

## Discourse Theory: Language, Politics, and Society

Teoría del discurso: lenguaje, política y sociedad

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### ABSTRACT

This article tries to review definitions of discourse and origin and purposes of discourse analysis. It points out that discourse theory integrates language, power, ideology, politics, and society. Plus, it provides a dynamic domain to analyze social and political phenomena to prove that under the light of discourse theory it is possible to recognize the influences of language on the political and social life of nations.

Keywords: discourse theory, discourse analysis, language, society, politics.

### RESUMEN

Este artículo trata de revisar las definiciones del discurso y el origen y los propósitos del análisis del discurso. Señala que la teoría del discurso integra el lenguaje, el poder, la ideología, la política y la sociedad. Además, proporciona un dominio dinámico para analizar fenómenos sociales y políticos para demostrar que, a la luz de la teoría del discurso, es posible reconocer las influencias del lenguaje en la vida política y social de las naciones.

Palabras clave: teoría del discurso, análisis del discurso, lenguaje, sociedad, política.

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## Introduction

According to some resources, history of the term discourse dates back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. To illustrate its meaning, as it is used in everyday language and dictionaries, discourse is said to be a form of language in use; for instance, a speech or even more generally oral language or style of speaking (MirFakhraie, 2004: 24). Up to the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, intellectuals were faithful that language plays the role of a tool to express the preexisting realities. However, after the turn of the century, they held the view that language shapes realities. At present, after the introduction of structuralism and under the influence of Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, and Hiedger a theory was presented which asserted that we know the world only through language forms and our human experiences gain meaning by means of language.

Previously and based Plato's theory of mimesis, literary and art texts were supposed to be copy of the world. However, after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this premises turned opposite according to which it is the real world itself that gains implications from the texts preceding it. In other words, our everyday biological experiences have their roots in the texts, not only literary but also all linguistic and semiotic experience, which we have read. We access reality through language. It does not denote that there is no reality but it connotes that we recognize realities by means of language relations. Indeed, we mold our experiences through language so as to get hold of them. Reality makes sense only through language or discourse. Language helps shape social world, social identities, and social relations. Over recent decades, discourse has been noticed and acted upon by intellectuals and theoreticians of a variety of domains like literary theories, philosophy, sociology, politics, psychoanalysis, even socio-psychology, and also other social sciences. The root of the term can be found in Greek verb "Discurrere", which literary means wandering, trekking, traversing, digressing, disseminating.

Dialogue or Dialog is considered to be the prerequisite of any discourse. Every type of speech, be it oral or written, is a social issue, i.e. they have social disposition, nature, and structure. Discourses vary in accordance with place and time. Every country has its own different discourse. Moreover, inside every country discourses vary.

Discourses vary in accordance with different social institutions and applications, where they are formed. In addition, they are different depending on the situation, prestige, and dignity of the individuals who utter or write them or even their addressees. Therefore, background and domain of discourse is not homogenous, unique, and consistent.

Discourse can be taken to be a social phenomenon, category, or issue. To put it in a better way, discourse is an issue or domain with a social background. Usage and meaning of all the mentioned expressions, speeches, statements, premises, words, or phrases depend on the point that the expressed materials, the presented statements, and the assumed premises, and the like are to answer the questions when? where? How? Who? Or against whom? They are used.

In other words, time and place setting of the applied cases or subjects of every point, statement and premises determine from, type, and content of every discourse. Discourses are embodiment of meaning and social interactions. Words and concepts, components of the structure of language, are not stable and consistent and depending on different times and places, their relationships undergo changes and they gain different meanings. Hence, structure of language is also instable. Given this, discourse can be claimed to be the representation of language presented above sentence, words, and phrases. Indeed, it should be sought after in nonverbal signs and practices and in all relationships between individuals. (Salimi, 2004: 55). It should be taken for granted that discourse is a multifaceted concept and basically is underdeveloped, vague, and controversial. Regardless of its etymology, which can be followed in Greek classic text, its new definition for various intellectuals is referring to a variety of signifieds so that every one of these individuals accentuates their own specific concept and takes it.

It is likely to assume to be a potential system. This potentiality is the one which allows us to create some principles that can be correct or incorrect. This issue makes discourse possible to be a branch of knowledge. Nevertheless, principles of discourse are not the ones followed by individuals unconsciously. Discourse is not a method or locus of an investigation but it is a collection of rules which provide the preconditions required for the establishment of these principles so that they are above interlocutors of discourse. In fact, prestige, practice, and characteristics of the knowers, writers, and listeners of discourse are duty and function of this type of discursive principles (Philip, 2002: 161).

By means of the help of institutions and organizations to which discourse is related and also based on situation or position from which discourse originates and positions or prestige it assumes for the speaker, discourse can be defined as a specific domain of language in use. However, this position or situation per se does not exist and is not independent but it can be taken to be a perspective or position which every discourse gains according to its relationship with other opposite discourses. Thus, every discourse, directly or indirectly, is administered through its relationship with or addressing another discourse. Nonetheless, every discourse relates to certain issues, subjects, and purposes and takes specific concepts and themes into account while putting other concepts aside.

Different discourses present different concepts and categories. From time to time, it is possible to take some concepts, which are presented in a specific discourse, and in a different discourse think it over and present it. But, this is not the case always. Everything which signifies something or is meaningful can be taken to be part of discourse. Meanings are embedded in technical processes, institutions, public etiquettes, different ways of communication, and dissemination of different forms of education and training.

Different discourses make up different systems. The required conditions for meaning come together and get consolidated and by means of the help of social and institutional position from which discourse originates (not through structure of positive structures and interpretations) are framed as certain meanings (or they gain certain meanings). Terms, words,

expressions, premises, and the like change their meaning depending on the positions their users take (McDaniel, 1998:41).

### Background and significance of the study

Discourse today is considered by researchers and critics as one of the approaches to studying literary works. Discourse is term which has been widely used in such diverse areas and fields like philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and linguistics. Different philosophers and theoreticians have proposed a variety of theories concerning its domain, concept, role, and function and have had diverse perspectives towards it. Ever-increasing development of knowledge and sciences along with complexity, dynamicity, variety, and plurality of issues and needs of community has made higher education system of different countries move from field-dependent paradigms towards interdisciplinary and metadisciplinary paradigms.

By means of establishing a relationship and bond among various fields, discourse, as a practical science, not only helps develop cohesion and effectiveness in universities but also provides the possibility of removing gap and vacant spaces among sciences and also satisfying the needs of community. Hence, scientific communities increasingly seek to integrate knowledge originating from various science fields in the form of interdisciplinary integrated approaches. It is crystal clear that appraising the contemporary interdisciplinary discourse, particularly in linguistics and sociology, requires profound investigation and study. Over recent years, studying literary works from a sociological perspective has been one of the concerns of contemporary researchers and literary works have been considered by means of referring to Foucault, Habermas, and Fairclough theories. However, discourse theory has not been well-established in Iran, especially in linguistics and literature fields. Plus, there is no meticulous research available on discourse. Based on the emerging theory of discourse, the present study has made attempts to probe into sociolinguistics concepts present in this theory.

Up to now, various quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis have been used to study linguistic phenomena. However, since discourse analysis methods are new and unknown, still no attempt has been made to employ discourse methods in language studies fields. The main aim of the present study is to initiate this way. But, as both discourse approach and language field are of wide complexity and variety, elaboration of discourse analysis and its effects on deciphering linguistic phenomena is certainly of specific significance. In line with discourse theory, the primary purpose of the present study is to present a novel technic and method for studying text, language, and society. Data collection method of this study is library-based, content analysis, and descriptive-analytical with structuralist approach. The present research is to indicate the relationship between discourse theory and language and society.

### Definitions

Discourse analysts endeavor to cross borders of definition. They take it for granted that discourse is a form of language in use. However, as still this definition is vague and often imprecise, discourse researchers resort to more theoretical concept of discourse, which has its own specific limits but at the same time has wider applications. They are willing to add some elements like who? How? Why? And when? intends to use language to the concept of discourse (MirFakhraie, 2004: 8 , 9).

The term “discourse” has been translated into Persian language as discussion, dialogue, speaking, conversation, and speech. Nevertheless, there is no clear consensus as to the nature of discourse, the way it functions, and its analysis. Even, there is no common agreement upon discourse analysis as well (Fazeli, 2010: 46).

There are a variety of definitions presented on discourse and discourse analysis some of which are pointed to here:

Jorgensen and Philips define discourse as “a specific style of speaking about the world and the way it is understood”. (Jorgensen et al. , 2010: 17).

Teun A. van Dijk believes that discourse consists of three elements; namely “language use, communication between beliefs (cognition), and interaction in social situations” (van Dijk, 2002: 19).

Fairclough defines discourse and discourse analysis as: I see discourse as a collection of three integrated elements: social practice (deed), discursive practice (production, dissemination, and consumption of the text), and the text itself. Analysis of a specific discourse requires analysis of any of these aspects and their interrelationship. Our assumption is that there is a significant relationship between specific features of texts, the ways in texts interact with each other and are interpreted, and the nature of social practice ( Fairclough, 2000: 97-98).

Therefore, Fairclough views critical discourse analysis a combination of text analysis, analysis of the text’s production, dissemination, and use, and socio-cultural analysis of discursive occurrence as a whole.

Stubbs sees discourse as language over sentence and phrase. (Jaworski, 2014: 28). Fasold also holds that studying any aspect of language use is studying discourse. (Blakemore, 2003: 31). Gee believes that discourse has to do with something more than language. Discourses always are to coordinate language with the style of practice, interaction, objects, tools, technologies, beliefs, and values. (Gee, 2015: 59). Javorsky and Kaplan present a more sociological definition of discourse. They assert that discourse is language use in terms of social, political, cultural,

and linguistic formations which reflect social order; meanwhile, it forms social order and reactions of individuals to society. (Jaworski, 2014: 22).

Azdanlou considers discourse to be one of the effective means which is used to trap language, comprehend various features of the relationship between individuals, and also categorize their subject matters. He assumes discourse to be the indicator of linguistic elaboration over bigger criteria (Azdanlou, 2000:36). Further, Shaerie defines discourse as “discourse provides the text with a purposeful and cohesive meaning. Indeed, the text owes its contextual and semantic identity, which is formed in a specific and cohesive direction, to discourse. (Shaerie, 2006:45). To Shaerie, discourse is a sort of mind presence which as a mega-meaning discloses, appears, and presents gradually and dynamically in the form of a mega-sign (spoken or written text). He takes discourse to be a type of speech making process in which interactive position of discursive factors (speaker and speech) together with disclosing hidden aspects of language, leads to production of a text with a cohesive meaning ( Shaerie, 2006:1-5).

Yar-Mohammadi, in his book *Common and Critical Study of Discourse*, points to three general and very common definitions of discourse.

1. Discourse is part of a meaningful language whose components are in a way related to each other and have a specific purpose.
2. Discourse is the production resulting from the relationship and interaction between interlocutors in a socio-cultural context.
3. Discourse is defined as speech practice or reaction against speech product or the text, which represents formal structure of the discourse (Yar-Mohammadi, 2014:12).

Michelle Foucault writes: we call a collection of statements discourse as long as they belong to a common discursive formation...it consists of a limited number of statements for which a collection of existential conditions can be defined (Soltani, 2005: 40).

Foucault considers discourse to be social knowledges which are formed based on some aspects of reality. He believes that these knowledges are formed in a specific social context and are created in a way which is compatible with the interests of social activists present in these contexts. Now, these contexts can be big, like multinational companies or small, like a family, or even it is likely that they are some institutionalized contexts like the press and/or somewhat informal contexts like discussion at dinner table and the like (Van Lion, 2016:189).

In terms of discourse, Foucault points to some discourses in which economics and ideology, as explanatory issues or in Foucauldian terms contents, are pronounced. The main point here is plurality of discourses, i.e. possibly there are various forms of awareness about a common knowledge object and indeed there are. Obviously, that object exists. However, our knowledge about it essentially is formed by discourse and depends on community. This point means that an individual can have different interpretations from one object. Plus, it is likely that depending on situation and also his specific interests and objectives of a certain subject; he may speak in different styles. On the whole, in terms of the definition of discourse from Foucauldian perspective it can be said:

1. Discourses are grounds for representations, i.e. they are knowledges about some aspects of reality which at the time of representing that aspect of reality, the given discourse may be referred to. Discourses do not determine what we can express about a certain aspect of reality; nevertheless, without them no knowledge can be represented. Therefore, we need them as a framework to comprehend the issues.
2. Discourses are plural. It is likely to have different discourses, i.e. different ways of understanding the same aspect of a reality, where different issues are taken into account or discarded or different interests are represented.
3. There is some evidence to indicate the presence of granted discourse in the text, whether spoken or written, and/or this evidence is expressed by means of other semiotic styles. Particularly, this evidence originates from the similarity between the points stated or written in different texts about the same aspect of reality. Based on these similar statements, which are repeated or represented in different texts and in different ways are disseminated in the texts, we can reconstruct the knowledge which is represented through these statements (Van Leeuwen, 2016:191).

As it was mentioned, there are a variety of definitions for discourse. On the whole and beyond all the approaches to discourse, it should be taken for granted that discourse is a meaningful piece of language whose components in a way are related to each other and follow a specific goal ( Yar-Mohammadi, 2006: 1).

### **Discourse Analysis**

Discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary field of study which emerged from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s due to extensive developments in science and knowledge in the fields like anthropology, ethnography, microsociology of perception and sociology, poetry, semantics, linguistics, psychology, semiotics, and other social and human sciences concerning systematic study of structure, function, and process of producing speech and writing. This tendency,

because of its being interdisciplinary, was very soon welcomed as one of the qualitative methods in different fields of political sciences, social sciences, communication sciences, and critical linguistics.

Discourse theory was basically born in linguistics and up to now has undergone various stages. Although linguistics was ignorant to discourse analysis for long, the term discourse analysis was first used by the famous English writer, Zelik Heris, in an article (Bahrapour, 2000: 7-8). In this article, Zelik Heris provided a formalistic view of statement and viewed discourse analysis to be merely a formalist (and structuralist) view of statement and text. In structuralist discourse analysis, discourse as language, is defined something more than a sentence. As functionalism developed in the 1960s and 1970s, some linguists brought the concept of context in discourse analysis and considered discourse to be language in use. This type of discourse analysis can be called functional discourse analysis. Context in functional discourse analysis means the limited time and place conditions in which language is used. The pitfall of this approach is that the given context is very limited and local. Hence, Fowler, Hatch, Crouse, and Tervo brought power and ideology in the form of critical linguistics into the current dominant discourse analysis in linguistics.

After Heris, many linguists considered discourse analysis to be opposite text analysis. They hold the view that discourse analysis includes analysis of the structure of spoken language (like dialogue, interview, and speech); while, text analysis includes analysis of the structure of written language (like article, story, report, and etc.). It took no long for some linguists to use this concept in different meanings. The latter group believed that discourse analysis has more to do with function or structure of sentences and discovering and describing their relationships.

In other words, for this group, discourse analysis was recognizing the relationship between sentences with each other and observing whole of the thing which is the outcome of such a relationship. According to this definition, in discourse analysis-unlike conventional linguistic analyses- we do not merely deal with syntactic and lexical elements forming a sentence as the major basis for explicating meaning, i.e. context, but more than that we resort to some factors out of text, i.e. cultural, social, and other contexts of situation ( Bahrapour, 2000: 8).

Therefore, discourse analysis considers the way meaning is formed and presented along with the message of language units in conjunction with in-language factors( context of the text) , language units ( the immediate given linguistic setting and also the whole system of language), and out-language factors ( social, cultural , and situational contexts) (Lotfipour Saedi, 1993: 10). But, Zoellick Harris uses it in a general sense. He believes that the discussion on discourse can be concluded from two aspects: the first is to develop conventional procedures and methods in descriptive linguistics and their usage at meta-sentence level (text) and the second is to create a relationship between lingual and non-lingual data like the relationship between language, culture, environment, and society. In the first aspect, merely lingual data are noticed. However, in the second aspect, non-lingual data like culture, environment, and society, which are out of linguistic domain, are considered (Bahrapour, 1999: 9).

Brown and Yule define discourse analysis as analysis of language in use. In this way, discourse analysis cannot merely be the description language forms independent from goals and functions to refer to which these forms are created in human affairs ( Bahrapour, 1999: 9).

Discourse analysis tries to study meta-sentence system and order of language elements. Therefore, it considers language units like oral interactions or written texts. Hence, discourse analysis deals with language in use in social contexts particularly interactions or conversations between interlocutors (Lotfipour Saedi, 1993: 10). Juxtaposition of the quoted definitions of discourse analysis indicates that as to discourse analysis, linguists propose two perspectives: one which defines discourse analysis as a way to consider and analyze language units longer than sentence; while, the other takes discourse analysis to be a specific focus on why and how language is used.

The first perspective, which considers form of text, is called structuralist; while, the second, which takes function of text into account, is called functional. The former sees discourse as a certain unit of language, which is longer than sentence, and discourse analysis is to analyze these units. The latter, however, holds that discourse analysis is studying different aspects of language in use, which concentrates on the functions of language units. The second group notice people's actions and deeds along with their certain purposes of using language. They make attempts to discover their social, cultural, and situational meanings (Bahrapour, 10).

Discourse analysis is studying the way texts are created, their functions in different contexts, and contradictions in them. This approach has a variety of sources ranging from speech act theory of Austin to structuralism, to post-structuralism, to hermeneutics, critical theory, and finally Foucauldian views. Recently, researchers of critical discourse analysis have employed discourse analysis in socio-linguistics, psycholinguistics, and raciolinguistics. The paramount studies in this sense are conducted by van Dijk, Halliday, Fairclough, and others. Intellectual foundations of discourse analysis are above just analyzing oral or written texts.

Discourse analysis is based on some presuppositions, which follow:

1. A unique text provokes different interpretations.
2. Reading is always reading text wrong.

3. Text a meaningful whole whose meaning is not essentially in the text itself.
4. Texts are laden with ideology.
5. Truth is always at risk.
6. Every text is produced under certain circumstances. Hence, social context of the text is very important (Emami, 2007).

For Zoellick Harris, discourse analysis is a way to analyze a constant oral or written text. This point assumes that descriptive linguistics extends over sentence limit at a time towards establishing a bridge between culture and language. Discourse analysis is analyzing such a language unit above sentence. Chief believes that such a unit is of high variety. (Yar-Mohammadi, 2003: 198-199). Discourse and text analysis is a branch of current linguistics whose purpose is to describe a meaningful constant speech which is over sentence (Aghagolzadeh, 2006: 46 & 57).

### Purposes of Discourse Analysis

The most remarkable purposes of discourse analysis can be summarized as follow:

1. To indicate the relationship between author, text, and reader.
2. To clarify the deep and complex structure of producing text, i.e. the way discourse is produced.
3. To demonstrate effects of context of text (language units) and situational context (social, cultural, political, historical, and cognitive factors) on discourse.
4. To show the specific situation and circumstance of interlocutor (conditions of discourse production).
5. To prove instability of meaning, i.e. meaning always undergoes changes and never is it complete. It also is never fully comprehended.
6. To hold that written or oral text is never unbiased but it depends on a specific situation. This issue may be completely unintentional and unconscious.
7. To show that the primary purpose of discourse analysis is to establish a novel technique and method to study texts, media, cultures, politics, society, and the like. Intellectual foundations of this approach are akin to the presuppositions of postmodernism (Bahrapour, 1999: 25).

### Critical Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis did not stop in linguistics and in a short while (about two decades) through the help of intellectuals like Foucault, Derrida, Pecheux, and other western dominant thinkers, from sociolinguistics and critical linguistics this approach entered cultural, social and political studies and acquired a critical form. These intellectuals who mainly developed discourse analysis as critical discourse analysis are indebted to Frankfurt critical school and its direct and indirect antecedents of new Marxists in the 1960s, particularly Gramsci and his followers, structuralists like Althusser, and neo-feminism thinkers (Bahrapour, 2000:10).

Critical discourse promotes discourse analysis by one level. In terms of inclusion of meaning, discourse analysis lays in a wider domain than socio-linguistics and critical linguistics. Intellectuals like Derrida, Pecheux, and Foucault, and especially thinkers such as van Dijk and Fairclough, who directly studied this field, helped discourse analysis bring in cultural, social, and political studies, where it gained a critical form.

Now if we take discourse analysis a level of description, critical discourse analysis promotes it to the level of interpretation and representation. And, while explaining and interpreting text, answers the question why this text should be selected out of possible linguistic options. And, over a certain occurrence, why individuals use certain expressions. Critical language and syntax discourse analysis relates these whys? Less to author. It asserts that institutions and organizations manage this collection and from text and individual is only part of it. Indeed, it holds that production and comprehension of text has to do with macro contexts like history, ideology, society, culture, and power.

On the other hand, its critical view is toward the theory assumes language to be a mirror which clearly reflects concepts and thoughts. Critical discourse analysis believes that unlike the mentioned definition, language is an opaque mirror which most of the time misinterprets realities. Critical discourse analysis opines that footprints of worldview, values, and socio-cultural categories are observable all over language (Emami, 2007).

### Discourse Theory: Language, Politics, and Society

Now discourse analysis has surpassed mere analysis stage, which is the initiative of any science, and has sufficiently achieved principles. Hence, it can be considered to be a science, which can be termed discorsal. (Yar-Mohammadi, 2003: 8). In general, discorsal is the science of studying theories concerning discourse. It includes all the discourse studies.

Discourse studies can be distinguished based on at least three criteria. These criteria are:

- Level of analysis ( micro and macro)
- Moving from or toward text analysis
- Type of study ( experimental, theoretical, and philosophical) ( Fazelie, 2004: 50)

It can be claimed that the first steps in creating discourse theory were taken by Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1931). Through introducing the term semiotics, which in his view is the science of studying the system of signs and signifiers and their meanings, he brought language, as one of the most important system of signs, to center of attention. For de Saussure, language as the system of signs encompasses the essential regulations through which the interlocutor establishes a meaningful relationship with others and stays faithful to it. He believes that structure of language as a system is a network of signs each of which gives meaning to others and relates the signifier and signified. He accentuates the point that language (*langue*) is different from speech (*parole*) because language is a social entity while speech is something personal. (de Saussure, 1999: 31). De Saussure pays a special attention to main structure of language and holds that because of being affected by tastes and mistakes of individuals, speech cannot be a valuable factor. In other words, the main elements of language in Saussurean structuralism are the signs which in spite of no predetermined and natural relationship between the signifier and signified, bring them together as a specific system of meaning. Therefore, the relationship between the signifier and signified is intentional and incidental (Sojoudi, 1991: 21). He assumes the relationship between language and outer world as a triangle whose sides are signifier, signified, and referent. Saussure likens language to chess where every sign acquires its identity and value in relation with others in a regulated system (Saussure, 1999: 126).

Therefore, one element, either signifier or word, is important only when it is used in the whole system. Words and signs like components of chess require a common collection of values and regulations, too. Discourse theorists accept Saussure's theory about relational identity of signs but they do not accept his point concerning the precise distinction between language and speech. They believe that signs acquire meaning when they are in use. Every sign acquires a variety of meanings based on different situations. Hence, in this theory, fixing meaning of signs is transitory and time-dependent and structure of language constantly changes as it is used (Sadra, 2007: 173).

Referring to Saussure's theory, Straus, one of the prominent anthropologists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, brought his structural analysis in social sciences. He emphasizes that there are some invariable elements among apparent discrepancies which can be discovered through structuralist approach (Straus, 2001: 7). Although development in structuralism drew science and philosophy domain's attention, some Marxist thinkers were impressed as well. One of them was Louis Althusser, the French philosopher, who influenced discourse theories, particularly comprehension of subject, through integrating Marxism and structuralism. He held that subject is subdued by ideology and assumed no independence and freedom to it. In his view, ideology puts individual in specific situations and regrading it the individual is expected to have special actions. The emphasis of structuralism on structure and its characteristic; and itself determining them and denying time-dependency of structures and conservative characteristic of structuralism provided the ground for it to be marginalized and leave its place to poststructuralist reading (Davoodi, 2010: 54).

By means of accentuating the pitfalls of Saussure's theory and structuralism, poststructuralists and postmodernists revised these theories. The common index of these revisions was questioning the overall concept of the package which was the foundation of conventional structuralism. Hence, if identities are only the present differences in discourse system, then no identity is fully formed unless it is a closed system.

Jacques Derrida criticized and challenged Saussurean structuralism and through presenting a poststructuralist view, introduced deconstructuralism approach as the most important concepts of intellectual and social domains. Derridean deconstructuralism, which centers on deconstructing text, aims to surpass borderlines and limitations and discover uncharted domains of meaning concepts (Zamiran, 2000: 7). Through presenting this plot, Derrida not only emphasizes the stark suspension in overlap between mind and meaning but also questions and deconstructs distinctions and dual tradition, which has a lot to do with will to power; and, indicates how transcendental discourses are internally vulnerable and owe their entity and identity to otherness and contrast with the other (Hagigi, 2003: 272).

In Derrida's theory, discourses are incomplete language systems tending to disseminate plural meanings with endless interpretations which are produced through representation and play of distinctions. Indeed, they play the role of a medium to make us comprehend the world and help shape our experience of the world. In contrast to this reality, as signs enjoy historical aspects and depend on situation and text, discourse encounters restrictions as to representation of the world. Because of this, language system cannot consolidate identity of signs and also the relationship between theories, words, and objects. Therefore, complete consolidation of meaning and arriving at a closed discursive system is impossible. Plus, it is unlikely to overtake it because deconstructuralism always tends to move towards metaphorical and verbal aspects and does not see plot of language but a game (Norris, 2006: 115).

Michel Foucault brought about a substantial revolution in the concept of discourse. Foucault presents two relatively different interpretations titled archeology and genealogy. Foucauldian theory of discourse is part of his archeology. For Foucault, since discourse consists of a limited number of statements, a specific can be defined to help them emerge. He believes that discourse should be analyzed in archeology and genealogy framework. From Foucault's perspective, there is nothing eternal and ideal but from the very beginning it is historical and temporal and also embodies meaning and social relationship and forms mentality and socio-political relationship (Davoodi, 2010: 57).

In his works, Foucault moves towards genealogy. In these works, he often probes into the relationship between power, knowledge, and truth. In fact, genealogy secures centrality of power and dominance in forming discourses, identities,

and institutions and tries to develop power dependent feature of master discourse. For Foucault, power should not be limited to political institutions but it should flow through the whole body of society and play a productive role (Dreyfus, 1997: 392).

The changes having occurred in the field of discourse indicate that modern methodologies, post-Saussurean linguistics, and Foucauldian hermeneutics rely on transcendental turn in modern philosophy and through surpassing the analysis concerning real affairs, take the circumstances that make them possible seriously. The fundamental assumption of poststructuralism as to discourse is that the possibility of envisioning thought and action depends on structuralizing mindfulness domain, which exists before any objective immediacy (Laclau, 1998: 31)

## Conclusion

Discourse theory is one of the novel and influential theories in linguistics, social sciences, and political sciences domain. Over recent decades, sociologists and politicians have widely benefited from this theory in analyzing social and political phenomena and structures. Discourse theory considers meaningful social practices and beliefs in political life. This theory investigates the method applied by semantic systems to discover the way people get aware of their roles in society. Plus, it analyzes the way these semantic systems or discourse influence political activities.

Discourses should not be assumed to be ideology in its conventional and limited sense, i.e. a collection of beliefs through which social individuals justify and explain their organized social practices. From discourse theory perspective, discourse encompasses all political and social practices including institutions and organizations. (Howarth, 1998: 45). Although in discourse theory mostly explanation of philosophical premises and theoretical concepts, a myriad of practical and experimental studies are to emerge social sciences based on discourse theory framework. Discourse theory integrates language, power, ideology, politics, and society and provides a dynamic domain to analyze political and social phenomena. History, religion, culture, and politics are embedded in language. Under the light of discourse theory the impacts of language on social and political life of nations can be discovered. Since it entered the domain of theoretical discussions, discourse theory has left deep impressions on theories concerning language, power, and community.

Fontanille holds that the first and foremost important issue regarding discourse is language practice. The relationship between human and language is an interactive one. However much human is affected by language affects it. Language and the world both have vacancy and only an interactive practice can fill up such a vacancy. Meanwhile, speech as a practice, which can lead to production of discourse or text, serves language and fills up its vacancy (Fontanille, 1998: 64).

Change in discourse is means to change the world. If we change our language, we will change our world. This is the primary goal of discourse and discourse analysis.

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