



The Concept of Hegemony in the Speech of Netanyahu on the 7 October actions: Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze the concept of hegemony in the speeches of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu related to the events of October 7, 2023, using Critical Discourse Analysis and Norman Fairclough's three models (text, discursive practice, and social practice). as the reserach consider in the basic of the fundamental premise that political discourse does not work as a neutral reflection of reality, but rather as a social practice that produces meaning and reshapes power.

There are different kinds of fundamentals of discourse analysis shown in this research that seek to reveal how Netanyahu employs linguistic and discursive tools such as value metaphor, the language of determinism, collective pronouns, and narrative selectivity to construct the hegemonic and the power at the same time in discourse that justifies control and legitimizes political and structural violence. It also demonstrates how the collective memory of the events of October 7 serves as a permanent justificatory framework that redistributes moral responsibility and frames coercive action as a necessity for existential survival.

This research offers a new way of looking at hegemony, suggesting that it acts as a framework that comes before violence and control, making people more open to accepting forceful actions. This research helps expand the idea of hegemony in critical discourse analysis from just how power is maintained in society to how language shapes the way people accept coercive actions.

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Introduction

The CDA is the most prominent field in linguistics recently; consider it among the most comprehensive studies addressing human issues, discourse, and their connection to daily reality. Researchers examine how discourse influences power, control, and hegemony in today's global context. This is where the importance of studying discourse directed at the world in general and at a specific group of people in particular lies—in other words, as speech produced for the whole world and to convince other people in particular in specific areas around the world. The speech conveys a general meaning, but it also contains a hidden meaning. This hidden meaning conveys the concept of hegemony. Only a few people will understand the hidden purpose of the discourse through the CDA theory and linguistics. The CDA procedure is applied to the texts, whether spoken or written; it is also a method that reveals the influences on and clears the discourse to the recipient, whether they are reading the text or listening to the words. Critical discourse exploits hegemony as a method to dominate people or nations. Netanyahu used effective rhetoric and exploited rhetorical devices to gain the sympathy of the world around his nation regarding the October 7 protests.

In doing so, he was able to dominate the region and influence society. through His speech on hegemony aims to control and potentially expand influence to include other cities, such as Gaza. This paper will illustrate how Netanyahu used his power of speech to confirm the terms of hegemony. Using linguistic concepts, structures, and terms, he applies the term "hegemony" (Critical Discourse Analysis—CDA) as an analytical framework for understanding how language is linked to power, ideology, and hegemony. Discourse is not a neutral reflection of reality; rather, it is a social practice that produces meanings and reproduces power relations. As Fairclough argues that: "Discourse is not only a mode of representing the world; it is also a mode of action, one form in which people may act upon the world and especially upon each other" (Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 1992, p. 1). It can express the other way of discourse in analyzing the texts, it can reshape the ideas and beliefs of people or at least impact their thoughts and directions.

Literature Review

There is more than one definition for the word "discourse," like the study of the language above the sentence boundaries, the study of language in its real context, the study of language in the real occurrence of discursive activity, and the study of the hidden meaning of the language or discourse. Furthermore, the term "discourse" belongs to the ancient Greeks; the earliest work of studies in discourse analysis was in 1928, followed by Zelling Harris in 1952 (Coulthard 2). It is widely recognized that critical discourse analysis (CDA) primarily examines the relationship between language and power. Martian and Wodak argue that CDA primarily focuses on analyzing the ambiguous structures in language that reflect dominance, discrimination, power, and control (p. 6). Here, we recognize that language serves specific purposes and goals. These aims are expressed in a manner that appeals to everyone, either through the vocabulary or the structure used to persuade others to accept the idea. It's the effect of the language; it's the magic's use of the language. As a consideration of the term "hegemony" in regard to CDA Gramsci mentions that hegemony means to explore how the discourse works as a means through which dominant ideologies are normalized and made to appear self-evident; that's how to maintain existing social and power structures.

First: Theoretical Introduction—Hegemony within Critical Discourse Analysis

Hegemony is a central concept in critical discourse analysis. It is not understood as a direct form of coercive control but rather as a symbolic-discursive process through which dominant meanings are produced and ideologically normalized as "natural" or "self-evident." This conception stems from the Gramscian legacy, but the CDA has reformulated it linguistically and discursively, making language a social practice that reproduces power relations. In this context, Fairclough emphasizes that hegemony is achieved through everyday and institutional discourse, arguing that "hegemony is leadership as much as domination across the economic, political, cultural, and ideological domains of a society." (Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, p. 92). Therefore, in the CDA, hegemony becomes a product of the interaction between text, discursive practice, and social structure.

Second: Classical Studies on Hegemony in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

The foundational studies in CDA, particularly those by scholars like Fairclough and van Dijk, assert that discourse plays a role in either reproducing or revealing ideological hegemony.

"Hegemonic practice and hegemonic struggle to a substantial extent take the form of discursive practice." Fairclough argues that discourse is not a reflection of power but rather a tool of its practices (Fairclough, Language and Power, p. 129).

Van Dijk, on the other hand, mentions that hegemony is connected to cognitive control, and domination is achieved not only through actions but also through control of knowledge and mental models: "Power involves control, namely by elite groups, of the minds and actions of others." (van Dijk, "Discourse, Power and Access," p. 95).

These studies confirm that hegemony is practiced at the level of linguistic representation, lexical selection, and the construction of agency and responsibility within discourse. Another study by Almasi Moghaddam offers a new theoretical review connecting CAD to theories of Laclau and Moff in Hegemony, asserting that hegemony is not a fixed structure but a negotiated process based on discursive conflict:

"Hegemonic discourse is not a fixed structure but a temporary articulation of meaning that remains open to contestation and re-articulation." (Almasi Moghaddam 88)

This notion signifies a substantial transition in the understanding of hegemony from a notion of "stable control" to a "fluid semantic construct."

Nawaz and Hussain (2025) ^[8] have demonstrated in a recent diplomatic study how evaluative language and metaphors in international political discourse produce hegemony.

"Modality, metaphor, and evaluative language function as discursive strategies to legitimize dominance and national superiority." (Nawaz and Hussain 589).

These findings confirm that hegemony is achieved through subtle linguistic mechanisms, not just through direct pronouncements.

Despite the richness of previous studies, they—in general—still view hegemony as a result of discourse or an ideological function of it.

The current study, however, adopts a different approach, treating hegemony as

A preliminary discursive framework that precedes violence or control and works to redistribute moral responsibility, transforming the actor into an instrument within a "greater will."

Thus, the study does not merely analyze the representation of hegemony but examines how discourse produces a psychological and moral susceptibility to justify subsequent coercive practices, whether physical, symbolic, or structural. This approach expands the concept of hegemony in CDA

from the level of social reproduction to the level of preparing for coercive action, something that has not been directly addressed in previous studies.

Methodology

The study's analysis was confined to Netanyahu's speeches and statements regarding the events of October 7, 2023, in which he recounted the attack and its repercussions. These included his official addresses, such as his speech before the United Nations, and his political interventions before the Knesset, as these texts are significant in shaping the discourse and political framing of the events. The study uses, in the analysis of the texts, Fairclough's three-part model in CDA, which moves from linguistic representation to discursive practice and finally to the social and cultural.

Linguistics Presentation

From his speech to the United Nations:

"...from Gaza, Yehiah Sinwar dispatched waves of Hamas terrorists. They stormed into Israel on October 7th and committed acts of unspeakable savagery."

Netanyahu portrayed the October 7 attack as an unjustified act of brutality, placing full responsibility on the Palestinian armed group Hamas.

The lexical choice here includes powerful words like "terrorists" and "unspeakable savagery" to reinforce the perception of dominance and threat, or what is defined in CDA as representation that reinforces the semantic meaning of the attack as a horrific act of aggression. The speaker wants to impose a preconceived sense of aggression on a certain group of people.

"Much of the world no longer remembers October 7. But we remember, On October 7th, the enemies of Israel tried to extinguish the light." (Speech at United Nations General 26 September 2025).

First: Textual Analysis

This level focuses on the linguistic features of the text in terms of vocabulary, pronouns, structure, and metaphor.

Pronouns and the Structure of Collective Identity

The use of the collective pronoun "we" in contrast to "the world" and "the enemies" produces a clear dichotomy:

We = memory, legitimacy, and morality.

The other = forgetting, hostility, threat

This linguistic technique reinforces what Fairclough calls the structure of collective identity.

Memory as a tool of power

The phrase "we remember" is not a neutral description but rather a rhetorical act that produces a moral monopoly on memory and transforms remembering into a sign of political legitimacy.

The Value Metaphor (Light vs. Darkness)

The metaphor of "extinguishing the light" belongs to a moral-cultural semantic field, where:

Light: Good, civilization, and life.

Extinguishing: Evil, chaos, and destruction.

This metaphor dehumanizes the opposing side and frames the conflict as a struggle between absolute values. Netanyahu uses stronger words to show the conflict is between good and evil.

Second: Discursive Practice Analysis.

According to this level of analysis, it focuses on how discourse is produced, circulated, and consumed

Reproduction of the security narrative

These phrases are recycled within the context of official speeches and international media, thus granting them the status of what is called a dominant discourse.

Selective Narrative

The speaker here produces what Fairclough calls foregrounding by focusing on a single event (October 7) in isolation from the broader historical context—highlighting one event to obscure others.

Directed Reception

The audience is different. The discourse is directed at an international audience and is formulated in a simplified, moralistic manner that facilitates its acceptance and limits the possibility of critical scrutiny.

Third: Analysis of Social Practice.

At this level, discourse is connected to broader social and political structures.

1. Discursive Hegemony

Discourse not only describes the event but also:

1. Justifies state actions.
2. Inevitably justifies the military response.
3. Transforms power into a moral imperative.

Thus, the discourse functions as a mechanism for reproducing hegemony, as Gramsci suggests, a concept Fairclough employs within CDA.

2. Legitimizing Structural Violence

By framing conflict as a battle between light and darkness, violence is redefined as

Defending values

An existential duty

There is no political practice open to criticism.

3. Excluding Alternative Discourses

Discourse excludes any other narrative (civil, human, or historical) and produces what Fairclough calls the naturalization of power, that is, presenting power as natural and unquestionable.

"Therefore, Israel must finish the job... we vow to relive October 7 again and again"

First: Textual Analysis

Domination as a Linguistic phenomenon

This kind of analysis at this level focuses on how domination is constructed within language itself.

The Language of Necessity and Inevitability

The use of the modal verb "must" does not express a political choice but rather an absolute moral imperative. Fairclough's analysis categorizes this formulation as the modality of obligation, thereby eliminating any potential discursive alternatives.

Here, domination is exercised linguistically by transforming the political decision into an indisputable duty.

The Semantic Avoidance of Violent Acts

The phrase "finish the job" avoids direct labeling (kill, destroy, attack) and replaces it with an administrative/technical expression. This is what Fairclough calls euphemization, where violence is re-encoded in seemingly neutral language, thus facilitating its social acceptance.

Time as a Way of Control

The phrase "again and again" conveys a sense of continuity and infinity, meaning dominance is not a reaction but a permanent, open-ended practice. Linguistically, violence is reconstructed as a continuous, natural state.

In summary, we have reached the conclusion of this analysis. According to Fairclough's three-part model, Netanyahu's discourse on October 7th can be characterized linguistically: it relies on collective pronouns and sharp moral metaphors. Rhetorically: It is produced and disseminated as part of a dominant security narrative. Socially: the discourse shows the following contributions as the reproduction of power relations and the legitimization of political violence. Thus, the discourse not only describes the event but also reshapes the political and moral reality to serve a specific power structure.

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