



Turning Adversities into Opportunities: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Muniba Mazari's Inspirational Speech

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Abstract

This study aims to analyse Muniba Mazari's selected TEDx speech from the perspective of critical discourse analysis to reveal her motivational stance on turning the adversities of life into opportunities. Mazari's inspirational speech is primarily gender specific, and she discusses the physical and psychological trauma she experienced during her life struggle against the backdrop of Pakistan's sociopolitical context. Muniba Mazari, the Iron Lady of Pakistan, is the representative of Pakistani women on various national and international platforms. This research highlights the way the speaker, despite initially being the object of suppression and later abandoned by her husband, has positioned herself in her own words to portray a positive image of a woman who is a leading figure in the public sphere, who is not inferior to men, and who is also performing her duties responsibly in the domestic sector. This speech also reveals a beautiful face of society, in which she was treated with excessive care and attention by male members of her family while fighting physical and psychological injuries. Fairclough's (1989) three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis is used to study how the selected speech contributes to revealing the gender ideologies of Pakistani society and the persuasive techniques underlying the speech to inspire people on a broader level. This critical discourse approach is combined with Halliday's textual analysis model to address the textual dimensions of the speech.

Keywords: CDA, Muniba Mazari's inspirational speech, representation of gender, Fairclough's (1989) three-dimensional model

1. Introduction

This study is a critical investigation of women's empowerment, gender ideology, gender portrayal, and the recreation of the image of people who are somehow disabled, which is discursively reinforced in Muniba Mazari's TEDx speech "Turning Adversity into Opportunity." The study focuses on the issue of gender identity in different situations narrated in the selected text, in which the female speaker projects herself. This chapter is about the critical discourse analysis and the introduction of the speaker and her speech, which are followed by the research questions and significance of the present study. The chapter mentions the delimitation of the present study at the end.

Muniba Mazari is a 35-year-old Pakistani artist, activist, inspirational speaker, singer, and TV host. She was born to a Baloch family on March 3, 1987, in the city of Rahim Yar Khan, Punjab, Pakistan. She got a bachelor's in fine arts. She has been tragically confined to a wheelchair since 2007, when she was involved in a terrible car accident that changed her life forever. She is the first Pakistani model in a wheelchair. She was dubbed "the iron lady of Pakistan" during a TEDx talk in Malaysia in 2017. In 2015, Muniba Mazari was also appointed as the representative of Pakistani women at the UN to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. She works actively to promote awareness about gender discrimination and child violence. In 2015, the BBC featured her on its list of 100 women. She inspires people to become freethinkers and decision-makers for the benefit of humanity.

1.1 Discourse and Discourse Analysis

The objective of critical discourse analysis is to disentangle the implicit ideologies of texts. This study focuses on disclosing the gender ideologies and power of the text that recreates the images about handicaps in the selected speech by employing Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA. Fairclough (1995) argued that the aim of CDA is:

"to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts and (b) wider social structures, relations and processes, to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggle over power, and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony" (p. 132).

Critical discourse analysis helps to expose the implied ideas of which people are explicitly unaware (Fairclough, 1989). Critical Discourse Analysis probes into the "hidden determinants" and "hidden effects" in the sociocultural system enclosed in narratives and discourses (Fairclough, 2011, p. 4). The relationship among language, ideology, and identity is explained with the help of critical studies of discourse analysis. Fairclough is one of the proponents of critical discourse analysis. Fairclough (1995) proposed a model of discourse analysis that includes three layers of discourse: description, interpretation, and explanation. This model allows for simultaneous critical examination of text at three major levels. In order to elaborate discourse, any text, spoken, written, audio, or visual, can be viewed by "(i) descriptions of structural components, spoken or written, (ii) as discourse practice (text production and text interpretation), and (iii) as sociocultural practice" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 97).



This research is guided by Fairclough's (1989) model of discourse. Fairclough (1992) uses the term "discourse" to refer to the social events being presented by any persona, in real life or in fictional stories. An individual can present his or her thoughts in the social context through meaning-making in the form of a discourse. According to Fairclough (1989), discourse is a process of creating and forming meanings. This power of discourse is employed for the formation of implicit ideas with the help of language. Brown (1995) explained that language is the tool through which those meanings are encoded for a specific hidden purpose. He stressed that in meaning formation in a sociocultural context, every single item of language, sentence form, and vocabulary is valuable to highlight the social evils. Critical discourse analysts regard discourse as a method of extracting meaning from various social events and contexts.

The critical study of such discourse or language requires interpretations from different perspectives, not limited to the author's or speaker's intentions. The subject matter of critical discourse analysis is the investigation of written text or spoken language to disclose hidden meanings through word formation. Critical Discourse Analysis has become a broad field that attempts to find meaning from multiple angles. There is no single meaning of any text for discourse analysts. The meanings are always somewhere beyond the author's intentions. That is why researchers in this modern field of critical inquiry attempt to interpret the text using objective procedures in order to interpret the true facts beneath.

1.2 Problem Statement

Women were being neglected in the past, and still in some societies, women are being oppressed and disregarded, especially those who are struggling with physical disabilities or psychological distress. They are considered the epitome of misery and grief. There is a need to motivate such masses to empower them and inculcate in them the thought of never giving up.

1.3 Research Objectives

The objective of this research is:

1. To explore the textual feature of speech through Fairclough 3D model
2. To investigate the discourse to expose the social ideologies of gender.
3. To explore a positive image of Pakistani women who are fulfilling their social and domestic duties remarkably despite of facing hurdles in life.

1.4 Research Questions

1. How Muniba Mazari's speech became a voice to reconstruct the image of the women and crippled persons who, however are considered as an epitome of misery and grief?
2. What role Muniba Mazari's speech does play in portraying a positive image of Pakistani women who are fulfilling their social and domestic duties remarkably?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study reveals that strong discourses, such as Muniba Mazari's motivational speech, can play a significant role in changing people's perceptions that a disabled person is a misfit in society and cannot progress in life without relying on others. Furthermore, the study contributes to the empowerment of Pakistani women by drawing attention to the problems they face in society. This study showcases the fact that women are capable enough to face the adversities of their lives and turn them into opportunities on their own. This research argues that Pakistani women can play their social roles perfectly in public and domestic spheres. As this analysis is being carried out through Fairclough's model of CDA, it will contribute significantly to the research in the field of CDA. It will bridge the existing gap as identified in the literature review and be useful to researchers and scholars for further research in this field.

2. Literature Review

This section discusses the literature related to the theoretical framework of the research and the research done in this field.

2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a discursive theory used for social analysis in the social sciences. The sociocultural and political issues and social relations, including power and ethnic and gender relations (ethnic inequality, discrimination, gender inequality, oppression, sexism, racism, and so on) in a literary text or speech, are studied with the help of critical discourse analysis. As a multifunctional approach (interdisciplinary), critical discourse analysis focuses on the study of social evils. Fairclough's (1989) three-dimensional approach investigates social evils through linguistic tools. Three levels of critical discourse analysis can be explained as follows:

2.2 Description

Description is the first stage of analysis in Fairclough's three-dimensional model (1989). It centres on the form of text and its textual features. At this stage, discourse is dissected into its component parts, and each component of language is studied minutely so as to provide the experiential value of the text. This description of the structural components of any text, whether linguistic, audio-visual, or pictorial, provides the base material for the later interpretations and explanations.

For the analysis of linguistic text, the description stage includes the study of syntactic features of text and relational values of expression. It concentrates on the description of values and diversities of textual constituents such as synonyms, hyponyms, antonyms, and other meaning relations to disclose how a text (discourse) is shaped and emphasized. This stage of critical discourse analysis also works to bring out the importance of different grammatical mechanisms, the voice of the sentence, modality, and implicit uses of language such as similes, metaphors, symbolism, and any other figures of speech. Moreover, it studies the use of formal or informal features of language in the given context.

2.3 Level of Interpretation

According to Fairclough (1989), we have various levels of interpretation in a text, including textual interpretation, intertextual interpretation, and situational interpretation. The level of text interpretation is concerned with phonology, syntax, vocabulary, morphological features, and phonetic "voices." Bakhtin (1981) defines "voices" as spoken or textual features of characters or any individual that represent individual consciousness. Moreover, Blommaert (2008) indicates that "voice" is socially connected with textual interpretation. In addition to Bakhtin's (1981) definition, it is said that one voice represents several other voices in textual interpretation.

2.4 Level of Context Interpretation

This level is associated with the explanation of the text and its features. It provides background and foregrounding information for the explanation of the text, which is helpful to understand the basic ideology behind the text and the author's intention. In Fairclough's "Language and Power" (1989), there are four levels of context-based interpretation, i.e., historical, situational, inter-discursive, and inter-

textual. In situational context, the analysts prefer and take into account different situations, situational reasons, features, and causes of the text. It also serves as the foundation for the text or what is said before the textual background.

2.5 Inter- Textual Interpretation

According to Fairclough (1995), inter-textual analysis is a boundary between discourse and text, and discourse practise is included in the analytical framework. The inter-textual analysis focuses on the text as a discourse practise (social context, social meaning). In addition to Fairclough (1995), the linguistic analysis is more descriptive in nature, whereas the inter-textual analysis is more interpretative in nature. Fairclough (1992) asserts that inter-textual analysis is “basically the property texts have of being full of snatches of other text, which may be explicitly demarcated or merged in, and which the text may assimilate, contradict, ironically evoke, and so forth” (p. 84).

2.6 Explanation

In this stage of explanation, discourse is evaluated and studied in a special situational context for the actual cause within which it is formatted and constructed. Social formation and the social structure of discourse can be vigorously discussed with various lenses and perspectives, depending on social determination. In this stage, discourse is analysed from different perspectives. This social determination focuses on discourse and has a great effect on text (discourse). Fairclough (1989) addresses the fact that comprehending and exploring discourse necessitates a variety of institutional, situational, and social approaches.

Mazhar (2003), in his “Friday Times of Pakistan,” has reported that in most of the rural areas of Sindh, women tied their daughters to the Holy Quran. He highlights an incident that was reported after a young girl was sentenced to marry the Holy Quran and stay tied to it forever. The purpose of such marriages is to keep the properties and lands undivided. This incident shows the patriarchal power and dominance of a society, which Muniba Mazari is also a part of, where religion is used to manipulate women. She also faced numerous challenges as a woman in such a complex patriarchal society as rural Balochistan. Hence, she attempts to speak out and be a voice for such oppressed women. The famous Pakistani contemporary feminist writer Sidhwa also deals with religion in her 2010 novel “Cracking India.” The religious family is trying to restore their religious honour and save their lives from their degrading position in society. The novel mainly deals with the exploitation and social issues in Pakistani society, as Mazari was exposed to the complex nature of modern and typical society when she was abandoned all alone. This novel presents a female’s life, which is exposed to the cruel systems of modern societies. Mazari and Sidhwa deal with the female world and identity, race, religion, and ethnic issues in different contexts. Similarly, in “Ice Candy Man” (2000), the character of Lenny shows the religious struggle throughout the entire novel, like Peri in “Three Daughters of Eve” (2017).

Lazar (2007) proclaims that gender issues and the struggle to pull through and attempt to survive in a social context provide the ideological construction of female life. He makes an effort to highlight female perspectives in the discourses.

Sadeghi and Ghorbani (2015) analysed Cyrus’s charter and his will using Fairclough’s model. The results show that Cyrus is the first human rights activist. Contemporary ethnic and religious conflicts can be resolved by considering his charter. They analysed Cyrus’ charter at the syntactical level to study the interaction of language, power, and ideology.

Kazemi and Dalae (2017) studied Zoya Pirzada's two novels using Fairclough's three-dimensional model to reveal how ideology and patriarchal power affect the novel's female characters.

Furthermore, Sipra and Rashid (2013) contend that social, cultural, and political inequalities underlie the text of Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream.” They have applied Fairclough’s version of CDA. This speech as a spoken discourse is analysed in a socio-political context, and it depicts the ideology of a powerful leader through linguistic choices in his speech.

Amer (2017) has argued that news reports are influenced by political orientation and ideology. He researched four major newspapers published during the Gaza War of 2008–2009 and discovered implicit ideology by applying Fairclough’s model of CDA. Vahid (2012) proclaims that advertisements are influenced by power structures. He studied six different advertisements by applying Fairclough’s and Kress and Van Leeuwen’s models. He investigated the techniques and tactics used by the companies to increase their sales through advertisements. He asserts that producers can alter the behaviour of the consumer through power and ideology.

Similarly, Weiwei and Weihua (2015) state that images can be constructed by purposefully using linguistic tools. They studied how a negative image of China was constructed by Western media through reporting on the “China Bullet Train Crash.” It is found that all sorts of discourses are affected by ideology, and media reports are part of discursive social practice. These reports were also analysed by employing Fairclough’s model of CDA to investigate the Western media reports, revealing the relationship between language, power, and ideology.

Al Haq and Al Sleibi (2015) analysed three speeches of King Abdullah II with the help of the CDA with reference to Fairclough’s model. They studied the speech based on four persuasive strategies: creativity, reference, intertextuality, and circumlocution. This study reveals that his speeches are the foundation of his thoughts and point of view on region and prestige. The study aims at discovering ideologies and political strategies in his speeches, which he uses as a tool to achieve political objectives.

Awan and Yahya (2016) critically analysed “Twilight in Delhi” by Ahmed Ali. They focused on the implicit cultural ideologies that separate the East from the West. This study also suggests that CDA can be applied to any kind of text, including novels. Awan and Yahya are of the view that critical discourse analysis can reveal cultural differences and how society can be affected by culture, norms, and traditions. This research is carried out by employing Fairclough’s model as an analytical tool, and cultural ideologies are examined on the three levels of CDA given by Fairclough (1989).

Kiren and Awan (2017) discovered the position of women in English society by critically analysing Jane Austin’s *Pride and Prejudice*. This study focuses on the issues that women faced in the 18th and 19th centuries. The study concludes that Jane Austin consorts with feminists and stimulates the freedom of women.

Sichani and Hadian (2015) studied the ideological differences in the novel “Coming Up for Air (1939)” by George Orwell. They also investigated its two translations in Persian, by Roshanfekar (1390) and Saeednia (1372). They concluded that the ideologies are linguistically encoded and that there is no difference in ideologies between the original text and its Persian translation. They examined the work by taking Fairclough’s model into account. Turhan and Okan (2017) also studied Turkish bank TV advertisements through the same model. They argued that researchers should critically analyse how advertisements can manipulate people's ideologies.

Briones (2017) investigates the power relationship between the Philippines' government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) by analysing two online articles about the “Mamasapano” incident in the Philippines. He investigated the facts using Fairclough's CDA model parameters.

Sheikh, Bughio and Kadri (2015) examine the propagation of specific social attitudes and ideologies through linguistic choices in advertisements. It is argued that the construction of images of male and female in the advertisement demonstrates an implicit ideology of

their social statuses and power relations between the two genders. The findings depict that advertisements tend to build up the conventional concepts of patriarchy, gender bias, inequality, and discrimination.

3. Research Methodology

This study uses the qualitative methods of investigation to gain in-depth information about the speech. The research data for Muniba Mazari's speech is retrieved from an online source; she delivered it in November 2014 at a TEDx programme held in Islamabad. The speech is transcribed into text form for the purpose of performing critical discourse analysis. The current researcher employs Fairclough's (1989) analytical framework to analyse the speech as a communicative event (Fairclough, 1995, p. 57). This theoretical framework investigates the text at three levels. At the first level, it studies the formal features of the text; the text is studied as a discursive practice; and lastly, it is explained as a sociocultural practice. The data is classified into different lexico-grammatical categories to analyse the speech extracts at the textual level. This critical discourse approach is combined with Halliday's textual analysis model to address the textual dimensions of the speech.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Extract 1

Behind every inspirational picture there is untold story of constant pain, persistent effort and determination. There are some people in the world who fight an unseen battle within themselves 24/7 with a big smile on their face. They never cry. They never crib. They never whine. I call such people warriors because these people know the art of living life and their way better than those people who just exist in the world.

4.1.1 Textual Analysis (Description)

4.1.1.1 Vocabulary

This is the opening paragraph of Muniba Mazari's inspirational speech. She has employed two persuasive techniques simultaneously to convey her message. First is the use of emotive language to create general agreement in her audience, and the second is the use of the relational values of politeness and connectedness. She arouses people's sympathy by using vocabulary that emphasises people's pain and struggle. She later calls them "warriors" to show their strengths. The speaker has used all the sentences in the active voice to be very direct and clear.

4.1.1.2 Cohesion

She has used the technique of anaphora by repeating the sentences, "They never cry." "They never crib." "They never whine," and then concluding them with "I call such people warriors" to show relatedness between her situation and other people's situations. She uses another anaphoric reference by using the phrase "such people." Here she is referring to the people who suffer inexhaustibly and tirelessly under hard circumstances.

4.1.1.3 Pronoun

Mazari has used the pronouns "they," "those," and "I" to express different situations and people. She uses the personal pronoun "I" to relate her story and in order to express that she owns her story because her story is not different from "those" people, and hence she owns the hardships of "these" people. Mazari has used "there" for life in common and to explain that there are different situations in people's lives that they have to go through like she has. Muniba Mazari has successfully managed to produce an emotional response among the audience through linguistic tools. She has instigated their sense of accepting her point of view by generalising the importance of patience and hard work.

4.1.2 Contextual Analysis (Interpretation)

The opening paragraph of the speech reveals that what is to come is about the struggle of a common man, who is in distress, who is weak, and who is taken for granted by the powerful. It prepares the audience's minds to imagine the society we live in, the discursive practices, the role of those in power and enjoying privileges, and the plight of those constantly struggling for survival. The choice of words, the parallel structures, and the use of symbolism develop a concrete image in the minds of the people about the hard life and the struggle for survival a common man has to face in the society the speaker lives in.

4.1.3 Social Analysis (Explanation)

The first lines reveal patriarchal and male-dominated patterns and structures. In such a society, where women are maltreated, insulted, and molested, and where the life of a working woman is made pathetic by the discursive practises of society, a woman who has lost everything and who has to start her life afresh from the ashes talks about her life, her struggle, and her fight against the mindset of the society, against male dominance, and against the abuses she had to face during her life struggle.

4.2 Extract 2

I was in severe pain both physically and psychologically. Many people left... (deliberate pause). Very close ones! (pause) The ones who were supposed to stay with me were the ones who left me when I needed them the most... (falling tone). I was devastated (rising tone, pause). Life was completely, pointless, aimless, colourless....

4.2.1 Textual Analysis (Description)

4.2.1.1 Vocabulary

Mazari has employed several synonymous qualitative adjectives—"pointless, aimless, colorless"—to express her situation and pain. She uses the verb "left" twice to express the attitude of people towards her when she was completely lost. She further expresses that she was "devastated" when she was left alone. She uses the strong adverbs "physically" and "psychologically" to express her severe pain. The phrase "very close ones" followed by a pause expresses how she feels and how painful the experience was of being left alone by her nears and dears. Her falling tone after she says "when I needed them the most" creates the perfect image of the situation she was in during her troubled moments.

4.2.1.2 Cohesion

This extract shows that Mazari has employed short imperative sentences in the active voice to present her point of view directly. She uses rising and falling intonation patterns to emphasise the subject. Furthermore, the technique of anaphora is used for reference to "them" and the "ones" to refer to people who left her in pain.

4.2.1.3 Pronouns

In this extract, many pronouns are used to expose the people who did not behave humanly when the speaker was in a devastating state of injuries and pains. By using third-person pronouns, she has distanced herself from "the ones who were supposed to soothe her but cheated her and got away from her." She has employed the personal pronoun "I" repeatedly to express her situation in relation to the people. The repetition of the first-person pronoun establishes that she was all alone in her struggle with life. It establishes the fact that one has to face the trials and tribulations alone, as no one offers a helping hand in testing times.

4.2.2 Contextual Analysis (Interpretation)

This paragraph states the pains and cries of Mazari, which she has gone through during her struggle for survival. It highlights people's attitudes and behaviours toward those in distress who require assistance. Mazari faced a cold shoulder not only from society but also from the people in her close circle. She expresses the pain she felt due to the sufferings inflicted by those who were supposed to be there to support her, buttress her, and comfort her. Her talk reveals that pain multiplies due to the sarcastic and insulting attitudes of people.

4.2.3 Social Analysis (Explanation)

The extract of the speech mocks the attitudes of society and the social discursive practises with people in distress. Unfortunately, society, though apparently very humane, has a very dark side in this respect. Mazari has revealed the darker, but original, face of society, unmasking all the covers it has wrapped itself in. The real face of people and society is bleak, evil, and devilish, which is why instead of helping the one in trouble, they leave her to face the music. It reveals people's attitudes toward a weak and poor lady in particular.

5. Conclusion

This research highlights the way the speaker, despite initially being the object of suppression and later abandoned by her husband, has positioned herself in her own words to portray a positive image of a woman who is a leading figure in the public sphere, who is not inferior to men, and who is also performing her duties responsibly in the domestic sector. The researcher restricts the investigation by choosing only one of Muniba Mazari's speeches. She has delivered multiple inspirational speeches that can be analysed from the perspective of critical discourse analysis. Though the study explores multiple themes, the analysis only provides answers to the research questions under study. Future researchers can also analyse her speech using stylistic analysis models and psychoanalytic approaches.

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