

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF PYGMALION BY GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

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ABSTRACT

The theory of discourse and power, which was put forward by the French philosopher, Michel Foucault, is more and more frequently employed in literary criticism. As one kind of discourse, conversation plays an essential role in understanding drama, *Pygmalion* is no exception. George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* encompasses power changes that are revealed in discourse. The purpose of this paper is to show how these changes are put in discourse. To do so, four linguistic elements, namely: topic- control, interruptions, addresses, and turn- taking, are chosen to be calculated and analyzed in this play to present the change of power relation between two main characters Eliza Doolittle and Henry Higgins. This paper shows that critical discourse plays an essential role in understanding the change of Eliza's identity as well as the power-relation between her and Higgins.

KEYWORDS: Address, Critical Discourse Analysis, Power, Topic Control, Turn, Taking, Interruption

INTRODUCTION

According to Van Dijk (2000) Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. The main and primarily goal of CDA is the focus on inequality, which we call social problems, and it will lead to better understanding by discourse analysis. One crucial presupposition of adequate critical discourse analysis is understanding the nature of social power and dominance. Social power is based on privileged access to socially valued resources, such as wealth, income, position, status, force, group membership, education or knowledge. Power involves control, namely by (members of) one group over (those of) other groups. That is, a powerful group may limit the freedom of action of others, but also influence their minds among strategic ways to change the mind of others in one's own interests.

Michel Foucault, the French postmodernist, has been hugely influential in shaping understandings of power. Power for Foucault is what makes us what we are, operating on a quite different level from other theories. According to Foucault's theory of discourse and power, people are told that discourse is the production of power, and power is hidden in the practice of discourse. Power and discourse are inseparable, and power is realized through discourse.

The aim of this research is to investigate power relation between two characters of a famous play called *Pygmalion* (1916) by George Bernard Shaw (1856- 1950). *Pygmalion* tells us a story how Professor Henry Higgins teaches a poor flower girl, Eliza Doolittle, to speak and behave like a lady. It had been made into a musical in 1956 and a successful film musical in 1964, both with the title *My Fair Lady*. Most readers, literary critics as well as directors attributed the great success of this play to its plot. They missed the language emphasis in *Pygmalion*, preferring to regard the play as a conversational love story between Higgins and Eliza. The present author believes that, as a play about the issue of a phonetic experiment, *Pygmalion* deserves attention for its discourses. Fortunately, some critics can be found that

held the same opinion. Eric Bentley has described *Pygmalion* as ‘a battle of wills and words.’ G. Vesonder has declared, Even a superficial examination of *Pygmalion* will show that the main focus of the play is not erotic involvement but the power of language (Reynolds, 1994:209). On the other hand Pirnajmudd in and Shahpoori Arani (2011) displayed how education discourse functions through disciplinary productive power and gives rise to a kind of social knowledge.

This paper investigates a play by Bernard Shaw called *Pygmalion* in terms of Critical Discourse Analysis to reveal the power relation between individuals and the change of this relationship. In this paper, Eliza and Higgins are the two individuals whose discourses are analyzed, and through the analysis of their discourses, this research aims at presenting the change of their power relation. The main action of this play centers around Eliza and Professor Higgins. The whole play consists of five acts, from which Act I and Act V are singled out for the final analysis. Through analyzing the discourses of Eliza and Higgins in this play, we can see the change of their power relation. Specifically, the following analysis is developed around four aspects of their discourses, addresses, turn-taking, topic control, and interruptions. Besides, the final comparison is made between Act I and Act V in these four aspects in order to show the change.

Foucault's View of Power and Discourse

Foucault challenges the idea that power is wielded by people or groups by way of ‘episodic’ or ‘sovereign’ acts of domination or coercion, seeing it instead as dispersed and pervasive. ‘Power is everywhere’ and ‘comes from everywhere’ so in this sense is neither an agency nor a structure (Foucault 1998: 63). Instead it is a kind of ‘metapower’ or ‘regime of truth’ that pervades society, and which is in constant flux and negotiation. Foucault uses the term ‘power/knowledge’ to signify that power is constituted through accepted forms of knowledge, scientific understanding and ‘truth’.

Truth is a thing of this world. It is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its “general politics” of truth that is the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true, the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned, the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (Foucault, in Rabinow 1991).

For Foucault, “power is recognized to be a core constituent of all discourses and one of the reasons why one participates in discourse. Discourses produce power but they can also expose it and render it fragile.” (quoted in Stahl, 2004:4330) Thus, the relationship between discourse and power is obvious. Power and discourse are inseparable, and power is realized through discourse. Discourse is not only a tool to exert power, but the key to hold power (Stahl, 2004).

The following quotation presents the most essential theoretical base of this paper. In Foucault’s view:

“power is relations; power is not a thing, it is a relationship between two individuals, a relationship which is such that one can direct the behavior of another, or determine the behavior of another” (Foucault, 1996: 410), and the other person may try to avoid or resist such control or attempt to control the actions of others in turn, thus forming a complex network of interpersonal power relations.

Foucault says, “Power strategy refers to the totality of the means put into operation to implement power effectively or to maintain it” (Foucault, 1990: 93). For instance, “Every time one side does something, the other one responds by deploying a conduct, a behavior that counter-invests it, tries to escape it, diverts it, turns the attack against itself, etc. Thus nothing is ever stable in these relations of power” (Foucault, 1996: 144).

In the social sciences the concept of power is used to describe an aspect of human social behavior. Basically,

power is the potential to carry out one's own will despite the opposing interests of others. Language is the primary means of exercising power in the society (Foucault 1998, p: 106). From among all of strategies used to include power in discourse, some are chosen to be discussed and analyzed in this paper, namely: address, turn-taking, topic control and interruption.

Address

According to Richardes and Schmidt (2002), it is the word or words used to address somebody in speech or writing and the way in which people address one another usually depends on their age, sex, social group, and personal relationship.

Terms of address are words and phrases used for addressing. Different definitions have been provided by researchers. Oyetade (1995) defines address terms as words or expressions used in interactive and face-to-face situations to designate the person being talked to. Leech (1999) considers that terms of address are an important formulaic verbal behavior well recognized in the sociolinguistic literature as they signal transactional, interpersonal and deictic ramifications in human relationships. In addition, Keshavarz (2001) considers that terms of address are linguistic forms that are used in addressing others to attract their attention or for referring to them in the course of a conversation. They are words or linguistic expressions that speakers use to appeal directly to their addressees (Taavitsainen and Jucker, 2003). To Afful (2006) "terms of address constitute an important part of verbal behavior through which the behavior, norms and practices of a society can be identified". And finally, Yule (2006) asserts that address term is a word or phrase for the person being talked to or written to.

The core address system indeed depends upon the (static) relationship between the participants, but address systems can vary more or less at their periphery, often due to pragmatically factors. Also power relations (which determine the address system) may influence "strategic politeness", but it is not quite clear to what extent. Terms of address are words used to indicate certain relations between people. As a result, address terms can mirror the thoughts and attitudes that speakers wish or wish not to express. The way we address someone and the manner in which we refer to that same person are not always the same. The use of address formulae is governed by a relationship between two participants the speaker and the hearer. When choosing a term of address, however, the speaker not only has to take into account his/her relationship with the hearer, but also has to decide how to present the term in a situationally appropriate manner (Nevala, 2004). It is also maintained that address forms are the best place to look at the close bond between language and society. Therefore, the use of address terms depends largely on social context (Shih, 1986).

Turn-Taking

Turn taking is a cyclical process. It begins with one person speaking, and continues as the speaker gives up control to the next person. The second speaker now has the conversational floor. When the speaker is finished, they give control back to another speaker (in this case, the beginning speaker), thus creating a cycle. The turn taking cycle stops when there is nothing left to say (Woodburn, Arnott, Newell, and Procter, 2011, p: 5).

Turn taking has two central aspects: 1) Frequency, 2) Control of contribution. *Frequency* refers to the amount of turn taking within a conversation. For example, a conversation between two people has high frequency, and a lecture has low frequency. The *control of contribution* refers to the amount of control a person has over what to say and how much to say. For example, a letter allows the person complete control over what is written in the letter, which is known as a free for all. A religious ritual provides less control over what a person can say therefore, it is seen as rule-dependent (Woodburn, Arnott, Newell, and Procter, 2011, p: 8).

In 'A Simplest Systematics for the Organization of Turn-Taking for Conversation', Sacks et al. (1974) outline a method by which speakers manage turn-taking in conversation. They observe that:

overwhelmingly, one party talks at a time, though speakers change, and though the size of turns and ordering of turns vary; that transitions are finely coordinated; that techniques are used for allocating turns. (Sacks et al. 1974:699)

Topic Control

Although the analysis of conversation generally presupposes that speakers have equal social roles, it is obvious that group and institutional membership of speakers, and in general social inequality, introduce differences in control over the ongoing dialogue. These differences appear, for instance, in talk between men and women, adults and children, whites and blacks, the rich and the poor, or between the more or less educated. It is assumed that such control by the more powerful speaker may extend to turn allocation or appropriation, speech act choice, topic selection and change, and style. The enactment of this control, however, need not be static, but may be dynamically negotiated or challenged by the less powerful speakers. In other words, talk is continuously contextualized by signaling various conditions or constraints of the social situation in general, and by the social relationships between the speech participants, in particular (Van Dijk, 1989).

Typically in conversation, one participant offers a topic, the partner accepts or rejects it, and the first participant then elaborates the topic. Clearly the residents differ in their abilities in this regard, whether verbally or non-verbally (Brewster, 2007).

Among many studied behaviors, topic control and management (Planalp and Tracy, 1980) is considered one of the most effective ways to control the conversation. Palmer (1989) shows that the less related a participants' utterances are to the immediate topic, the more dominant they are, and then argues, "the ability to change topical focus especially given strong cultural and social pressure to be relevant, means having enough interpersonal power to take charge of the agenda. Recent work by Rienks et al (2006) also shows that topic change, among other structural patterns discussed above, is the most robust feature in detecting influencers in small group meetings.

Also vital for all discourse and communication is who controls the topics (semantic macrostructures) and topic change, as when editors decide what news topics will be covered (Gans 1979; van Dijk 1988), professors decide what topics will be dealt with in class, or men control topics and topic change in conversations with women (Palmer 1989).

Interruption

As Lakoff (1975) pointed out, the participants in a conversation use a number of strategies to achieve their conversational goals. One of these goals may be to dominate other participants of the speech situation. The question whether gender or status and power is the motivating force for conversational behavior has been resolved in favor of status and power in the literature. Most studies find that in mixed talks men tend to be more dominating than women. One of the obvious strategies for achieving this goal, as we have seen, is the use of interruptions. Their use is generally explained by the relative power of the participants which derives from their social status.

More negatively, West and Zimmerman (1983) describe interruption as having the potential to disrupt turns at talk, disorganize the ongoing construction of conversational topics, and violate the current speaker's right to be engaged in speaking. The function of interruption is to prevent the first speaker from being able to finish what he/she wants to say, and to allow the second speaker to take over the floor. Therefore, interruption has long been regarded negatively and associated with dominance and power. Octigan and Niederman (1979) observe that an interruption is taken as a sign of conversational dominance. It is often interpreted as violating normal conversational rules and constituting an attempt to dominate and

control the interaction through control of the floor and of the topic of conversation (James and Clarke, 1993). That is, an interruption is considered a hostile, rude, and disrespectful act, with the interrupter an aggressor and the interruptee an innocent victim.

Since interruptions represent a clear violation of turn-taking norms that give one conversant greater access to others' attention, we are not surprised that their occurrence is linked to dominance, power, and status (see, e.g., Zimmerman and West 1975; West 1984). Earlier studies have found that men interrupt women, adults interrupt children, doctors interrupt patients (except when the doctor is a "lady"), the more powerful spouse interrupts the less powerful one, and those with masculine identities interrupt those with more feminine self-images. These violations of turn-taking norms clearly allow the powerful, high-status speakers more access to important interpersonal resources (the "floor") at the expense of their lower-status partners. They may also serve to disorganize the speech and ideas of the interrupted (West 1979).

Power oriented interruptions are generally heard as impolite, intrusive and inappropriate, conveying the interrupter's aggression, dislike, or apathy towards the interrupted speaker or the talk at hand. They are concomitantly treated as an act of conflict or non-involvement (Chun Lu & Chin Huang, 2006).

METHODOLOGY

Having the knowledge of the theoretical framework which we have for our analysis, we will meticulously investigate power in discourse through these four conversational elements in order to answer this question:

- How is power realized through discourse in *Pygmalion*?

Material

The material used in this study encompasses a play by Bernard Shaw called *Pygmalion* to be analyzed discursively in terms of Critical Discourse Analysis to reveal the power relation between individuals and the change of this relationship. In this paper, Eliza and Higgins are the two individuals whose discourses are analyzed, and through the analysis of their discourses, this study aims at presenting the change of their power relation. The main action of this play centers around Eliza and Professor Higgins. The whole play consists of five acts, from which Act I and Act V are singled out for the final analysis. Through analyzing the discourses of Eliza and Higgins in this play, we can see the change of their power relation. Specifically, the following analysis is developed around four aspects of their discourses, addresses, turn-taking, topic control, and interruptions. Besides, the final comparison is made between Act I and Act V in these four aspects in order to show the change.

Procedure

Having the knowledge of the theoretical framework which we have for our analysis, we will meticulously investigate power in discourse through some conversational elements including: turn-taking, interruption, addresses, and topic-control in order to investigate the role of these elements in manifesting power in discourse and conversation.

Data analysis includes calculating the number of interruptions and turn-takings in all acts and tabulating them. The second step is to show the percentage of each element in all acts. The third step is to compare the acts in terms of the number of these elements. The next is to compare the other two, addresses and topic-control, in all acts and discuss the dialogues in terms of using them. The last step is to discuss all acts by taking into account these four elements and then to compare acts I and V in order to show the difference in using these elements that reveals the change of power relations between Eliza and Higgins.

DATA ANALYSIS

From among all strategies used to include power in discourse, some are chosen to be discussed and analyzed in this paper, namely: interruption, address, topic control, and turn-taking.

The first element to be analyzed is *turn-taking*. Since the aim of this study is to show the power relation between Higgins and Eliza, just the turns of speech taken in the presence of both Higgins and Eliza is taken into account.

Turn-Taking

Pygmalion by George Bernard Shaw goes through the transformation of Eliza Doolittle from a poor flower girl to a lady with the manner of a duchess from the phonetically teachings of Professor Henry Higgins. At the beginning of the story Shaw characterizes Eliza as a poor girl from a lower class.

Table 1: Turn- Taking of Eliza and Higgins in Act I

Speaker	Number	Percentage
Higgins	28	34.56
Eliza	18	22.22
Others	35	43.20
Total	81	100

In Act I all the turns taken in the presence of Higgins and Eliza are 81. From among 81 turns 28 is related to Higgins, 18 to Eliza and 35 to other speakers.

From the outset, Higgins evidently establishes himself as a domineering character and the power relation between Eliza and Higgins is not balanced. Table 1 determines that Higgins, an educated wealthy male from the upper-class, stands in a higher position in comparison to Eliza, an illiterate flower vendor from the working-class. Higgins exercises his power over Eliza through dominating strategies which are, interestingly, mostly linguistic ones such as taking more turns, interrupting and forcing her to silence repeatedly.

Table 2: Turn-Taking of Higgins and Eliza in Act II

Speaker	Number	Percentage
Higgins	67	34.41
Eliza	58	31.52
Others	59	32.06
Total	184	100

In Act II all the turns taken in the presence of Higgins and Eliza are 184. From among 184 turns 67 is related to Higgins, 58 to Eliza and 59 to other speakers. As it is obvious the percentage of turns taken by Eliza in Act II is more than turns taken by her in Act I. It shows reforming Eliza's behavior when her linguistic retraining starts. And this is through disciplinary power that Eliza's new self emerges.

Table 3: Turn-Taking of Higgins and Eliza in Act III

Speaker	Number	Percentage
Higgins	4	8.33
Eliza	21	43.75
Others	23	47.91
Total	48	100

In Act III all the turns taken in the presence of Higgins and Eliza are 48. From among 48 turns 4 is related to Higgins, 21 to Eliza and 23 to other speakers. As you see in Act III the number of turns taken by Eliza is much more than turns taken by Higgins. In Act III Eliza is trying her hardest to achieve her goals. She doesn't speak with a thick accent; her

grammar is correct; she moves with poise and confidence. Over the course of the play Eliza is transformed from a poor flower girl into a sophisticated young woman.

Table 4: Turn-Taking of Higgins and Eliza in Act IV

Speaker	Number	Percentage
Higgins	38	50.66
Eliza	30	40
Others	7	9.33
Total	75	100

In Act IV all the turns taken in the presence of Higgins and Eliza are 75. From among 75 turns 38 is related to Higgins, 30 to Eliza and 7 to other speakers. Most of the conversation in Act IV occurs between Eliza and Higgins which indicates that Eliza's self-formation process is almost completing.

Table 5: Turn-Taking of Higgins and Eliza in Act V

Speaker	Number	Percentage
Higgins	50	34.96
Eliza	63	44.05
Others	30	20.97
Total	143	100

In Act V all the turns taken in the presence of Higgins and Eliza are 143. From among 143 turns 50 is related to Higgins, 63 to Eliza and 30 to other speakers.

Eliza takes more turns in Act V than in Act I, while Higgins's case is just the opposite.

The frequency of the two characters' turn-takings in Act I and Act V is shown specifically in the tables above.

Table 1 shows the number of turns that Eliza and Higgins take in Act I. Generally speaking, Eliza takes fewer turns than Higgins. The power-relation between them is exposed that Higgins possesses more power in Act I than Eliza. The number of her turns is determined by her identity as a flower girl, her lower-class social status, her poor cockney accent, etc.

Table 5 illustrates the turn-taking of Eliza and Higgins in Act V. It is clearly shown that Eliza takes more turns than Higgins in Act V. To compare the two tables, two conclusions can be made: firstly, changing her identity from a flower girl to a lady, Eliza's discourse features have changes; secondly, she possesses more power, even more than Higgins, that is to say, the power-relation between them has changed.

Although it is not completely scientific, but many literary critics and readers believe that turn-taking and speech control play essential roles in judging which speaker possesses more power. From the previous analysis, Eliza is considered the one who becomes more powerful after changing from a flower girl into a lady because she takes more turns in Act V than in Act I.

Topic-Control

As far as topic control is concerned, Eliza is rather passive in the conversations in Act I, following others most of the time by simply giving responses. The following extracts are good examples.

- **Extract 1**

THE MOTHER. How do you know that my son's name is Freddy, pray?

THE FLOWER GIRL. Ow, eez ye-ooa san, is e? Wal, fewd dan y' de-ooty bawmz a mather should, eed now bettern to spawl a pore gel's flahrzn than ran awy atbaht pyin. Will ye-oo py me f'them?

- **Extract 2**

THE DAUGHTER. No. I've nothing smaller than sixpence.

THE FLOWER GIRL [hopefully] I can give you change for a tanner, kind lady.

THE MOTHER [to Clara] Give it to me. [Clara parts reluctantly]. Now [to the girl] this is for your flowers.

THE FLOWER GIRL. Thank you kindly, lady.

THE DAUGHTER. Make her give you the change. These things are only a penny a bunch.

THE MOTHER. Do hold your tongue, Clara. [To the girl]. You can keep the change.

THE FLOWER GIRL. Oh, thank you, lady.

THE MOTHER. Now tell me how you know that young gentleman's name.

THE FLOWER GIRL. I didn't.

These two extracts from Act I show that the flower girl has no power in initiating or controlling the topic of the conversation. She cannot start the conversation and answers the others by expressions like: "Ow, eez ye-ooa san, is e?". In Act I she starts out as a flower girl with a very unusual way of speaking English due to her impoverished background. Overall she is a weak character always relying on others even in speaking. Even when situations are against Eliza, she screams and shouts to assert her rights and show her disapproval of those people belonging to upper class. But in Act II it's different. In Act II Eliza has deviated a bit from being a flower girl and has started to be a lady. These extracts from Act III confirm it.

- **Extract 3**

LIZA. How do you do? [She sits down on the ottoman gracefully in the place just left vacant by Higgins].

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL [introducing] My daughter Clara.

LIZA. How do you do?

CLARA [impulsively] How do you do? [She sits down on the ottoman beside Eliza, devouring her with her eyes].

- **Extract 4**

MRS. HIGGINS [at last, conversationally] Will it rain, do you think?

LIZA. The shallow depression in the west of these islands is likely to move slowly in an easterly direction. There are no indications of any great change in the barometrical situation.

FREDDY. Ha! ha! how awfully funny!

LIZA. What is wrong with that, young man? I bet I got it right.

FREDDY. Killing!

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. I'm sure I hope it won't turn cold. There's so much influenza about. It runs right through our whole family regularly every spring.

