

Fifties Stamps discourse from the Applied Semantics Perspective Based on Van Leeuwen Critical Discourse Analysis Approach

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Abstract

Critical discourse analysis is a new branch of discourse analysis that addresses the cause and justification of contents and, in other words, the disclosure of information. Critical discourse analysis reveals the relationship among language, power and ideology through discovering discursive structures or features. Analyzing the discursive features of texts (stamps), the author intends to link them to the methods of representation of actors to reach hidden messages in texts and show that the methods of representation of actors are different, depending on stamp producers' attitudes, and that stamps are directional. Text production, including image, seems to be a discourse, a social act. The effective use of language means that ideological constructions are indirectly presented to listeners through language. To realize this, language and discourse should include levels and layers. Language and discourse include ideology and the relations of power and domination at lower levels, and include discourse structures and events at higher levels. The present research aims to discover the hidden layers of stamp meanings within the framework of critical discourse analysis. Analyzing visual and written texts, the author explores how stamps portray language as evident, natural and inevitable culture and examine its different discourse, social and cultural functions. According to Fairclough (1989), critical discourse analysis represents communications kept hidden from the eyes of people in society. In critical discourse analysis, there is a tendency towards image analysis, as if images are linguistic texts. Van Leeuwen (1996) tried to create a theory and method to analyze multi-modal texts, which use different semiotic systems like language, image, or voice. Using elements, symbols and images, the discourse system of stamps is able to reproduce cultural and national identities in line with governments' political, cultural, and social beliefs, and stamps use both visual and written layers to represent historical memory for one's audiences. In fact,

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a stamp is a record of an event or presence that always persists over time and introduces a trace of represented memory of history. In the research, utilizing the Van Leeuwen pattern and analyzing stamps of the 50's, the author intends to show that the writing style and ideology of text (stamp) designers and producers are represented within the discursive structures, and both interact closely .

The main research questions include:

- How the discourse system of stamps can represent national identity process based on cultural and historical elements?
- What is the relationship between structural and visual elements and hidden power?

The research methodology is from structure to content, which is reached by half a look at social semiotic image analysis from the point view of Kress and Van Leeuwen. In the research, for the analysis Van Leeuwen's socio-semantic pattern is used. This pattern utilizes two main mechanisms, which are exclusion and inclusion, to represent social actors in a socio-semantic approach favorable by Van Leeuwen. In the research, purposive sampling was used. Therefore, 78 samples (39 stamps before the Revolution and 39 stamps after the Revolution) from stamps of the 50's were analyzed by Van Leeuwen's socio-semantic features qualitatively and quantitatively. It should be noted that the results obtained are generalized within the seventy-eight selected stamps, but not in general population, because giving a definitive answer to the research questions requires a very large sample and further research. In order to further clarify the first question, we checked the selected stamps of the 50s comparatively, based on the Van Leeuwen pattern from a socio-semantic perspective (according to discursive features), and found that the choice of images used in the stamps greatly depends on the rule based on which stamps had been published and are tools of transferring information from one generation to another. This is because using elements, symbols and images, the discourse system of stamps is capable of reproducing cultural and national identities in line with the political, cultural and social beliefs of governments. The majority of political, social, and cultural thoughts hidden in the heart of images are transferred through suppression and backgrounding features to their audience. Discourse features can be linguistic or socio-semantic, but by examining the images and the results obtained, it can be said that all the socio-semantic features do not necessarily have formal linguistic representations. An important point on socio-semantic features is that efficiency of socio-semantic features should be more in representing different discourse layers and in revealing the hidden meaning of the text .

With regard to the second question, it can be said that the relationship between structural and visual elements in the stamp with power discourse varies according to statemen's state functions, and the ideology governing the minds of the statesmen is reflected in the texts (stamps) by using specific discursive features, such as personalization, passivation, backgrounding, suppression, and other Van Leeuwen's discursive features. In fact, there is a bilateral relationship between the discursive features and ideology. For this purpose, looking at the total findings from the statistical analyses, it has been found that some discursive features, such as backgrounding, suppression, collectivization, utterance autonomization, indetermination, passivation, differentiation and instrumentalization, have a higher frequency in the texts; while some socio-semantic features, such as individualization, functionalization, activation, association, personalization,

nomination, identification and spatialization, have a lower frequency. The motivation for the present research is to raise awareness and strengthen critical thinking, since one can consider critical discourse analysis as one of the most useful tools to examine texts in order to track the ideologies dominated on them. Van Leeuwen's pattern of social actors is an effective pattern to do research in this area. In the authors' view, such research can be used in the following organizations and institutions: The Organization for Educational Research and Planning of the Ministry of Education, International Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Deputy for Information and News Unit of IRIB, Deputy for Research of Universities (by holding conferences) (Disclosure: Raising university academic degree and rank, print and publication of educational book; Suppression: Income for university), Iranian Psychological Association, etc.

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