an imperfect tool that needs to be upgraded. J. Torfing says that political discourse analysis (PDA) needs to show

three important things. First, it needs to show the analytical value of discourse theory in empirical studies that go beyond just showing arguments and ideas. It must also cover the most important topics and areas in social and political science. It can't just focus on so-called "soft" topics like gender, race, and social movements. Lastly, it needs to look at the questions of method and research strategy with a critical eye [22, p. 27].

Unfortunately, modern PDA still can't give a full answer to social problems like "power" and "inequality." "legitimation", "identification", "conflict", etc. The fact is that neither the linguistic matrix proposed by Fairclough and Van Dijk nor the work in the field of "discourse psychology" has had the desired effect. They still haven't given fundamentally new answers to old questions or a unique way to learn completely new things.

To improve political discourse analysis, it seems like the classical theoretical background needs to be looked at and revised. So, the goal of the research is to find out what the main approaches are to analyzing political discourse and to compare them to figure out how well they work and what else could be done.

Different authors have used different ways to measure the idea of discourse. So, some ways of analyzing political discourse have come into being.

Because of this, different theoretical ways to compare and sort them have been suggested. Synthesis and secondary data analysis, induction and deduction, analogy and contrast, classification, and comparison are the most important.

In terms of literature, both old and new contributions to the study of political discourse were changed:

- socio-semiotic approach of critical discourse analysis [14; 2];
- sociocultural approach of critical discourse analysis [9];
- socio-cognitive approach of critical discourse analysis [3];
- the postmodern theory of discourse analysis [10; 15; 22]
- contemporary studies [13; 12; 25]

Results. There are many definitions of discourse. But there are two main ways to understand this phenomenon: the classical way and the postmodern way. According to the classical approach, discourse is understood as any linguistic interaction, or conversation. In contrast to the classical approach, the postmodern approach sees “discourse” as a way of thinking, a “world picture” or an ideology. Postmodernism sees discourse first and foremost as a way to understand the world, the limits of what is possible in thinking, and, as a result, the limits of what people can do in their social lives. In its turn, the political sphere of both the state and the world is characterized by a large number of such “discourses”, each of which has a unique nature [1].

As the phenomenon of discourse does not have a single unified meaning, political discourse analysis, as a theory and method, does not have a single approach. So, our main job is to look at the main directions in modern discourse analysis and compare them so we can pick the most forward-looking one.

There are numerous contributions to discourse analysis in the pool of modern science. They appear in two of the most important approaches. PDA is defined in the first approach as a critical analysis of political discourse. A linguistic paradigm is used in this case. The other is based on the ideas of postmodernists in general and postmodern discourse theory in particular. As a result, today’s leading directions in the study of political discourse are critical discourse analysis (CDA) and postmodern discourse analysis theory (post-structuralist discourse analysis).

These approaches have a lot in common. For example, they have a common theoretical background:

- the doctrine of hegemony and power coercion contained in speech introduced by Gramsci;
- the interpretation of ideology as a means (including discursive) of positioning people as social subjects; the analysis of the communicative appeal as an ideological way of forming subjectivity represented by Althusser;

- the attitude to discourse as to the unity of knowledge and power; the interpretation of various fields of knowledge and social institutions as discourse impacts mentioned by Foucault;

- the idea of discourse as a non-subjective ideological formation (matrixes of meanings) the “meeting place” of language and ideology and the consideration of discourses as language-encoded forms of ideological class wrestling suggested by Pesho;

- the semiotic approach to discourse and the interpretation of discourse as a way of constructing social reality using meanings (denotations) created by Bart;

- understanding discourse as a habit that generates social practices and regulates evaluative perceptions and looking at discourse as symbolic capital functioning in the political space designed by Bourdieu,

- the concept of ideal discourse communication aimed at reaching agreement and a balance of claims invented by Habermas.

In addition to the general theoretical base, proponents of both critical and postmodernist currents in discourse analysis are united by the interpretation of discourse as a power resource performing the following functions:

- (a) constructing and deconstructing the socio-political image of the world
- (b) regulating, distributing and reproducing power relations
- (c) forming social, political and ideological identities
- (d) articulating social claims, interests, and value orientations in the competitive struggle in the political market.

However, despite such similarities, these approaches are different enough. Let’s have a look at the comparison table represented below:

Now, we will look deeper into each of the paradigms.

Critical discourse analysis

Critical PDA is a leading approach. According to CDA proponents such as Fairclough, Wodak, van Dijk, Kress, Chouliaraki, PDA should be understood as an analysis of political discourse. Hence, because of this tradition, the key to any PDA is the political discourse, which is simply defined as a political text plus a political context. In other words, political discourse is interpreted by these authors as a symbolic method of communication aimed at the production and reproduction of knowledge, images, meanings, values and interpretations that provide the representation and positioning of social subjects in a dynamic policy space.

The main features of the CDA approach are:

- 1) Orientation toward linguistics
- 2) Discourse is defined as a communicative action, produced in the form of text and speech

Political discourse analysis's main approaches

Kind of discourse analysis	Critical discourse analysis (next - CDA)			The postmodern theory of discourse analysis
Kind of approach	socio-semiotic	sociocultural	Socio-cognitive	poststructural
The main representatives	Kress, 1985; Chouliaraki, 2005	Fairclough and Wodak, 1997	van Dijk, 2002	Laclau, Mouffe, Foucault, 2019; Torfing, Zizek
The main features	Discourse is considered as an ideological tool. Discourse can be expressed not only in linguistic forms, but also in visual images. Discourse analysis reveals relations between conceptualization and the certain point of view.	There are three main areas of sociocultural and political life: ideas about the world, social relations and social identity. The concept of "order of discourse". Intertextuality. Discourse-historical method	Political discourse is defined as a certain representation of political structures, events, actors, groups, and processes. Political discourse and political knowledge are connected with each other through social and political memory	Discourse is defined as a relational system of signification. Discourse refers to ways of constituting knowledge. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. The concept of discourse encompasses not only language but everything social

3) Written and spoken discourse are interpreted as forms of social practice

4) Mutual conditionality and dialectics exist between discourses and social practices

5) Political discourse is a verbal representation of ideological domination

6) Special attention must be paid to criticizing the discriminatory and repressive content of mainstream socio-political discourses

7) Special research attention must be paid to the discourses of racism, nationalism and sexism

8) Consideration should be made of the discourse of political elites and media discourse as the main sources of the power asymmetry.

Within its framework, several methodological approaches can be distinguished:

- socio-semiotic approach of critical discourse analysis [14; 2];

- sociocultural approach of critical discourse analysis [9];

- sociocognitive approach of critical discourse analysis [3].

The socio-semiotic approach in CDA

The followers of such a kind of approach are convinced that discourse is fundamentally ideological because it always expresses the point of view of a speaker.

The organization of the content in discourse is determined by the existing systems of ideological principles, and this content can be expressed not only in linguistic forms, but also in visual images. This is a characteristic of the majority of media events, most notably television productions.

As H. Kress emphasizes, both the text structure of the discourse and the semantic content of the television picture, in short, all the attributes of the television broadcasting competition have a specific ideological

setting. Then it is the primary task of a discourse analyst to find out what that setting is [14, p. 27-42].

According to one of the prominent representatives of the socio-semiotic approach, L. Chouliaraki, the interpretation of language as a semiotic practice assumes that the language ensures the construction of reality, the formation of social and ideological identities, and finally, the construction of text. Hence, it follows that language fulfills three functions in society: the gut function, the communicative function, and the textual function [2, p. 278].

But the fact that language has a textual function implies that people are connected to reality and to each other in a semiotic way, through the textual signifier. That's why socio-semiotic discourse analysis is one of the most important parts of the apparatus of critical discourse analysis. Its essence is to establish the relationship between conceptualization, which includes the creation of identities, and the discursive point of view from which ideas are derived.

In accordance with the Critical Discourse Analysis methodology, linguistic and visual textual resources should be regarded as interrelated indicators of the struggle to establish a regime of truth. In view of this, the analysis should include revealing the role of verbal and visual texts in displacing certain discourses by others whose interpretations (verbal or nonverbal) pretend to be the only ones that are true.

The sociocultural approach in CDA

The sociocultural analysis is based on the postulate that the discourse and the social and cultural reality are mutually supportive of each other. The contest forms society and culture, and the contest itself forms them; they are interrelationship is dialectical. This means that every instance of language contributes to the production or transformation of society and culture, including power relations [9, p. 273].

N. Fairclough and R. Wodak distinguish three main areas of sociocultural and political life, which are defined by a discourse: ideas about the world (discourse is a representation of the world), social relations (discourse provides social positioning) and personal identity (discourse confers distinctive traits on a person). Further, any public discourse includes elements of a variety of discourses, the configuration of which is denoted by the concept of “order of discourse”.

The discourses, according to N. Fairclough and R. Wodak, are always related to other discourses, both those that came before and those that came after them simultaneously [9, p. 276]. Hence, the necessity of researching such a parameter of discourse as intertextuality.

Furthermore, studying any discourse, it is important to consider the body of historical knowledge that constitutes its context. In this regard, she developed a “discourse-historical method” aimed at revealing the “history” of each structural component of discourse. This method was first applied to the study of anti-Semitism in post-war Austria. By analyzing implicit prejudices and identifying codes and cues that can only be deciphered in the historical circumstances of the discourse context, Wodak and her colleagues in the Vienna Group (F. Menz, B. Matuszek, et al.) traced the formation of the stereotypical antisemitic image of the enemy, identifying the attitudes that make up racist discourse [24, p. 165-169]. Currently, the discursive-historical method is used by Wodak in analyzing the discursive construction of national identity, in particular, the Austrian identity [24, 2002].

The socio-cognitive approach in CDA

Political discourse, according to the socio-cognitive approach, is a specific representation of political structures, events, actors, groups, and processes. As a result, it defines political cognition as the coherence of individual and collective political dimensions through political discourse [3, p. 205]. Political discourse and political knowledge are linked by social and political memory, which consists of political knowledge, beliefs, values, and norms [3, p. 218]. Political knowledge, beliefs, and values, as well as constants and norms, are the main components [3, p. 218].

The majority of the works of T.A. van Dijk, the leading representative of the socio-cognitive approach, are concerned with the issues of the production of national prejudice and racism in media discourses, institutional discourses, and political elite discourses.

Van Dijk defines racism as a system of dominance and social inequality. We are dealing with racism when ‘whites’ as a group have more economic, political, social, or cultural power in society and abuse that power by limiting the rights of ‘non-whites.’ Power implies preferential access to control over irreplaceable social resources [5]. He interprets dominance as the abuse of power by one group over another, mani-

festing itself in various forms of discrimination and marginalisation of minorities on the one hand, and prejudice and stereotyped beliefs on the other, i.e. in ideological structures.

The media is one of the most powerful institutions for conveying racist discourse. People’s everyday perceptions of immigrants and minorities are typically based on information obtained from newspapers, television, and radio programmes rather than personal experience. Meanwhile, as van Dijk points out, the media rarely covers minorities’ everyday lives and problems and tends to ignore or gloss over their contributions to society’s culture and development, instead focusing on the offences and social and anti-social behaviour of members of “non-white” groups [5].

A thorough examination of discursive practises is impossible without first investigating their sociocognitive foundations. Individual and social perceptions that take the form of beliefs, prejudices, and ideologies are among the sociocognitive foundations of racist discourse.

Discrimination based on beliefs and prejudices is based on the opposition between those who belong to the group (we) and those who do not (they). The polarisation between us and others is reflected in texts and conversations that highlight the virtues of one group and the flaws of another. Such an approach can be seen overtly (for example, how “white” and “non-white” are described in textbooks) as well as through the use of specific pronouns and metaphors, sentence construction, and so on [6].

So, the supporters of the socio-semiotic approach to discourse analysis are convinced that the discourse is fundamentally ideological since it always expresses the strategy and position of the speaker. The discourse expresses the importance of and preference for certain ideas and values [14, p. 29]. Sociocultural discourse analysis is based on the notion that discourse and sociocultural cause each other; discourse shapes society and culture and is, itself, shaped by them: the relationship is dialectical [9, p. 273]. Within the framework of the sociocognitive approach, political discourse is seen as a mental representation of political structures, events, actors, groups, processes, and political consciousness – as a cognitive way of connecting the individual and collective aspects of policy through political discourse [3, p. 205].

However, critical discourse analysis is not only known for classic works; more and more contemporary works with suggestions on how to improve this method are appearing every day. Take a look at a modern study of Yunana Ahmed. According to him an analysis of political discourse in a postcolonial world, particularly in Africa, requires the incorporation of some decolonial methodologies. He offered the decolonial approach to political discourse focusing on the ways politics in a postcolonial context is imbricated in

the logic of coloniality. The decolonial approach was considered necessary rather than sufficient in interrogating the hegemonic structure of colonialism in Africa's political discourse. In his study, the author used critical discourse analysis situated within decolonial methodologies to analyze former President of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan's declaration-of-intent speech to seek re-election [25].

Actually, there are a lot of emerging studies based on a framework of Critical Discourse analysis. Each of them seems to be narrow and specific. At the same time, they are still not insufficient for modern challenges in the social field. Then it creates an extra demand for postmodern theory consideration.

The postmodern theory of discourse analysis

The authors of postmodernist PDA look not into certain texts, but into social processes through the prism of post-structuralist discourse theories. In this sense, it is about Foucault, Laclau, Mouff, Lacan, Torfing, Zhizhek, etc. They see PDA more as a type of political analysis based on discourse theory than as an analysis of a certain political discourse.

The most important parts of this method are:

- 1) Lack of interest in the linguistic study of discourse;
- 2) A broad interpretation of the concept of discourse and the consideration of all social practices without exception as discursive;
- 3) The interpretation of discourses as open, mobile and changeable formations that are in constant interaction with other discourses and are constantly competing for "meaning"; an interpretation of social antagonisms as collisions of discourses;
- 4) The treatment of politics as an articulation of meanings; a means of forming and structuring the social;
- 5) The notion that all images of reality are disguised by the concept of "objectivity", and are formed by the dominant discourses that have won the competition with alternative sign formations;
- 6) The idea of ideological concepts as a set of changeable signs that have different articulations and are denoted by the concept of myth;
- 7) The desire to combine in discourse analysis the concept of power by Foucault with the psychoanalysis of power by Lacan, yielding an approach to discourse as a unity of power and passion.

Postmodernism encourages a way of looking at the world that challenges what has come to be accepted as truth and knowledge. Poststructuralists always call into question how certain accepted facts and beliefs work to reinforce the dominance and power of particular actors within international relations.

Foucault was one of the most significant discourse analysts; he has been called the 'father of discourse'. He developed the post-structuralist way of thinking by combining discourse with power. Discourse, as defined

by Foucault, refers to ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and the relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning.

Laclau and Mouffe built on Foucault's ideas and made them better. They came up with a theoretical foundation for understanding postmodernist discourse. The authors used four analytical concepts in their sociological theory of discourse: discourse, articulation, moment, and element. They arranged these concepts in their scientific system as follows: "We will call articulation any practise of establishing relations between elements, in which, as a result of articulatory practise, the identity of the elements changes. All structural cohesion that arises as a result of articulatory practise, we will call discourse. We'll call the different ways that the sign can be held "moments." And we will call an element any distinction that is not articulated in the discourse". Thus, through these concepts, Laclau and Mouffe demonstrated the conventionality of any discourse. At the same time, a discourse's nodal points allow it to form and become temporarily fixed internally. A nodal point is a privileged sign around which other signs are ordered and take on their meaning. Thus, their concept of discourse encompasses not only language but everything social. In their theory, the linguistic structure of meaning is identical to social practices and social activities. Social actions acquire their meaning through relationships to other actions. At the same time, all our knowledge and practices are mediated by systems of meanings. Our ideas about reality, society, and our own identity are constructed by a system of meanings in the structures of discourse.

The five key arguments of Laclau and Mouffe are:

- 1) All social practices occur in the context of historically specific discourses, which can be thought of as relational systems of meaning.
- 2) Discourse is built in and through hegemonic struggles that aim to establish political and moral-intellectual leadership through the expression of meaning and identity.
- 3) The hegemonic articulation of meaning and identity is intimately connected to the construction of social antagonism, which involves the exclusion of a threatening Otherness that keeps the discursive system stable and stops it from closing down completely.
- 4) A stable hegemonic discourse falls apart when new incidents occur that it can't explain, represent, or control in some other way.
- 5) The dislocation of the discursive structure means that the subject is always a split subject that might try to rebuild a full identity through acts of identification [22, p. 28].

Let's pay attention to the contemporary study of Khan, T. H., and MacEachen E. In their paper, the authors consider the opportunities provided to qual-

ity researchers at the Foucauldian Discourse Analysis, which allow us to understand the “complexity” of human experience, ranging from basic human communication to internal functioning systems of power relations, and which give us a version of the truth or reality about the problems faced by researchers. The authors proposed to develop and promote robust analytics capable of capturing the important and implicit components/assumptions of this complexity. According to the article, the Foucauldian Discourse Analysis may be a fairer analytic than the social constructionist analytic, as it analyzes not only what participants said, but how they said it, considering not only how they interpret their experience, but also how their experience reproduces and/or disrupts the dominant discourses around the issues under study. Although the Foucauldian Discourse Analysis plays a key role in problematizing intellectual traditions, it has some drawbacks in that it is more concerned with theory than method [13].

But also authors admitted that the lack of a clear methodology to follow is a major limitation for new researchers. In the end, the authors came to the conclusion that because the Foucauldian Discourse Analysis ideas are full of arcane philosophy, it can be difficult for beginning researchers to apply these concepts to qualitative data analysis.

There is some confusion regarding the Foucauldian statement and how it can be operationalized to identify discourse, according to Karlsen H. He demonstrated, however, that this could be done by considering Foucault’s distinction between statement (*énoncé*) and enunciation (*énonciation*). In almost 7,000 books digitized by the Norwegian National Library, he demonstrated how discourse on women in Western countries before the first wave of the women’s movement could be identified. Eventually, he concluded that digitized Foucauldian discourse analysis is possible, using a combination of digital methodology and close reading [12].

Conclusion. We have described the two approaches briefly here. Each has its own set of benefits and drawbacks. But which approach is better for future research?

Most discourse analysts use the language tradition of CDA in their research on politics. They have been recognized for their specific results as a result of working with specific texts. Unlike them, we regard such an approach as flawed. It still struggles with gathering massive amounts of discursive information, which prevents us from getting answers to the most important political questions. In other words, we consider CDA to be too narrow for political analysis and to be more linguistic than social in nature.

Postmodern theories, on the other hand, appear to be comprehensive but overly theoretical. Such theories provide us with a unique perspective. We believe that their accomplishments can be

applied to modern practice. Despite the lack of a specific methodology and toolkit, it can examine social phenomena more thoroughly than critical discourse analysis. Furthermore, it is an approach that we believe can provide new laws and patterns to social science. Finally, we see the possibility of incorporating IT advances into the humanities, which will likely eliminate deep relativism and fill the social sciences with objective knowledge. It is a matter of extrapolating cybernetics and programming principles, data science, and blockchain technology into the sociopolitical domain. This fusion appears to be possible thanks to Foucault’s postmodern theory of discourse analysis, which has been developed by his followers. Eventually, the theory may be able to bridge the gap between what appear to be incompatible disciplines, the natural and social sciences.

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Перспективи політичного дискурс-аналізу: перегляд теорії

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Стаття присвячена опису класичних підходів до розуміння політичного дискурс-аналізу як одного з найперспективніших методів загального політичного аналізу. У статті розглядаються як гілки критичного дискурс-аналізу, запропонованого Г. Кресом та Л. Чоуліаракі (соціо-семантичний підхід), Н. Ферклоу та Р. Водак (соціокультурний підхід) та Т. Ван Дейком (соціокогнітивний підхід), так і постмодерна теорія дискурс-аналізу, запропонована М. Фуко і розвинута його послідовниками, зокрема Е. Лакло та Ш. Муфф. Метою статті є аналіз даних підходів та їх порівняння для подальшого розвитку політичного дискурс аналізу.

Актуальність статті зумовлена низкою чинників. По-перше, сучасні методи дослідження політичної реальності зазнають кризи, вони стають все менш ефективними для осягнення суспільних процесів нашого часу, тож справедливо, що вони мають бути переглянуті та удосконалені. По-друге, з кожним днем зростає популярність міждисциплінарних методів досліджень, а політичний дискурс аналіз вважається недостатньо дослідженим у соціальних науках феноменом, нарешті може бути замінена на мову, тобто цеглинки, з яких ця сама свідомість складається і завдяки яким може функціонувати в соціальному просторі. Такий підхід дає нам змогу нівелювати фізико-біологічні прояви свідомості на користь соціальних, що дозволяє максимально точно інтерпретувати соціально-політичну дійсність сучасності та передбачувати майбутні зміни.

У результаті, ми визначаємо політичний дискурс-аналіз як різновид загального політичного аналізу, що базується на постмодерністській теорії дискурсу. Ми переконані, що такий вид аналізу має найбільші перспективи для дослідження таких суспільних процесів і соціальних відносин, як влада, конфлікти, нерівність, питання політичної ідентичності тощо.

Дана стаття буде цікавою як для тих, хто займається політичним дискурс аналізом та розвиває його, так і для інших науковців, хто досліджує філософію науки, методологію, політичну психологію, кількісні та якісні методи дослідження у соціальних науках.

Ключові слова: дискурс, політичний дискурс-аналіз, критичний дискурс-аналіз, постмодерна теорія дискурсу, методологія.