

Chapter 20

Effectiveness of Critical Discourse Analysis to Solve Constrained Employment Relations: Application Based Study on Two Indian Organizations

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ABSTRACT

In employment relationship, power is a dominant construct. Power per se can have adverse effect on institutional employment, which even culminates to conflict and resistance to change. When organizations are constrained by the negativity of workers' power it is difficult to bring order, and even to offer the right solution for lack of problem identification. This book chapter explains the process of interventions in two organizations to solve the problem of constrained employment relations, pertaining to workers' redeployment subsequent to technological change. The author in this case played the role of an interventionist and using primarily the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) could evolve a solution, which ultimately could redeploy most of the erring workmen in restructured job positions, even outside their job family. The book chapter is unique in application of CDA in specific issues pertaining to constrained employment relations. The chapter at the end also discusses on implications for practice of CDA in organizational research, particularly to resolve conflict in employment relations. However, the paper has the inherent limitations as the results are very much organization specific.

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INTRODUCTION

Research in human resource management (HRM) mostly follows a normative approach presumably for fear of its non-acceptance by the scholars (Bhattacharyya, 2007). Using critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a tool to understand the power constructs in HRM was earlier focused through case analysis by Francis (2006). But Francis's analysis was more on a broader perspective of generic human resource management practices, than to offer an issue based solution to the problem of constraining employment relations. It could only map the experience of managers in organizational change. Like HRM, CDA was also applied to human resource development (HRD), to understand how it can contribute to theorizing the HRD functions in organizations (Lawless *et al.* 2011). In this case again, the focus was more in studying the influence of CDA on HRD practices. The social and conversational dimensions of CDA, both for the HRM and HRD have been recognized in series of other researches (Pavlica *et al.*, 1998; Rigg *et al.*, 2007; Holman and Thorpe, 2003). Similarly, Patrizia, *et al.* (2003) studied diversity percepts of HR managers through interview using CDA. Use of CDA for organizational studies has also been legitimized by Leitch and Palmer (2010). Their assumptions, however, restrict its use in the 'analysis of texts in context'. Chouliaraki and Fairclough (2010) also advocated its use with a robust methodology. Perhaps the more powerful argument on application of CDA in organizational research, in recent years, can be credited to Vandellannoitte (2011) for viewing organization as a dynamic 'negotiated order through power knowledge relationships.'

Fairclough's approach (1995) to CDA recognizes its application in human resource management (HRM). Fairclough (2005) also conceded the importance of CDA in organizational research, more specifically in organizational change. CDA has also been recognized as effective tool for the analysis of power relations (Watson 1995, 2004). Again Fairclough (2001) and Wodak (2005) legitimized the use of CDA resembling organizations like 'political site' where people have conflicting interests. Fairclough's three dimensions of CDA, i.e. the linguistic forms, social relations, and subject positions are considered by many scholars as overlapping (Francis, 2006). Through the analysis of linguistic forms of discourses we can take many HR related decisions, like; recruitment, coaching, and mentoring. Similarly discourses on social relations and subject positions also related to many HR decisions, say harmonizing the problem of industrial relations. Wodak (1996) contended that CDA is effective to analyze both the transparent and opaque structural relationships that encompass dominance, discrimination, power and control, manifested through language. Our instance research being focuses on the power dynamics of workmen to refute the management's policy of redeployment, use of CDA can be legitimized from the methodological perspectives.

However, all these studies could only emphasize on the contextual analysis of the texts. In our instance case, this was not possible. Taking clue from the Indian psycho-philosophy, which emphasized on the learning through *shruti* and *smriti* (Bhattacharyya, 2001), the present study emphasized on the use of CDA on the unstructured verbal discourses of the workmen to map their issues of discontentment on redeployment subsequent to technological change decisions. *Shruti* is what is heard directly. *Smriti* is memorization of what is heard.

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