

## Critical Discourse Analysis of Artful and Political language of “Loki” in the Movie “Thor”

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### Abstract

*This paper examines the persuasive strategies of Loki, a character from the movie Thor which was released in 2011. It also deciphers the ideologies hidden in the conversation of two scenes picked for analysis. The analysis is based on the concepts of Fairclough in critical discourse analysis as he asserts that the ideologies are primarily located in the ‘unsaid’ (implicit proposition) which cannot be separated from the text and the discursive event shapes the discursive structure which is open to interpretation (Fairclough, 1995). The results indicated the hidden ideologies and persuasive components in the discourse of Loki.*

**Keywords:** *Critical Discourse Analysis, Persuasive Strategies, Ideology, Fairclough, Loki, Thor.*

### 1. Introduction

The importance of language cannot be negated in this world where humans are considered as social animals. Apart from the prior function of communication, language has other purposes as well. All of them have not been pinned point up till now. Different researches have been conducted on many aspects of language which has yielded benefits to the future linguists in understanding language. It started from analyzing the text carefully in literary theory. In 1960’s, everyone was influenced by Chomsky. At that time, linguistic grammar was just focusing on sentence grammar. It was the first step towards the analysis of language which was purely concentrating on text grammar. The emphasis of linguists then moved from mere sentence structures to the cognitive aspect hidden in the text. It was analysis of how people understand certain text, written or spoken? It was a step towards understanding discourse. After that, the focus of linguists moved to another aspect of text and discourse which was society. In order to understand the full impact of discourse, it required discourse structures, mental or cognitive structures and social structures. All these structures combined together and formed critical discourse analysis (CDA) which is a perspective of socially committed analysis of discourse.

Since CDA is dealing with all the semiotic elements of social life specifically focusing on ‘semiosis’ (discourses) and the effect of discourse on power positions in the society ,therefore power, politics and manipulation are crucial aspects of critical discourse analysis. The very name of Politics has the connotation of diplomacy, power struggle, status and manipulation. Nothing is possible in this world without the use of language. In politics, language is used for manipulation or gain of power in society. The

political language is the artful and manipulative language. It can alter the status, the power, the idea, the thinking, the perception, indeed, it can change the world. Politics cannot only be restricted to the area of government. It has now evolved into every part of the society, for instance, workplace politics between the employees or artful use of language between mother-in law and daughter-in-law. A movie portrays real life like scenes with the dialogues as human beings produces in their daily life. This paper stresses on the critical analysis of the dialogue of Loki in the movie Thor. The selected parts from the movie use language as a tool to alter the whole course of action in the movie. The distinct feature of this paper is the cause and effect of political, persuasive and manipulative language of Loki and the ideology underlying his conversation. The paper will follow the methodology given by Fairclough. The study of movie gives the advantage of over view of the use and effect of convincing strategies applied through language. It also gives us the benefit of understanding the after effects of such playful language. The aim of this paper is to decipher ideological components in Loki's dialogues and to examine his persuasive tactics. This paper will analyze the keywords and discursive components in his dialogues (discourse) of Loki in the movie Thor (2011). This analysis will help us understand the effect of manipulative and political language which leads to power abuse.

## **2. Literature Review**

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is the most recent approach which is developing rapidly in the field of language and linguistics. Some scholars like Teun van Dijk prefer to use critical discourse studies (CDS) instead of CDA (Wadok & Meyer, 2009: 2). It contributes to the discourse and its relationship to social aspects. In the recent years many works have been done in CDA. (Fairclough 1995, Van Dijk 1997, Fairclough 1989, Wadok 1989, Wadok & Meyer 2001, Wadok & Chilton, 2005, Van Dijk, 2006, Van Dijk, 2007). It took its birth with Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wadok. It is taking a step ahead of linguistic analysis contributing from Karl Marx and Michel Foucault to analyze the ideology and power relations involved in discourse. It takes particular interest in the progress of diagnostic framework for finding the link between language, power and ideology (Fairclough, 1995:9). CDA is unlike discourse analysis which focuses only on linguistic units and grammar etc. Its focus is on studying "social phenomena which are necessarily complex and thus require a multidisciplinary and multi methodological approach" (Wadok & Meyer, 2009:2).

CDA does not emphasize on any particular area, discipline, paradigm or organization. Its main focus lies on the social disputes where the discourse of any individual, group or organization is used to alter the power position or entirely changes their power roles in a society (Van Dijk, 1993:4). CDA has influenced almost all the fields including political science, gender studies, international relations, social science and most importantly linguistics, as in "gender issues, issues of racism, media discourses, political discourses, organizational discourses or dimensions of identity research" but the methodologies differ greatly on the basis of the aims of the research and methodologies applied (Weiss & Wadok, 2003:12). The aim of CDA is to analyze particular linguistic, semiotic and interdiscursive feature of the text which are the part of any social change (Fairclough, 2015: 23). This change is considered as the position of power in a society or social inequality which is exercised by the dominance (the

employment of public power that results in disparity “including political, cultural, class, ethnic and racial inequality” (Van Dijk, 1993:250)) of one individual or group. This is also called power abuse. Fairclough (1995) established his own three dimensional method of analysis; the textual analysis, the analysis of discourse process of practice and analysis of discursive events as social study. The relationship between the discursive event and discourse can be extremely different. Sometimes the speech words chosen for power use are truly commands or imperatives whereas in many cases this action may be performed by the tactful use of language. In those cases the discursive power abuse is more manipulative.

CDA also addresses the ideological character of discourse (Fairclough 1989). Fairclough asserts that discursive events work ideologically. The question is not of the truth and falsity of any ideology hidden in the speech or discourse. With changing ideologies in the society, found in both structures and events, it has continuously influenced every field (for instance, the occurrences of Feminism (ideology) can be perceived in different academic writings). Ideology is located in the ‘unsaid’ which implies that ideologies are generated and transformed, veiled in discursive events (Fairclough, 1995:21). CDA is the linguistic and semiotic aspects of social processes and problems. It helps to understand major political and social movements or policies that have brought drastic change in the power position. (Fairclough: 1995).

### **3. Methodology**

Data for this research was gathered from the Movie named Thor, which was released in 2011. This movie was chosen for its richness of manipulative language and power abusive aspects. The screenplay is written by Don Payne, Ashley Miller and Zack Stentz. The director of the movie is Kenneth Branagh. The movie Thor has number of scenes and dialogues which can be analyzed but due to time constrain, it was decided to select two most important samples for the purpose of analysis. A non- probability sampling technique was adopted in order to overcome time constraint. The Reason for purposive sample was to take a specific scene that fits the most was selected to get a better view and analysis of the language used. Those dialogues of Loki, which were to be analyzed because of its manipulative and power abusive qualities, were typed. All the selected dialogues were critically analyzed following the CDA specifically the ideological aspect given by Fairclough. For that purpose, the standard paper of Juraj Horvath “critical discourse analysis of Obama’s Political Discourse” was followed as a modal paper. For the satistical analysis of the text, online software named SEBOOK keyword destiny analyzer was used. The manipulative aspect of the dialogues were analyzed according to the ideas and methods suggested by Fairclough.

### **4. Analysis**

#### **4.1. The background of the dialogues**

The dialogues, which are analyzed in this paper, are taken from the beginning of the movie. The whole action in the movie depends on this scene which is picked for analysis. The movie is an adventure about Norse blond: the god of thunder named Thor. Thor is the first in line to ascend the throne of Asgard after his Father, Odin, who is soon to be retired. Loki, the brother of Thor, is second in line to the throne. On the day of coronation, their ever sworn enemy Frost giants enter through a portal in their realm and destroy the day for Thor. Thor asks the permission of his father to teach a lesson to Frost

giant's king, Laufey, by attacking them. His father disallows him for any such action. A conversation takes place between Thor and Loki which builds up the whole plot, story and action in the movie. The language used by Loki in both the selected scenes is given in the outline.

#### 4.1.1. The outlines of dialogues:

The dialogues are taken from the two scenes of the movie. Both the scenes are focusing on the power and ideology perspective taken up by Fairclough. Therefore, the analysis is divided into two according to scenes. In the first scene the status of Loki is not very powerful. He is second in line to the throne of Asgard after his father, Odin. The conversation takes place between Thor and Loki when his father refuses him to attack Jotunheim after their enemy barged in their territory on the day of coronation. The conversation is as follows:

1. THOR: It's unwise to be in my company right now, Brother.
2.                 This was to be my day of triumph.
3. LOKI: It'll come
4.                 In time.
5. CRONIES: What's this?
6. LOKI: If it's any consolation,
7.                 I think you're right.
8.                 About the Frost Giants, about Laufey, about everything.
9.                 If they found a way to penetrate
10.                Asgard's defenses once,
11.                who's to say they won't try again?
12.                Next time with an army.
13. THOR: Exactly.
14. LOKI: There's nothing you can do
15.                without defying Father.  
(Thor gives a convincing look)
16. LOKI: No, no, no. I know that look.
17. THOR: That's the only way to ensure the safety of our borders.
18. LOKI: Thor, it's madness.
19. CRONIES: Madness? What sort of madness?
20. THOR: We're going to Jotunheim.

Thor is convinced that he cannot do anything without disobeying his father. Therefore he takes his cronies along with Loki and attacks Jotunheim. Due his act of defying his father, the enraged Odin banishes him from Asgard leaving his half-brother Loki next in line for throne. Odin falls ill because of the circumstances. Loki who was waiting for this moment for so long ascends the throne. Conversation takes place among Loki and Thor's cronies which is also analyzed in this paper and is the second part of the analysis. The reason for choosing this scene is his present powerful position unlike the first scene. The conversation is as follows:

21. CRONIES: All father, we must speak with you urgently.
22. LOKI: My friends.
23. CRONIES: Where's Odin?
24. LOKI: Father has fallen into the Odin sleep.

25. Mother fears he may never awaken again.  
 26. CRONIES: We would speak with her.  
 27. LOKI: She has refused to leave my father's bedside.  
 28. You can bring your urgent matter to me.(SPEAR THUDDING)  
 29. Your king.  
 30. CRONIES: My King, we would ask that you end Thor's banishment.(CHUCKLES)  
 31. LOKI: My first command cannot be to undo the All father's last.  
 32. We're on the brink of war with Jotunheim.  
 33. Our people need a sense of continuity,  
 34. in order to feel safe in these difficult times.  
 35. All of us must stand together for the good of Asgard.  
 36. CRONIES: Yes, of course.  
 37. LOKI: Good. Then you will wait for my word.  
 38. CRONIES: If I may beg the indulgence of Your Majesty to perhaps reconsider.  
 39. LOKI: We're done!

#### 4.1.2. Example of the Rules of Three

Loki used the rule of three which is one of the techniques used in oration. The importance of this technique is to give emphasis to something. 8 is the example of Rule of three mentioned below

I think you're right.(7)

About the Frost Giants, about Laufey, about everything (8)

#### 4.1.3. Example of contrast

Loki uses a contrast for emphasis on the idea of first and last command. 31 is the example of contrast as below

My first command\_cannot be to undo the Allfather's last.(31)

#### 4.1.4 Examples of past references

Past experiences, either good or bad, has a very vital role in the persuasion and power abuse. The following is the example of past experience

If they found a way to penetrate(9)

Asgard's defenses once,(10)

who's to say they won't try again?(11)

Next time with an army.(12)

#### 4.2 Ideological Analysis

The interpretation of the power and ideological aspect of Loki's dialogues helps to link the discourse with the social processes and to find out the ideology hidden in the conversation. As CDA is dealing with language and how it is used to gain power, therefore the dialogues are analyzed in this aspect. According to Fairclough ,“the ideologies are primarily located in the ‘unsaid’ (implicit proposition)” (Fairclough, 1995: 24). Loki starts his conversation with 3 and 4 which implies a very general proposition. Fairclough states it as “naturalized ideologies” (Fairclough, 1995: 30). The underlying proposition in 3 and 4 was that the time was not right. Therefore, if he was not able to become the king, probably it was not the exact time for it. The ideology in line 3 and 4 is of *belief or faith*. He suggests that everything will happen on its own time. Loki's convincing strategies begins from these lines which hides an idea of satisfaction for Thor.

He instantly changes his ideology from naturalized and cliché to the dogma of association by using the term consolation in 6. About the Frost Giants, about Laufey, about everything. If they found a way to penetrate, Asgard's defenses once, who's to say they won't try again? Next time with an army. (8 to 12)

In 8 to 12 Loki concentrates on safety of the realm. The ideology of *fear* is prevailing in these lines. The proposition suggests the “historical background knowledge” (Fairclough, 1995:30). The safety of Asgard was in danger because it was attacked by the Frost giants before this conversation took place between them. The Frost giants attacked Asgard with just 3 soldiers to get their casket. 12 ( next time with an army) proposes the future in an exaggerated way. In line 14 and 15, he puts forward the dogma that Thor has no option but disobeying his father. The ideology here is of *pragmatism*. Loki implies that the only practical solution to this problem was flouting his father's command rather than finding an emotional solution to it. In 17 the response of Thor is because of the “Taken as given” (Fairclough, 1995:30) proposition. In line 8, 9 and 10 Loki talks about the safety of the Asgard and so the response of Thor is convincing, where he says that for the safety of the borders they will go to Jotunheim.

In the second scene of the movie, taken for the analysis, the company of Thor comes to talk to Odin to end the banishment of Thor. The company is bewildered to see that instead of Odin, Loki is the king. He uses tactful language in the reply to their request to end Thor's banishment. In 31 “My first command cannot be to undo the All father's last”, the ideology is of extreme *obedience and respect*. In the following lines ideology takes a shift.

*We're on the brink of war with Jotunheim. Our people need a sense of continuity, in order to feel safe in these difficult times. All of us must stand together for the good of Asgard.* (32-35)

In these lines Loki concentrates on the duties of the nation. The Ideology of *unity* is very clear in these lines. He states that for benefits of Asgard everyone should stand with him in these difficult times, when Asgard was facing their enemies.

#### 4.3 Analysis of frequently used words and connotations

A corpus based quantitative study of Loki's dialogues was conducted to find out the frequently used words and their percentages in the selected scenes of the movie. The results specified that the total words were 210 whereas unique words were 129 including stop words for both.

**Table 1. Keyword density report**

Word	Count	Density
Father	5	2.38%
madness	3	1.43%
Speak	2	0.95%
Way	2	0.95%
Asgard	2	0.95%
Time	2	0.95%

<b>Word</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Density</b>
Thor	2	0.95%
jotunheim	2	0.95%
Right	2	0.95%
Good	2	0.95%
Odin	2	0.95%

  

<b>2 Word Phrases</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Density</b>
we re	3	2.86%
you can	2	1.90%
all father	2	1.90%
way to	2	1.90%
speak with	2	1.90%
to be	2	1.90%

The results indicated the use of “father” five times yielding the density of 2.38% which signifies Loki’s persuasive strategies. His discourse revolves around his father. As his father is the king therefore the prominence of his father is undeniable for everyone in Asgard. Hence he made use of this word for convincing others. When he wants to convince his brother, Thor, for attacking Jotunheim he uses the word father and brings the idea of defying his father. He is able to convince his brother, therefore the result of his action is the banishment of Thor from Asgard. This leaves Loki to be the first one to ascend throne. Thus he is able to get power by the use of his language and changes his position from being second in line to first, and only one, to the throne. His use of the word “father” in the second scene, where he has already taken the position of king, is for persistence of his power. As a king, Loki has all rights to undo the banishment of Thor but this will lead to loss of his kingship. In 30 when the cronies asks him “My King, we would ask that you end Thor's banishment”, he replies it with 31 “My first command cannot be to undo the All father's last.” His use of common noun ‘father’ along with indefinite numeral adjective ‘all’ entails his tactful use of language. He is using indirect way of refusing to the request of termination of Thor’s banishment because that will take away his powers of king. Hence it clearly shows power abuse and power use.

The results also ascertained the two word phrases in the text. The most frequently used phrase is “we’re” which is used thrice and the density of the word is 2.86%. This shows that pronoun “we” is used to show the unity and oneness with others. It is used for the persuasive purpose for expression of unanimity. In 32, 33 and 39, the pronoun “we” (our) are used for illustration of uniformity of one person with another. According to Halliday these grammatical elements and their functions enables us to understand their role in “meaning-making” and their contribution in “social formation” (Halliday, 1978: 21-31). Hence it shows union relation and puts the listener and speaker in the same

position which implies that if something is beneficial for one it is equally beneficial for other as well.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper examines the ideological stances as well as the statistical analysis of key words in the conversation of Loki in the movie Thor. On the basis of the discussion of the analysis, it has been concluded that the discourse of Loki is enriched with the ideological stances. This paper focuses on the ideas of Fairclough. Fairclough states that ideologies are present in all unsaid propositions (Fairclough, 1995: 24). In addition to that, ideologies are the representation of the features of our surroundings which helps us to understand the “relation of power, dominance and exploitation” (Fairclough, 2003: 218). On the basis of his concepts that meaning is produced through interpretation and other concepts mentioned above, this analysis is divided into following parts:

The first part concluded that the ideologies of *faith or belief, fear, pragmatism, obedience and respect* and *unity* are present in the discourse of Loki.

The result of keyword analysis have shown that the most frequently used single word was “father” which signifies the persuasive strategies of Loki as his father is the king and no one can defy his orders. Keyword analysis have also indicated the frequently used two word phrase which was “we’re”. That has suggested the idea of unity as it is very significant in convincing others and for attainment and upholding a power position in the society. The result of past references exhibited the notion of fear as explained above. The significance of referring to past experience was to convince Thor to take an action. Fairclough discusses the discursive events and structures, and the relationship of those discursive processes with text and with social process. The result of both the scenes has indicated that discursive event shaped the text of Loki and his listeners along with controlling the interpretation by the partners of Loki in the discourse.

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