Critical Metaphor Analysis of Teacher Talk Based on Cognitive Frame

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Abstract: The discussion in this paper is organized around "discourse analysis", the subject that comes from linguistics and has been developed into academic sub-fields like "Critical Discourse Analysis" and "Critical Metaphor Analysis". Though a great body of researches are conducted on teacher discourse, saying "teacher talk", there remains an unsolved question why teacher talk tends to dominate classroom power relationship, which poses a threat to teacher-student interaction. According to this article, it is less a matter of teaching manner than that of teaching cognition, which is demonstrated from five parts. First, the development of discourse analysis is provided; Second, the essence of critical metaphor analysis is discussed; Third, the theoretical foundation of critical metaphor analysis is constructed; Fourth, ways of checking teacher talk are suggested; Lastly, it culminates in a tentative conclusion that cognitive frame might serve as the theoretical paradigm for critical metaphor analysis of teacher talk, which hopefully can provide teaching staffs with any reference for better check of classroom dynamics.

Keywords: discourse analysis; critical metaphor analysis; teacher talk; cognitive frame

1. Introduction

The early 20th century witnessed a vigorous ontological revolution in postmodernism, where linguists sought to explore the essence of language and discourse. The first mention of "discourse" dates back to 1930s when J.R.Firth discusses its meanings in context. It is Halliday's Systemic-functional Grammar (SFG) that provides the very theoretical basis. Following up is Zellig Harris who gives out a paper in *Language* and leads in mainstream discourse analysis (DA). Since then, Discourse Analysis, Social Representations and Social Identity had been seen as "three-in-hand" in European social psychology. The 1970s was greeted with a cognitive turn, represented by Fowler and Kress who develop the socio-cognitive approach to discourse analysis. Subsequently, Fairclough[1] proposes "Critical Discourse Analysis" (CDA), later further extended by Wodak and van Dijk, having historical significance. The latest progress is Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA).

Generally speaking, "discourse" refers to spoken or written language patterns that are more extended and coherent than a simple sentence. When it comes to critical discourse analysis, the "critical" here does not mean criticism or negativity, but conveys dialectical and neutral meanings that judge the ways discourse produces or governs social power relation. In view of van Dijk, the aim of CDA is an in-depth exploration of "power abuse" such as dominance and inequality. Nevertheless, critical discourse analysis was ever challenged by Martin[2], who held the principle of "ideal speech situation" in Frankfurt School of Philosophy and then put forward the theory of Positive Discourse Analysis. Still, he made it clear that there basically exists no absolute boundary between positive discourse and critical one. Anyway, critical discourse is characterized by "dialecticism" that reflects social power relationship.

Discourse analysis has been growing and evolving into multi-disciplines, which inevitably generates the problem of incompatibility among language, cognition and social relations. Wodak considers this as a "mediation problem". To the best of the author's knowledge, there is not yet a fully fledged model that works it out. Even the problem is more than obvious in teacher talk. Foreign study on teacher talk was driven by the principle of Communicative Language Teaching in late 20th century. Domestic researches fashioned it in the early 21th century when "Life Class" sprung. While there is no constructive answer provided for the mediation problem related to teacher talk, which requires an alternative criteria working on it. The author assumed critical metaphor analysis might come in handy.

2. The essence of Critical Metaphor Analysis

The concept of "metaphor" is from rhetoric philosophy in ancient Greece. According to Goffman's Framing Theory, metaphor is an analytical framework that enriches and diversifies human experience. On one hand, metaphor reveals speakers' intentions reflected upon social reality. On the other hand, experience that regulates human thought is manifested through metaphor presented in discourse. To be brief, metaphor is characterized by cognition.

Compared to traditional Conversational Analysts, critical discourse analysis is operated at a "semiotic" level, or "meaning negotiation". Studies on meaning negotiation have been conducted for decades through, few connects it to mediation problem in classroom context, let alone to solve it. At this point, critical metaphor analysis is supposed to fill this gap.

3. Theoretical Foundation of Critical Metaphor Analysis

We having discussed the pertinence between metaphor and cognition, a key issue, however, left unchecked is the extent to which metaphor is associated with cognitive frame. "Frame" is first mentioned by Gregory Bateson in 1955. In Goffman's *Frame Analysis*, frame refers to a dynamic process where cognitive experience is involved. Then Fillmore formulates the Commercial Event Frame Model and develops the notion of "cognitive frame", explaining the understanding of language is a process in which speakers mentally create a frame world via enriching contextual experience. Consequently, we are convinced that identification and evaluation of metaphor can be realized through the cognitive-frame approach.

3.1 Ideology of cognitive frame

Irrespective of if it is in ontological philosophy or epistemological philosophy, discourse is characterized by human ideology, against which Wodak develops the "socio-cognitive model" to verify a triangular relation among discourse, social structure and cognition. She concludes social power relation is mainly reflected upon judgement and evaluation of ideology. And vice versa, ideology is the direct reflection of human experience on social power relations. If language is the primary means of control on power, then the most potent effect of metaphor is "power of evaluation". In this way, cognitive frame is treated as an ideological "weapon" that governs power relations, by which teacher talk is mostly featured.

3.2 Conceptualization of cognitive frame

According to Lakoff's Conceptual Metaphor Theory, conceptualization refers to an automatic and unconscious mechanism that metaphor converts from inferential language to underlying thought. In short, metaphor is basically characterized by conceptualization. Hart supports to say ideological reproduction is a conceptual process where language evokes cognition. On one hand, frame-based knowledge carries different evaluative connections or textual entailment, which enables metaphorical connotation to be exerted. On the other hand, framing strategies are presented when human experience is combined with "gestalts" in different discourse situation. It follows that conceptualization of metaphor requires re-contextualizing of speakers' cognitive frame.

4. Meaning negotiation in teacher talk

"Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains". Genuine communication is characterized by uneven distribution of information shared in a common community, namely "negotiation for meaning". While traditionally, teachers are criticized by taking up excessive teacher talk time (TTT), which is reflected upon the mediation problem. Indeed, it requires a certain level of sacrifice on teachers' part. But this goal must not be realized at the cost of simply reducing teacher talk time since it serves as the very source of knowledge input for learners.

Michel Foucault indicates in his Power Discourse Theory that real power does not come into force without discourse, nor is essential meaning or absolute truth found in deep discourse structure. A wise teacher wouldn't follow a rigid "initiation- response-feedback (IRF)" discourse chain. Instead, keen awareness and soft measures are required when raising questions, correcting errors and giving feedback. To this end, appropriate metaphor delivery is demanded for reducing teacher talk time to a relatively

favorable extent, which may facilitate meaning negotiation with learners.

5. Conclusion and discussion

From what has been discussed above, it bears that critical metaphor analysis of teacher talk based on cognitive frame is theoretically suitable for identification and evaluation of classroom power relation. In specific, language poses an influence in power relation only if a conditional or causal connection exists between ideology that is attached to cognitive frame and mental conceptualization that governs the process of metaphorical expression. Especially, it is unreasonable by putting huge emphasis on metaphor without taking into account speakers' cognition.

Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this article to demonstrate how critical metaphor analysis works on cognitive frame. Though Pragglejaz Group implements a "metaphor identification procedure", he indeed acknowledged the complexity and non-reality. Anyway, larger-scale studies should get exposed to this field in future, especially for treating the mediation problems in teaching platform.

References

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