

Shakespeare Play by Afghans in London 2012: A Critical Discourse Analysist

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Abstract: *This paper analyzes some important discourses made by the performers and the director of a Shakespearean play. The play was performed by collection of Afghan actors and actresses in a huge international festival in London. There are many sociopolitical, psych economical, and cultural discourses associated with the play. There are many analyses going within the paper. First, discourse is the text, idea, literature, or a language form to reflect message/s. The second concept is analysis, which is not judgment in reality rather is the differentiation of phenomena within a language form. It could come by various forms. For example, Fairclough (1992) describes three sorts of analysis : the analysis of discourse practices, the analysis of text, and the analysis of social practices. This paper integrates with textual discourse analysis since the text has been transcribed from the video ; however, since there are some social concordances appear within the text and the video, it could the mixture of all three-analysis sorts.*

Key Words: *Perform, Literature, Discourse, Analysis, Actress, Critical.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

The significant approach by which the three-abovementioned pieces analyzed is the critical approach. Rogers (2011) explains “Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a problem-oriented and transdisciplinary set of theories and methods that have been widely used in educational research” (p. 1). As a result, this paper tries to reveal the fundamental challenges of Afghan community toward global development based on literature, identity, and culture. There are many negative stereotypes about the Afghanistan based on world media. This paper grasps the sociopolitical dilemmas of the discourse and clarifies the reasons why these have happened so far.

This study responds to the following three research questions :

1. Why was Afghanistan selected to dramatize Shakespearean work by their own language while the language was hard to be understood ?
2. How were the woman actresses selected for the play despite of many socio-cultural problems in Afghanistan ?
3. What could be the political influence of the play on the national government of Afghanistan ?

The story begins by ten actors who are hoping to redefine Shakespeare. They tried to show the public perception of Afghanistan by taking part in one of the most ambitious theatre festivals of all time. An important part of this festival was cultural transition. They players tried to dramatize Afghanistan social and cultural behaviours by a Shakespearean play. I certainly believe that language is the context of culture, so the players were explaining their traditions and national originalities by speaking Dari among international audience despite they realized that no one understood their language. As Fairclough (1993) said:

“The value of critical discourse analysis, as a method to be used alongside others in social scientific research on social and cultural change, and as a resource in struggles against exploitation and domination (p. 153).”

Based on Fairclough’s above idea, application of critical discourse analysis to realize the individual duty of the players in the drama clarifies how they tried to emphasize on international community not to understand the realistic picture of their community. They represented their culture in the framework of the gender-balanced, stronger literature, knowledge of acting and professionalism in the field, which all represented the social realities based on the play’s context. There were two women who played centrally in drama. The lives of these women are very hard since one has seven children with husband and another was working in a guesthouse.

Another cultural restriction in this play was the selection of female players. Afghanistan was interpreted as a complex socially bounded society. As a result, it was very hard for the director of play to select the professional women for the play. Here, the obstacles associated with Afghanistan culture and society critically analyzed. Since this country has had the war ideological heritages remained for many years and the people have not been dedicated to theatre and cinema, this gap appeared to be the big challengeable issue within the play.

Here, multimodality is another approach associated with analysis of this paper. As mentioned before in introduction, I have seen this visual-text from many dimensions; therefore, here we need to elaborate which sort of approach is multimodality in critical discourse analysis. As O'Halloran (2010) stated that critical discourse analysts are increasingly required to account for multimodal phenomena constructed through language and other resources (e.g., images, sound and music) and to relate higher-level critical insights on the social motivations of these texts to their realizations in lower-level expressive phenomena, and vice versa.

Based on social linguistic approaches to multimodality initiated by Bezemer (2009), this discourse is very argumentative since some of Afghan players in the drama were totally illiterate of what they performed but their gestures were relevant to what they do unconsciously.

Jeff Bezemer and Carey Jewitt (2009) believed that speech and writing are the central modes of representation and communication in a range of interrelated research traditions concerned with the social and situated use of language. Cited from Psathas, 1995, Goffman, 1981, Gumperz, 1999, Durante, 1997, Creeese, 2008, and Erickson, 2004, Bezemer (2009) stated that the social linguistic traditions include conversation analysis, interactional sociology, interactional sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, micro-ethnography, and linguistic ethnography. All of these traditions have also been and are increasingly concerned with modes other than language, such as gesture or gaze.

The way of acting, staying, moving hands, and talking apparently proved that these women are willing to move toward professionalism. For me, as a Dari native and literature specialized in Afghanistan, it is clear-cut that their discourses were disarranged and sometimes got lost. Like other national plays from other countries on the stage, the Afghan women rarely moved around and influenced by men.

"Afghanistan is a traditional society," one actress explains. "Many people are illiterate and don't understand the concept of theatre. I get harassed on the street. People call me a pervert and a prostitute. They say that we are a lady and should be at home. They don't understand."

These remarks of this Afghan actress revealed the facts that still the society is perplexed with full of superstitious beliefs. People have negative outlook from cinema, theatre, and drama. Now, the question behind her comment appears that who are the addressees to work on eradicating these beliefs. She believes that change should come by the help of foreigner because in another part of the movie, she said in London, "This country is very beautiful and peoples are very comfortable. I don't know why they are not known about Afghans." This discourse means a need for help. Based on CDA, the discourse is interrelated with social problems and the genre is very argumentative. Butt et al. (2004, p. 268) in article "Grammar – the first covert operation of war" initiated four systematic factors named system of different orders while he was analysing 9/11 by which any socio-political event is analyzed.

The movie shows psych economic challenges within playing the drama. It reflects how much psychological and economic problems people are facing with in Afghanistan. It emanates from one of the actresses who said, "My daughter was very sick." She said that she was teaching at the time but could not make enough money. So, she would say to her husband, "Your daughter is very sick. Please take her to the doctor." She became totally disappointed when her husband told her, "To hell with her. She's a girl, wait until she's married and then her husband will pay for treatment. If she is to die - then let her die." Therefore, this problem came to existence because of poor economy. And poor economy created psychological problems for the family. These psych economic challenges addition to security and social challenges are on the way of about entire Afghan families. It seems that the actor and actresses receive very small amount of money from their plays.

Another Afghan actress in other part of the video stated, "The six-week festival culminates in an Afghan Comedy of Errors. Director Corinne Jaber, who once performed with the RSC and has transposed Shakespeare's early farce to modern-day Afghanistan, masterminds the production." This means that Afghan women strongly need professionals in different fields to work with and educate them in different fields. Many criticisms about the women's obstacles in their community are apparently observed since the practicing period of drama was held in India rather than Afghanistan.

In one part of the discourse, it was clear that one of the greatest challenges had been finding women willing to participate. Of those women that took part in plays and theatre had to flee the country because of war. One is now living in Canada will appear in the Comedy or Errors, alongside two local actresses from Kabul. This semiotic also reflects socio-political problems within Afghanistan security.

Ms. Jaber said, "Shakespeare has particular relevance to Afghanistan. She explained that the fact that the play opens with a father searching for his lost family would speak to people here. After 30 years of war people do return looking for lost relatives - and family is so important, you just can't exist without your family." This is another model of discourse by which she tries to link the natural lives and cultural of Afghanistan to Shakespearean works so as to motivate the Afghan dramatists to successfully perform their play as well as to introduce the literature of Afghanistan worldwide.

In this play, it is clear from the director of this drama that Renaissance England was much closer to contemporary Afghanistan than anywhere in Europe. All the cultural codes within Shakespeare's plays have a meaning in Afghanistan,

and of course poetry is an integral part of Afghan culture and this country is famous for Rumi and hundreds of remarkable poets.

In another part of the video, it was stated that The Afghan National Theatre staged Shakespeare before it was destroyed during the civil war in the 1990s. Theatrical performances were banned by the Taliban, and more than 10 years after the fall of the regime, there is still little live theatre in Afghanistan. But it was destroyed during the civil war in the 1990s and never rebuilt. It shows the impacts of war for the past thirty years on the mind of the people and on the infrastructures of the society, especially the culture of acting i.e., cinema, drama, theatre, and so on. These discourses show new evidence that Afghanistan before 1980s had the Shakespearean stage and the senses of these plays are not new among people. More importantly, one of the actors in this play has enough knowledge of Shakespeare.

He said, "Shakespeare is not something new in Afghanistan. When I was younger, we used to go to the National Theatre in Kabul, and we saw Shakespeare. It was like a little Paris - people would leave the theatre at two in the morning. It was another world."

Another important issue is the political dimensions, which I understood from one of actor's ideas. Shah Mohammed in this play said that the reason we wanted to do this play is to show the world that Afghanistan has talented people, and rich culture. He added, "When Afghan directors cast a play, they consider the traditions and work in a way that considers the sensitivities of the society," he says.

He added, "Many foreigners come here, and when they leave the project is gone. They employ actors on contracts, and they play their roles, but when the director is gone that's it. They leave nothing." From these ideas, the realities come out that people around the world have had negative stereotypes of Afghanistan for many years.

The only things people associate Afghanistan with are drugs, war and terrorism. The reason they wanted to do this play could be to show the world that Afghanistan is not what they think: it has talented people, and rich culture.

2. SUMMARY:

Findings clarify the connections between micro-interactions, like inequality and challenges on the ways of women and Theater and Drama, and macro-interactions, like the political, social, economic, and security challenges, within the social structures. Critical discourse analysis analyzes any written or oral discourse and goes beyond that. And, multimodal discourse analysis analyzes a discourse from many different perspectives. The needs for these approaches become very serious when problems appear. However, these approaches are not judgements rather they explain the rates of complexities within a discourse. In this paper, I have analyzed the story using both CDA and MCA approaches using the systems of different orders elaborated by David G. Butt with his colleagues in their article "War – the first covert operation war." I have tried to analyze this movie from sociopolitical, psych economical, and cultural dimensions. These dimensions could apparently show the realities of Afghan society associated with drama and theater.

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