

A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF INSTAGRAM CAPTIONS USING NORMAN FAIRCLOUGH FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACTs

In the digital era, social media has become a central platform for communication and meaning-making. Instagram, as one of the most widely used platforms, allows users to express ideas not only through images but also through captions that carry implicit social meanings. This study aims to analyze Instagram captions using the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework proposed by Norman Fairclough, focusing on the relationship between language, power, and ideology. This research employs a qualitative descriptive method. The data consist of selected Instagram captions taken from specific accounts, which are analyzed using Fairclough's three-dimensional framework: text, discursive practice, and social practice. The analysis examines linguistic features, the process of production and consumption of the captions, and the broader social context influencing the discourse. The findings are expected to show that Instagram captions are not neutral but are shaped by and contribute to the construction of social realities, including the reinforcement or challenge of power relations and ideological perspectives. Furthermore, the study highlights how language in digital spaces plays a crucial role in influencing audience perception and social interaction. In conclusion, this research provides insights into how discourse on social media operates within a wider socio-cultural context. It also emphasizes the importance of critical awareness in interpreting digital texts, particularly in understanding how language can shape and reflect power and ideology in contemporary society.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Instagram captions, language, power, ideology, Norman Fairclough

ABSTRAK

Di era digital, media sosial telah menjadi platform utama untuk komunikasi dan pembentukan makna. Instagram, sebagai salah satu platform yang paling banyak digunakan, memungkinkan pengguna untuk mengekspresikan ide tidak hanya melalui gambar tetapi juga melalui caption yang mengandung makna sosial tersirat.

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis caption Instagram menggunakan kerangka Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) yang dikemukakan oleh Norman Fairclough, dengan fokus pada hubungan antara bahasa, kekuasaan, dan ideologi. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Data berupa caption Instagram yang dipilih dari akun tertentu, yang kemudian dianalisis menggunakan kerangka tiga dimensi Fairclough: teks, praktik diskursif, dan praktik sosial. Analisis ini mencakup fitur linguistik, proses produksi dan konsumsi caption, serta konteks sosial yang lebih luas yang memengaruhi wacana tersebut. Hasil penelitian diharapkan menunjukkan bahwa caption Instagram tidak bersifat netral, melainkan dibentuk oleh dan turut berkontribusi dalam konstruksi realitas sosial, termasuk dalam memperkuat atau menantang relasi kekuasaan dan perspektif ideologis. Selain itu, penelitian ini menyoroti bagaimana bahasa dalam ruang digital memainkan peran penting dalam memengaruhi persepsi audiens dan interaksi sosial. Kesimpulannya, penelitian ini memberikan wawasan tentang bagaimana wacana di media sosial beroperasi dalam konteks sosial-budaya yang lebih luas. Penelitian ini juga menekankan pentingnya kesadaran kritis dalam menafsirkan teks digital, khususnya dalam memahami bagaimana bahasa dapat membentuk dan mencerminkan kekuasaan serta ideologi dalam masyarakat kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: Analisis Wacana Kritis, caption Instagram, bahasa, kekuasaan, ideologi, Norman Fairclough

A. Introduction

In the digital era, social media platforms have become powerful tools for communication, self-expression, and information dissemination. Among these platforms, Instagram plays a significant role in shaping how individuals and institutions construct and share messages through visual content and captions. Instagram captions are not merely supplementary texts; they function as meaningful linguistic elements that convey ideas, emotions, and social perspectives.

Language used in Instagram captions often reflects broader social realities, including issues of power, ideology, and identity. Through specific choices of words, tone, and style, users may intentionally or unintentionally reproduce dominant ideologies or challenge existing social structures. Therefore, analyzing captions from a critical perspective is essential to uncover the hidden meanings and underlying intentions embedded in the text.

This study applies the framework proposed by Norman Fairclough, a prominent figure in Critical Discourse

Analysis (CDA), which emphasizes the relationship between language and social context. Fairclough's three-dimensional model consisting of text analysis, discursive practice, and social practice provides a comprehensive approach to examining how discourse operates within society.

By using Critical Discourse Analysis, this research aims to explore how Instagram captions reflect the relationship between language, power, and ideology. It seeks to reveal how discourse in social media contributes to shaping public perception and maintaining or challenging social norms. This study is expected to provide deeper insights into the role of language in digital communication and its impact on contemporary society.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an approach that examines how language is used to represent and construct social realities. According to Norman Fairclough, discourse is not only a form of communication but also a social practice that is closely linked to power and ideology. CDA focuses on uncovering hidden meanings in texts and how these meanings contribute to

the maintenance or transformation of social structures.

Fairclough proposes a three-dimensional model of discourse analysis, which includes:

1. Text (Micro Level) – analysis of linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure.
2. Discursive Practice (Meso Level) – analysis of how texts are produced, distributed, and consumed.
3. Social Practice (Macro Level) – analysis of the broader social and cultural context that influences the discourse.

This framework is widely used to analyze various forms of media, including digital texts such as Instagram captions.

Instagram has become a powerful medium for discourse in the digital age. Users utilize captions to communicate messages that go beyond the visual content. These captions often reflect social identities, cultural values, and ideological positions, making them relevant objects for discourse analysis.

B. Methodology

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach to explore and

interpret the meanings embedded in Instagram captions. The research focuses on understanding how language is used rather than measuring it statistically. The data consist of selected Instagram captions taken from specific accounts, such as influencers, public figures, or brands. The captions are chosen based on their relevance to social issues, persuasive language, or ideological content, making them suitable for discourse analysis. Data are collected through documentation by selecting, screenshotting, and categorizing captions that are relevant to the research objectives. Furthermore, the data are analyzed using the three-dimensional framework proposed by Norman Fairclough. The analysis focuses on text analysis to examine linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure, discursive practice analysis to understand how captions are produced and consumed, and social practice analysis to explore the broader social context and ideology reflected in the captions.

C. Results and Findings

This study aims to analyze Instagram captions from the account

@hari_speak5 by applying Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) proposed by Norman Fairclough. The analysis is conducted through three dimensions: *text (micro level)*, *discursive practice (meso level)*, and *social practice (macro level)*.

The results reveal that Instagram captions are not merely tools for delivering information. Instead, they function as *discursive practices that construct meaning, reflect ideology, and reproduce power relations* within digital communication. The language used in captions is carefully designed to influence audiences, promote learning, and shape perceptions of what is considered “correct” or “appropriate” English usage.

Results of Text Analysis (Micro Level)

At the micro level, the analysis focuses on linguistic features such as sentence structure, vocabulary, and stylistic choices found in captions on Instagram.

1. Use of Imperative Sentences

The findings show that most captions employ imperative forms, such as “*learn*,” “*stop saying*,” “*use*,” and “*save this post*.” These expressions function as direct instructions, positioning the content

creator as an authority figure or “digital teacher” who guides audience behavior.

2. Evaluative Vocabulary

The captions frequently include evaluative words such as “*better,*” “*professional,*” “*fluent,*” and “*excellent.*” These lexical choices imply the existence of a hierarchy in language use, where certain expressions are considered more valuable or appropriate than others.

3. Integration of Digital Language

The use of terms such as “*Gen Z slang,*” “*viral,*” and “*reel caption*” reflects the influence of digital culture on language. This demonstrates how language evolves within online communities and adapts to contemporary communication trends.

4. Function of Hashtags

Hashtags such as #*LearnEnglish,* #*FluentEnglish,* and #*DailyEnglishTips* function not only as categorization tools but also as markers of identity and community belonging. They help position the content within a specific discourse community of English learners.

Micro-Level Conclusion: The language used in captions is persuasive, instructive, and ideologically loaded, designed to

influence how audiences think and act.

Results of Discursive Practice (Meso Level)

At the meso level, the analysis examines how captions are produced, distributed, and consumed.

1. Content Production

The captions are produced strategically, considering clarity and simplicity of language, audience engagement, and platform algorithms. The repeated use of formats such as “Daily English Tip” indicates consistency in content branding and helps establish audience expectations.

2. Engagement Strategies

The content creator employs several engagement techniques, including call-to-action phrases such as “save this post,” short and visually appealing text, and the use of emojis. These strategies are designed to maximize interaction and visibility.

3. Audience Consumption

The audience actively engages with the content by saving posts, sharing content, and applying learned expressions in real-life communication. This shows that meaning is not fixed but is co-

constructed between the producer and the audience.

Meso-Level Conclusion: Instagram captions are part of a strategic and interactive communication process shaped by digital media practices.

Results of Social Practice (Macro Level)

At the macro level, the analysis connects the captions to broader social and cultural contexts.

1. Native-Speaker Ideology

Expressions such as “*sound like a native*” suggest that native speakers are seen as the ideal model of language proficiency. This reinforces linguistic hierarchies.

2. Self-Improvement Ideology

The captions promote continuous learning and improvement, reflecting a broader cultural emphasis on personal development.

3. Globalization of English

English is presented as a global language essential for communication in digital spaces, highlighting its role in globalization.

4. Power Relations

The content creator holds authority in defining what counts as “correct” English, influencing audience perceptions and practices.

Macro-Level Conclusion: The captions reflect dominant ideologies and power structures embedded in language use.

Detailed Data Analysis

1. Data 1

“Learn these 15 viral Gen Z slang words...”

Micro: imperative structure, digital vocabulary

Meso: engagement strategy (save/share)

Macro: native-speaker ideology

2. Data 2

“Stop saying ‘very good’...”

Micro: evaluative language

Meso: simplified educational content

Macro: linguistic standardization

3. Data 3

“Don’t say ‘I don’t understand’...”

Micro: contrast between informal and formal language

Meso: pragmatic instruction

Macro: language and social status

4. Data 4

“Daily English Tip...”

Micro: structured explanation

Meso: consistent content series

Macro: global communication norms

Summary Table of Findings

Dimension	Key Features	Function	Ideological Meaning
Micro	Imperative, evaluative words	Instruction	Language hierarchy
Meso	CTA, repetition	Engagement	Digital learning culture
Macro	Native norms, politeness	Social influence	Power & ideology

Based on the framework of Norman Fairclough, the findings demonstrate that Instagram captions function as complex social discourses rather than neutral texts.

At the micro level, language is used to guide and influence audience behavior. At the meso level, captions are strategically produced to maximize engagement and learning. At the macro level, they reflect broader social ideologies, including self-improvement, globalization, and linguistic hierarchy.

These findings confirm that social media platforms serve as spaces where language is used not only for communication but also for constructing social reality and reinforcing power relations.

D. Result

This study concludes that Instagram captions play a significant

role in shaping meaning in digital communication. Through Critical Discourse Analysis, it is evident that language in social media is not neutral but is influenced by ideology and power.

Captions function simultaneously as tools for communication, education, and social influence. Therefore, users must develop critical awareness when interpreting digital texts.

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