Organizational discourse:

Exploring identity, entrepreneurship and politics

الخطاب التّنظيميّ: استكشاف الهويّة وريادة الأعمال والسّياسات

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Abstract

This paper investigates the role of discourse as a social practice, with a particular focus on discourse as collective practice. It explores the interconnectedness of ideology and meaning in discourse, emphasizing how ideology shapes various social activities, including politics, identity and language use. The paper then discusses the significance of discursive practices, highlighting their role in constructing social realities and how individuals represent their social actions through meaning, which is fundamental aspect of social practices. Drawing on these three sections, the paper applies the discussed concepts to a real-world context: a Novus Project Management Services job vacancy advertisement posted on GulfTalent. The findings reveal that as political efforts aim to achieve national objectives, such as economic prosperity, the discourse increasingly reflects the power behind these collective endeavors and reinforces social and political identities.

Keywords: discourse, ideology, discursive practice, representation, knowledge, power, identity, politics.

1- د. كميل أ. مخايل حائز على شهادة دكتوراه في اللغات والترجمة من الجامعة اللبنانية، باحث ولساني يهتم بدراسات الخطاب والتداولية.

ملخص

تستقصي هذه الدّراسة دور الخطاب بصفته ممارسة اجتماعية، وتركز على مفهوم الممارسة الجماعيّة للخطاب. وتستكشف الدّراسة علاقة الأيديولوجيا بالمعنى في الخطاب، حيث تركّز على كيفية قيام الأيديولوجيا في صوغ الأنشطة الاجتماعيّة والسّياسيّة والتّأثير في بناء الهويّة واستعمال اللّغة. ثم تناقش الدّراسة موضوع الممارسات الخطابيّة وأهميتها، وتبرز دورها في إنشاء الوقائع الاجتماعيّة وكيفية قيام المرء بتمثيل أفعاله الاجتماعيّة بواسطة المعنى، وهو ما يعدّ مظهرًا رئيسًا من مظاهر الممارسة الاجتماعيّة.

وبناء على المباحث النّظريّة السّابقة، تختبر الدّراسة المبادئ التي نوقشت، وذلك في سياق عمليّ، وهو نصّ إعلان لخدمات إدارة المشاريع نوفوس، ونشر على منصة مواهب الخليج. تبين النّتائج أنّه كلما تضافرت الجهود السّياسيّة لتحقيق إنجازات وطنيّة مثل الازدهار الاقتصاديّ، يبيّن الخطاب على نحو واضح السّلطة التي تدعم هذه المساعي ويعزّز أيضا الهويّات السّياسيّة والاجتماعيّة.

الكلمات المفتاحيّة: الخطاب، الأيديولوجيا، الممارسة الخطابيّة، التّمثيل الخطابيّ، المعرفة، السّلطة، الهويّة، السّياسات

Introduction: Discourse as collective practice

Discourse as a tool of communication has experienced significant changes and developments over the past few decades. Numerous factors have contributed to these changes, notably poststructuralist ideas. These ideas reject the idea of an underlying structure upon which meaning can rest secure and guaranteed. Meaning is always in process, and what we call the 'meaning' of a text is only ever a momentary stop in a continuing flow of interpretations following interpretations (Storey, 2018, p. 131). The meaning of a discourse is not a straightforward process of encoding and decoding; rather, meaning is context-bound, but context is boundless (Culler, 2000, p. 67).

Consequently, meaning is the result of collaborative efforts or elements in context (Hall, 1992b, p. 292) and the linguistic forms of speech and writing express the social circumstances in which language occurs (Fowler and Kress, 2019, p. 26). In other words, while using language as a tool for communication can be seen as neutral, employing discourse for the same purpose is not so simple. The contextual representation of meanings involves more than just linguistic forms. Hence, social meanings and political identities are constructed within discourses defined as more or less sedimented systems of rules, relations and articulations that are shaped and reshaped in and through power struggles (Torfing, 2011, p. 191).

According to Stuart Hall (2001), the shift from language to discourse within Foucault's conceptualization underscores not purely linguistic concept; instead it is about language and practice (p. 72). Furthermore, the concept of discourse

is not about whether things exist but about where meaning comes from (Hall, 2009, p. 45).

Alternatively, discourse serves as an additional resource in which the production of meanings becomes more subtle and is influenced by intertextuality and interdiscursivity. This idea carries significant implications: while language is reiterative, invisible and semiotic, focusing on discourse means focusing on what is unique and individual (Todorov, 1995, p. 26), as well as what is visible and symbolic (Rajan, 2002, pp. 176-177), and on what is social (Lemke, 2005, p. 17).

Historically, Meanings were the main focus of semantics and pragmatics. However, after the post-structuralist turn -which reflects the advances in the social sciences- the analysis of discursive meanings and knowledge has become the primary interest in social sciences for various reasons. For example, Michel Foucault, a constructionist, regards meaning and meaningful practice as constructed within discourse (Hall, 2009, p. 44). What distinguishes this new framework is the idea that discourse, rather

than language, plays a crucial role in shaping social realities. Hence, what can this new framework offer that the old one did not regarding this idea?

In this context, Discourse is first understood as a form of social practice, and second, this type of practice

implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s) which frame it. A dialectical relationship is a two-way relationship: the discursive event is shaped by situations, institutions and social structures, but it also shapes them... It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it. Since discourse is so socially influential, it gives rise to important issues of power (Fairclough & Wodak, 2000, p. 258).

From this perspective, discourse is regarded as a collective practice of creative processes. Additionally, viewing discourse as a window into the mind has proven to be a more effective way to understand cognitive abilities than language alone. As a result, historical, media, political, organizational and corporate discourse are analyzed based on shared collective criteria, being understood as both collective and social practices.

In this sense, Michel Foucault (1972) argued that discourse should not be treated as a mere document of the mental qualities behind it, but as sequence of external events in which symbolic structures (formative rules) are manifested (pp. 138-139) and (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 248). These theoretical advancements in discourse studies have led to a new understanding: - discourses do not simply describe the social world; they constitute it by bringing certain phenomena into being... Discourse thus lays down the conditions of possibility that determine what can said, by whom, and when, and thus (Hardy & Phillips, 2004, p. 301).

Crucially, discourse is inherently intertwined with structures of power and systems of knowledge. This constitutive relationship moves analysis decisively beyond the confines of purely linguistic description, as will be

seen in paper's final section. Moreover, discourse legitimizes certain truths and regulates the behaviors of others. Given that discourse is productive, it creates knowledge and shapes social realities through communication, yielding power. These processes can occur on an individual or collective level.

Therefore, the function of power can influence either individuals or collective subjects. In the case of collective subjects, a common ground or common sense through which this process of influence works is essential, because the focus on the collective is associated with the highlighting of the collaborative processes through which shared representations arise (Harré & Moghaddam, 2015, p. 224). As a result of these conceptualizations, the conventions routinely drawn upon in discourse embody ideological assumptions which come to be taken as mere 'common sense', and which contribute to sustaining existing power relations (Fairclough, 2001b, p. 64). This is significant because public discourse is often a form of collective, institutional discourse, as is the power it enacts (van Dijk, 2008b, p. 54).

Accordingly, this research explores how organizational discourse captures social interactions and shared beliefs while simultaneously representing power dynamics and investigating cultural identity, entrepreneurship and politics within institutional structures. The significance of this inquiry is multifaceted; most importantly, it seeks to uncover the often-hidden roles of ideology and discursive practices across diverse context-specific settings. Therefore, the study will be grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and will draw on its analytical tools, particularly the theory of representation and the conceptualization of discursive practices. The analysis will focus on specific organizational discourse and communicative practices –such as textual, discursive, and social practice– to trace how meanings are produced and circulated. In the next section I will address the topic of ideology because it exerts its power subtly and on a societal level, shaping how people think and feel.

1. Dynamics of ideological mediation

The study of ideology within the social sciences has explored numerous ideas across a wide range of disciplines and reveals a significant amount of implicit information embedded in language use, offering a wealth of new insights. Among these insights are the connections between ideology and other forms of social human activities, such as politics, identity, education and power. However, I would like to begin this section by clarifying my view on the relationship between discursive practices, material worlds, and social events.

Given that practices represent the world in specific ways, they implicitly make the claim that this is how things are (Swidler, 2001, p. 99) and these ways are what will be discussed in the fourth section, where modality, intertextuality, and interdiscursivity contributed to the versatile nature of discourse. Therefore, discursive practices embrace different forms in which the world is meaningfully constructed in language or in other sign-systems (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 254). Moreover, practice weaves together the discursive and material worlds. Without language, communication and discourse, people could not tell the difference between behavior and practice (Alder & Pouliot, 2011, p. 8).

In this context, the relationship between semiotic (symbolic) and non-semiotic elements is essential for understanding discursive practices. Hence, I believe that discursive practices play a crucial role that goes beyond simply mediating between different worlds or parties. Instead, their primary function lies in maintaining the social world, including those social relations that involve unequal relations of power (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 63). This relationship implies that every discursive process is inscribed in ideological relations and will be internally moulded by their pressure (Eagleton, 1991, pp. 195-196).

In this perspective, ideology is not passive element; it is not simply inherited through various aspects of culture. Instead, it is an active

component that can be formed whenever a social reality is created and enacted through daily interactions and mediations, particularly through language use or discourse. Therefore, viewing discourse as constitutive –as contributing to the production, transformation and reproduction of the objects of social life (Fairclough, 2006, p. 41)– is significant here. Furthermore, the transformations occurring within discourse, known as discursive practices, often reflect the ideological totalization.

It can be assumed that ideology connects the social dimensions of an individual's existence. The more individual becomes aware of their existence, the more they evolve into a subject in Foucauldian sense, and this self-awareness is linked to their social existence. Consequently, ideology can be understood as an interpretation (or representation) of a social relationship that creates social meaning and has social consequences (Powers, 2007, p. 19). This process of creation involves discourse and ideology.

Many of the approaches discussed earlier were initially adopted by critical linguistics due to its significant role in the field. However, these approaches also became fundamental to critical discourse analysis (CDA). As a result, the social theory of discourse emerged, leading to a shift in focus, where social issues became a central concern for CDA. This is also why CDA may be characterized as a social movement of politically committed discourse analysts (van Dijk, 2015, p. 466, emphasis original).

For example, ideology, as defined within CDA, refers to meaning in the service of power: ways of representing aspects of the worlds, which may be operationalized in ways of acting and interacting and in 'ways of being' or identities, that contribute to establishing or sustaining unequal relations of power (Fairclough, 2010, p. 8). Ideology can also be used as constructions of significations/constructions of reality that are embedded in different dimensions of the forms/meanings or discursive practices. Furthermore, ideologies are propositions that generally figure as implicit assumptions in

texts (Fairclough, 1995, p. 14, emphasis added). This notion is reflected in the work of Willard Mullins (1972) who argued that the language of ideology is decidedly more sparse and economical (p. 507).

The previous discussion has focused on several features of ideology, particularly its philosophical and textual aspects, which have contributed to its impact and importance within discourse studies. Additionally, the cognitive power, evaluative power, action-orientation and logical coherence features of ideology are also important (Mullins, 1972, p. 507). These features can be summed up as follows:

1- ideology is more important than cognitions.

2- Ideology is capable of guiding individuals' evaluations.

3- Ideology provides guidance through action.

4- Ideology must be logically coherent (Wodak, 2012, p. 634; Mullins, 1972, pp. 506-510).

Researching ideology and its active role in society is closely linked to the societal process of communication. This connection can significantly influence how individuals perform discursively in various social contexts and relationships. Nearly every context in which we negotiate meaning is intertwined with negotiation of ideology, whether this occurs consciously or unconsciously, implicitly or explicitly. Therefore, ideology must be mediated and as a result, arts, literature, political systems and various cultural practices and discourses can all play a role in this mediation process.

Yet, what is of a major interest for this research is the verbal communication or discursive practices as a means for mediating ideology, because through which language may be used and abused to convey ideology, and at the same time mediation involves the constant transformation of meanings, both large scale and small, significant and insignificant, as media texts and texts about media circulate in writing, in speech and audiovisual forms, and as we, individually and collectively,

directly and indirectly, contribute to their production (Silverstone, 1999, p. 13).

As stated by Norman Fairclough (2010), language and ideology are deeply intertwined. As a result of this relationship, one aspect of this imbrication in the social which is inherent to the notion of discourse is that language is a material form of ideology, and language is invested by ideology (p. 59). In simpler terms, there is a hierarchical connection between ideology, which consists of an abstract set of beliefs, and discourse, which is the concrete form used to convey these pre-existing beliefs. This dynamic occurs within discourse and assumes a transformation of knowledge as well as in an individual's status, as it influences their actions and performance.

In this sense, Althusser emphasizes the importance of the relationship between ideology and the formation of social subjects. He defines Ideology as a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence and discourse through which we represent to ourselves our lived relations to our material conditions of existence (Althusser, 1971, p. 162).

Furthermore, Althusser claims that ideologies 'interpellate' individuals as subjects of particular sorts, placing them in particular subject 'positions'. Discourse plays a major part in such processes of interpellation (Fairclough, 2001a, p. 595). The implications of this relationship are complex and discourse theory has frequently examined various aspects of it, often connecting them to Marxist or post-Marxist theory. Language is, therefore, where actual and possible forms of social organization and their consequences are defined and contested (Broadfoot, Deetz, & Anderson, 2004, p. 195). As noted by Powers (2007), Althusser argued that ideology is a process that obscures the fact that unacknowledged value systems are operating in a systematic manner to oppress people (p. 19). Consequently, the concepts of discursive practices and representations will be discussed

in the next section, as they play both implicit and explicit roles in influencing people.

2. Mapping discursive practices and representations

Discourse became a focal point of attention following the emergence of poststructuralism, playing a crucial mediating role due to the intertwined relationship between meaning, discourse and ideology. While some aspects of this relationship were addressed earlier, this section will explore additional factors, particularly the ways in which discourse is produced and represented. These discursive practices have been discussed extensively, but their significance lies in their constitutive role in shaping knowledge–power relations. As Michel Foucault (1980) noted, power means relations (p. 198), and these relations are often produced discursively. The implication of this idea is that discourse is not composed only of linguistic components; discourse is also embedded in material practices (Hardy & Thomas, 2014, p. 324).

According to Hall (1992b), who discussed the relationship between discourse and power, discourses always operate in relation to power –they are part of the way power circulates and is contested. The question of whether a discourse is true or false is less important than whether it is effective in practice (p. 295). Practices have a performative effect that is observable; they actively contribute to the formation of discourse. This prompts us to reflect on the nature of practices and their relationship with discourse. In this regard, Mills (2003) argues that rather than seeing discourse simply as a set of statements which have some coherence, we should, rather, think of a discourse as existing because of a complex set of practices which try to keep them in circulation and other practices which try to fence them off from others and keep those other statements out of

circulation (p. 54).

As a result, it becomes evident that theorizing discourse begins to incorporate specific material statements, which arise from the power

generated within the discourse itself and are negotiated by social actors or through discursive subjects. Foucault argued that things meant something and were true only within a specific historical context… He thought that, in each period, discourse produced forms of knowledge, which differed radically from period to period, with no necessary continuity between them (Hall, 2001, p. 74).

In this framework, discursive practices emerged as crucial for linking text and social practice (Titscher et al., 2000. p. 150), but their significance goes beyond this linking role. Discursive practices encompass not only the usage of words but also factual claims, knowledges, moral resources, justifications and legitimation, and they make use of institutional or organizational resources (Keller, 2020, pp. 54–55).

It follows that discursive practices are concerned with the construction of social realities within societies. The main question to explore here is how discourse influences this process in various contexts. A discursive construction of reality focuses on the production of meaning and knowledge, as previously mentioned. This process necessitates the contextual use of meaning, knowledge and local expressions. Accordingly, Foucault studies discourse as a system of representation (Hall, 2001, p. 72).

Furthermore, although meaning is socially constructed, discourse both shapes and is shaped by society (Fairclough, 2013, p. 8). As Hall (1992b) noted, discourse is about the production of knowledge through language. But it is itself produced by a practice: 'discursive practice' –the practice of producing meaning. Since all social practices entail meaning, all practices have a discursive aspect. So, discourse enters into and influences all social practice (p. 291). Thus, discourse is understood as a social practice that affects how meaning is constructed. Burr (2015) put this idea differently, the social construction of meaning constructs our political thoughts, what we think and say, what we feel and desire, and what we do. Discourses can be seen as having the potential to be deployed ideologically, in the

service of power and in the interests of the relatively powerful groups in society (p. 100).

Before continuing I want to clarify some basic concepts mentioned above. First, discourse and power are intertwined; second, discourse and ideology are also connected, particularly in social and political interactions. While discourse or power can be used or abused, ideology plays a significant role in this process. Third, since discourse, ideology and power are woven together in a discursive framework, identities are constructed and negotiated within this context. Fourth, even though discourse is considered to be a social practice, it does not presuppose that the discourse participants are always free to say and think what they want. In this context, Angermuller (2015) argues that discursive practice of discourse participants is subject to rules and constraints, which they do not always control. While discourse typically exceeds what they mean to say, think, or do, they become subjects only by entering discourse. Subjects, actors or agents are, themselves, a discursive effect of discourse, and not its origin (p. 510).

Social constructionism, finally, is an important theoretical framework for analyzing identity. This perspective views identities as socially built in interaction and within social practices from inventories that are deployed according to contextual constraints. From this perspective, identities do not belong to people but are 'done' and performed in that they involve discursive and strategic work (De Fina, 2016, p. 169).

Critical discourse analysts have extensively discussed this conceptualization of identities and have found that a critical perspective differs from social constructionism. Specifically, they adopt sociocognitive framework viewing identities as mental constructs that possess a cognitive reality. These identities are shaped by shared mental representations of ourselves and others. As a result, critical discourse analysts regard social identities as relatively stable constructs that exist in the minds of social actors before they engage in interaction, are not constituted in it, and are

activated when people use them within concrete social occasions (De Fina, 2019, pp. 3–4).

These representations can take the form of knowledge, ideologies, attitudes, emotions, norms and values (Van Dijk, 1998, p. 314). My view in this context aligns with Norman Fairclough's dialectical–relational approach, suggesting that discourse shapes and is shaped by society and helps to constitute (and change) knowledge and its objects, social relations and social identity (Fairclough, 2013, p. 8, emphasis original). But what does the term 'representation' mean in this context, and how do people make utilize it in their everyday social interactions?

As argued by Stuart Hall (2009), representation involves using language to say

something meaningful about, or to represent, the world meaningfully, to other people… Representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture (p. 15). In other words, discussing representation means exploring the question of how people represent their social practice in meaning as a constitutive dimension or every social practice (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 158).

This conceptualization includes how individuals represent their thoughts and feelings towards others, as well as how they share and represent their experiences and knowledge regarding the realities they encounter –realities intertwined with ideology, language and identity, as well the concepts of discourse and representation. Hence, discourse, Foucault argues, is about the production of knowledge through language. But … Since all social practices entail meaning, and meanings shape and influence what we do –our conduct –all practices have a discursive aspect (Hall, 2009, p. 44.)

Nevertheless, social constructionist premises posit that representations are contingent, and that critique can facilitate the replacing of one representation with another. Additionally, distinguishing categorically

between representation and reality, and even if representation is never a direct reflection of reality, one cannot avoid representing and thus giving some sort of picture of reality (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, pp. 183-185).

Hall (2001) elaborates on these issues, arguing that Michael Foucault did not studied language, but discourse as a system of representation, i.e., he studied discourse not as a system of linguistic concept, but as an interconnected system of ideology and power… Therefore, the study of discourse includes the following elements: statements about something, pragmatic rules of talking subjects, embodied knowledge, used practices within institution (pp. 72-73).

From this perspective, it becomes crucial to analyze the role of discursive practices and the representations they create within the process of semiosis, particularly in the context of critical discourse analysis approach, where the focus is accordingly on both the discursive practices which construct representations of the world, social subjects and social relations, including power relations, and the role that these discursive practices play in furthering the interests of particular social groups (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 63). Within this framework, discursive representations always exist in a text, even when referring to imaginary objects (Matus, 2018, p. 115). Consequently, the knowledge produced from these discursive representations reflects the discursive subjectivity of that individual.

This type of analysis explores the relationship between meaning elements and their discursive organization, demonstrating that meanings are not limited to isolated signs. Rather, meanings are diverse and spread throughout the entire chain of discourse elements. Therefore, poststructuralist thinkers embrace this perspective. In other words, the aim of discourse studies is to provide an explanatory description of the intricate relations between forms of discourse elements and their functions in communication (Renkema & Schubert, 2018, p. 2).

The implications of these ideas are significant. One of these implications involves the cultural relationship between language and meanings, which differs from the relationship between discourse and meaning. The second implication focuses on the implicit meanings found within discourse, which are of clear interest in discourse studies. Regarding the first implication, individuals or institution can misuse or mistranslate this relationship. Concerning the second, institutions, political parties and individual can abuse this feature to influence others and create representations that align with the discourse goals pursued by the speaker, or to reflect the realities that support their power dynamics and dominant ideology.

Van Dijk (2008b) emphasizes the pragmatic nature of the relationship between language and power, asserting that power abuse can only manifest itself in language use where there is the possibility of variation or choice, such as calling the same person a terrorist or a freedom fighter, depending on your position and ideology (p. 3). He connects here between ideology, knowledge and language use, arguing that this relationship determines what types of knowledge is represented and why. This question is explored across various disciplines because it shed lights on active, not passive, reasoning of human. In this sense, Hall (2009) argues there is no simple relationship of reflection, imitation or one-to-one correspondence between language and the real world. Language does not work like a mirror. Meaning is produced within language, in and through various representational systems which, for convenience, we call 'languages'. Meaning is constructed through signifying, i.e., meaning-producing -practices (p. 28).

While Representation focuses on what is represented, specifically the meanings conveyed, discursive practices (thinking and talking) (Waugh et al., 2016, p. 87) pertain to how these meanings are represented and negotiated within social contexts, i.e., discursive practices pertain to the form of such meanings. Essentially, discursive practices involve the choices people make in representing meanings or ideologies, influencing how they

define and construct social realities they encounter.

Since empowered people are the ones who make decisions, discursive practices reveal the use of power, while representation exposes ideologies. Hall (1985) thoroughly discussed this issue and argued that

> The designation of ideologies as "systems of representation" acknowledges their essentially discursive and semiotic character. Systems of representation are the systems of meaning through which we represent the world to ourselves and one another. It acknowledges that ideological knowledge is the result of specific practices –the practices involved in the production of meaning (p. 103).

While Stuart Hall frames his theory of representation within a cultural perspective, Teun van Dijk approaches it from a socio-cognitive perspective in critical discourse analysis. For example, van Dijk's concept of representations or social cognitions is a part of an interdisciplinary approach that mediates between the micro- and macro-levels of society, linking discourse with action and the individual with the group… And there is no other way to relate macro-level notions such as group dominance and inequality with micro-level notions as

text, talk, meaning and understanding (van Dijk, 1993, pp. 257-280).

The ideas discussed here evolved over time due to various factors, including the development of cognitive, social and interdisciplinary approaches to discourse studies. van Dijk (2008a), who has engaged with the cognitive perspective for many years, particularly with Walter Kintsch, argues that the crucial "influencing" force is not in society or social structure itself, but in social members' representations or constructions of such social structure and social situations (p. 120, emphasis original). Notably, van Dijk did not use the term 'member' in the singular, but he uses the term 'members' in the plural, which highlights his focus on collective cognitive influences rather than individual ones, reflecting the complexity of ideological influence. For instance, van Dijk's concept of the ideological

square illustrates this type of representation: a distinction between the 'good Us' and the 'bad Them' (van Dijk, 2011, pp. 396–397).

The final perspective of representation theory that I want to discuss in this section is the critical perspective. Norman Fairclough, known for his dialectical approach, emphasizes that different aspects of the social world operate according to distinct logics. For instance, the relationship between parents and children is partly discursively constituted, but, at the same time, the family is an institution with concrete practices, pre-existing relationships and identities (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, pp. 19–62). As Fairclough (2006) states, the discursive constitution of society does not emanate from a free play of ideas in people's heads but from a social practice which is firmly rooted in and oriented to real, material social structures (p. 66).

Chouliaraki and Fairclough (2005) discuss the concept of representation by emphasizing that practices always have a reflexive dimension: people always generate representations of what they do as part of what they do (p. 22). Furthermore, they argue that discourse representation does not just bring different voices together, it combines and orders them in a particular way, for instance setting up hierarchical relations between them so that one voice is used to frame another or to inflect another (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 2005, p. 153).

In this excerpt, the concepts of intertextuality and interdiscursivity are echoed. First, it's important to note that hierarchical relationships often lead to certain voices or meanings being implicit while others are explicit, primarily for pragmatic reasons. Second, from a critical perspective, the interplay between explicit and implicit meanings, and how they frame understanding, can be more significant than the meanings themselves. From these ideas, it follows that discourse representations may become naturalized. According to Fairclough (2010), naturalization gives to particular ideological representations the status of common sense, and

thereby makes them opaque, i.e., no longer visible as ideologies (p. 44).

In this sense, discourses differ in how social events are represented, what is excluded or included, how abstractly or concretely events are represented, and

how more specifically the processes and relations, social actors, time and place of events are represented (Fairclough, 2003, p. 17). In other words, the way social events are portrayed is influenced by the political choices made by language users. These choices shape the meanings constructed around social and political relationships, reflecting the users' own power and dominance.

From this discussion, it becomes clear that there are differences in aspect, focus and analysis level between discursive practices and representation. These differences are shown below in the table (1):

Aspect	Representations	Discursive practices
Nature	what is represented (content/meaning)	How representation happens (process)
Focus	Products of discourse	Production/negotiation of discourse
Analysis level	Semantics, themes, symbols	Power dynamics, strategies, institutions
Theorists	Saussure (signs), Hall (encoding)	Foucault (power/knowledge), Fairclough (CDA)

4. Analyzing organizational discourse

Before beginning the analysis, I will outline the analytical framework based on

the conceptual framework mentioned earlier. The analytical framework will focus on several key components. It starts with Fairclough's three-dimensional model, which includes textual, discursive practice and social practice (Fairclough, 2010, p. 94). Within this framework, these types of analysis are supported by various analytical keys, encompassing following analytical categories:

- Representation of Social Actors (Inclusion, exclusion, activation, passivation): this refers to the ways in which individuals or groups are included or excluded, and whether they are activated or passivated within the text.
- Interdiscursivity and Intertextuality: this concept involves the Integration of various discourses and voices within the text.
- Modality and Evaluation: this relates to expressing degrees of certainty, obligation, or value judgments in statements.
- Presupposition & Implicature: these terms describe the implicit assumptions and underlying ideologies present in the texts.
- Lexical Fields: this involves the use of ideologically charged vocabulary and the formation of semantic frames.
- Framing: this relates to how issues or actors are positioned in relation to dominant ideologies (Flowerdew & Richardson, 2017).

As for the analysis, GulfTalent[2] posted a job vacancy advertisement on its website on April 7, 2025:

1 Novus Project Management Services (NPMS)

2 Dubai, UAE

3 posted on 7 April 2025

4 JOB DESCRIPTION / ROLE

5 Employment: Full Time

6 Key Responsibilities:

7 Plan and coordinate construction activities for timely completion of projects.

8 Able to understand specifications/methodology and civil drawings/ finishing activities.

9 Coordinate with project site teams & sub-contractors, provide technical guidance and support and ensure timely completion with required quality.

10 Co-ordinate with MEP and Finishing team to avoid any rework.

11 Requirements:

12 Qualifications:

13 Diploma/bachelor's degree in civil engineering, Construction Management or related field.

14 Proven minimum 5 years' experience in managing civil/renovation work along with project management and team coordination.

15 Strong knowledge of construction materials and work techniques.

16 Excellent communication and leadership skills.

17 Detail-oriented and strong problem-solving abilities.

18 Skills:

19 Proficient in Microsoft Office Suite & AutoCAD, Revit, BIM and other design management tools etc.

20 Familiarity with Project Management Software and tools such as MS Project or Primavera.

21 Knowledge of using SAP & ERP.

22 Communicate with clients, consultants, contractors and other stakeholders.

23 Salary:

24 AED 5,000 to 10,000 per month inclusive of fixed allowances.

25 Additional benefits: Annual Paid leave as per UAE labour law + Return Air Ticket to Native country

26 KEY DEMOGRAPHIC REQUIREMENTS

27 Based in UAE.

28 ABOUT THE COMPANY[3]

4.1 Textual, discursive practice and social practice analysis

First, I will begin with an analysis of the textual content. This advertisement or discourse provides a wealth of information about the vacancy offered on the website. The text is divided into six structural sections: (1–3; 4–10; 11–17; 18–22; 23–25; 26–28), each addressing a specific topic while maintaining coherence. The details are presented in a concise manner, utilizing a diverse and effective use of language through five types of phrases: verb phrases (L. 7, 9, 10 and 22), noun phrases (L. 1, 2, 4, 6, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25 and 26), adjectival phrases (L.5 , 8 and 19), participial phrases (L. 3 and 27), and prepositional phrase (L. 28).

In this discourse, the use of language suggests that certain qualifications are preferred rather than strictly mandatory (L. 8). At first glance, this choice indicates a preference; however, the pragmatic meaning of this modality reveals that the phrasing demonstrates a deep understanding of the job's requirements. As for Wording, in (L. 9) the authors use four verbs instead of typical noun phrases, which are more common in other lines. This wording implies that an active, agile employee is desired, or that a younger candidate is preferred. In other words, there is an implicit requirement embedded in this stylistic choice.

Transitivity is employed in this discourse and is presented to the public with a sense of neutrality. This is important in professional settings where a degree of impersonality is necessary. Nominalization, which is regarded as a quality of transitivity alongside passivity (Fairclough, 2010, p. 107), is prominently featured in this discourse. Its purpose is to provide a concise and formal language while describing the details of the vacancy in a precise and objective manner (L. 13, 20 and 21). Additionally, this use of language indicates that the details of the job are in demand and accepted worldwide.

The concept of nominalization reveals, from a discursive perspective, that intertextuality and interdiscursivity are present in this discourse. For example, they involve two famous verbs used in professional settings: plan and coordinate (L. 7). Additionally, the discourse includes mixed genres such as informational discourse: key responsibilities, requirements and qualifications (L. 6, 11 and 12) respectively, as well as organizational and legal discourse (L. 24 and 25). Furthermore, various styles are integrated into this discourse, including a formal style characterized by precise terminology and an objective tone, a direct communication which involve expressing needs and clear instructions without ambiguity (L. 7, 9 and 22), and a technical style focused on specific skills (L. 21).

This type of representation indicates that the text is written or influenced by at least three parties: first, the main company NPMS; second, the job platform; third, the external element or the virtual employee, who contributes intentionally and unintentionally to shape the details presented in the discourse or advertisement. As a result, this discourse has been crafted according to presumed criteria and in performative style, particularly in the use of verbal phrases that reflect the competitiveness of the applicants.

As a social practice, this discourse goes beyond simply outlining the primary responsibilities assigned to employees. Instead, it highlights globally recognized working conditions, and the requirements and rights of employees, such as skills, salary and allowances. By adhering to these established terms and conditions, NPMS positions itself within a global corporate framework, comparable to major international companies in Europe and America. Thus, NPMS's practices can be understood through an ideological lens, demonstrating that the company follows a global employment system. In other words, the local and normative policies governing NPMS's terms of employment are part of a broader policy landscape.

The ideas discussed here are conveyed through specific and general terms that the discourse either presupposes implicitly or explicitly states. On one hand, the discourse outlines a particular requirement or policy that requires applicants to be UAE residents (L. 27). On the other hand, it specifies several general requirements for applicants, such as holding a diploma or bachelor's degree (L. 13), having relevant experience (L. 14), and the ability to communicate with clients (L. 22). Additionally, the discourse indicates that applicants or the social actors within it must be familiar with specialized knowledge or skills (L. 19–21). It also suggests that speaking English language in Arabic-speaking country is not necessarily viewed as a skill but rather as an assumption or something that is taken for granted or framed as natural.

4.2 Beyond discursive analysis: Identity, entrepreneurship and politics

I will begin this section of the analysis by using a (CDA) lens. First, as Ruth Wodak (2014) noted, critical analysis of discourse means making explicit the implicit relationship between discourse, power and ideology, challenging surface meanings, and not taking anything for granted (p. 304). Second, semiosis is the making of meaning through recourse to language and other semiotic systems that, as critical realists, we need the tools and skills of critical semiotic analysis (linguistic analysis, discourse analysis etc.) to reflect (critically) on any text (Fairclough, 2010, p. 212).

This advertisement can be viewed as a tangible representation of various developments in the UAE. Over the past twenty-five years, the UAE, particularly Dubai, has attracted numerous international companies and established itself as a major global business hub. Consequently, state-facilitated entrepreneurship has become a significant force shaping political priorities and power dynamics in Dubai. This entrepreneurship spirit has influenced many aspects of the organizational discourse in the UAE, especially the creation and dissemination of such discourses.

In other words, this discourse serves as a semiosis, reflecting Dubai's unique identity within the Arabian Gulf. This identity, which pertains to both individuals and groups, is conveyed in the discourse mentioned above.

In this sense, the [this] discourse is not an isolated event; rather it consists of a series of events and texts, forming a chain that includes intertextuality, interdiscursivity and recontextualization. Therefore, the participants in an event [or this event] inevitably draw upon their own networks of communication and on a range of information sources (Fairclough, 2010, pp. 420-421). For example, formal and concise language is employed in the discourse, along with performative acts and competitive language.

This advertisement serves as a form of organizational discourse, utilizing ideological elements to engage a diverse range of applicants globally and to subtly influence their decision-making. This aim aligns with van Dijk's ideological square, specifically through positive self-representation and the strategic omission of disadvantages. First, the advertisement constructs the company name as inherently revolutionary (e.g., highlighting that Novus derives from the Latin word for new). Second, it positions NPMS as an internationally competitive company reflecting high standards. For instance, the adjectival phrase (L. 8) and noun phrase (L. 25) encourage applications by asserting that NPMS's terms and offers mirror international benchmarks. Moreover, the discourse conspicuously omits any mention of potential work tensions or challenges, further reinforcing the positive self-representation.

Furthermore, the discursive choices used in this advertisement aligns with universal ideological expectations, such as the use of JOB DECRIPTION/ROLE (L. 4), key responsibilities (L. 6), requirements (L. 11), and qualifications (L. 12). All these discursive choices illustrate a managerial discourse and indicate that the company's identity and goals are set and clear or serves as an identity kit (Gee, 1989, p. 7). Moreover,

while these choices reveal some aspects of Dubai labor policies and ideologies and represent them as acceptable or desirable, they conceal others, such as specific working hours and days.

These criteria, along with others, are used in the advertisement not just as grammatical tools, but as semiosis tools that reflect and reinforce the ideology of cultural superiority, contributing to the development of national identity in the UAE. In this context, Stuart Hall (1992a) emphasizes that

> Identity bridges the gap between the 'inside' and the 'outside'—between the personal and the public worlds. The fact that we project 'ourselves' into these cultural identities, at the same time internalizing their meanings and values, making them 'part of us', helps to align our subjective feelings with the objective places we occupy in the social and cultural world. Identity thus stitches (or, to use a current metaphor, 'sutures') the subject into the structure. It stabilizes both subjects and the cultural worlds they inhabit, making both reciprocally more unified and predictable (p. 276).

This advertisement reflects the growing influence of various aspects of contemporary UAE culture, including economic, social and political dimensions. It is particularly relevant to the national politics of the UAE, which is widely recognized around the world. The objectives of this political framework include political stability, economic prosperity, and sustainable development. As Fairclough (2006) explains, any discursive 'events' (i.e., any instance of discourse) is seen as being simultaneously a piece of text, an instance of discursive practice [how it's produced and interpreted], and instance of social practice (p. 4).

Furthermore, media discourse and other forms of communication are believed to support the UAE's efforts to enhance its international standing in an ever-changing global landscape. This concept can also be seen in the coherent elements of the discourse structures, which effectively connect the micro-level details to broader macro-level themes. For instance, the

organization of the theme and rheme in lines (9, 10 and 22) demonstrates coherence through a progressive flow of information and a clear, stable structure. Often, the use of nominalization and other tools such as genre and style in similar discourses serves to legitimize the social use of power within discourse (Reisigl & Wodak, 2014, p. 26). This, in turn, helps to construct and legitimize social relations (Fairclough, 2006, p. 4).

5. Conclusion

The organizational discourse that I have just analyzed reveals that national identity in the UAE evolves rapidly due to both internal and external factors. Twenty-five years ago, such discourses hardly existed. However, over time, numerous human activities have been organized in the UAE and other similar countries in the Arabian Gulf. Therefore, analyzing organizational discourse in these changing environments becomes increasingly significant. Not only is identity changing and evolving, but all aspects of ideological activities –including economic, social, religious and political life– are continuously transforming.

Given the influence of these factors on human thought at both individual and collective levels, their discursive and representational dimensions offer crucial insights. They illuminate the pragmatic implications of discourse, revealing how it projects future directions and possibilities that shape identity construction and ideological activities.

5.1 Recommendations, limitations, and implications

The study recommend that future studies should adopt longitudinal and comparative designs to trace the evolving nature of identity discourses in the UAE and the Gulf. Integrating multi-modal materials and engaging with under-represented groups –such as migrants, women, and youth– would provide a more inclusive perspective. Methodologically, combining critical discourse analysis with ethnographic approaches could clarify how institutional narratives are interpreted in everyday contexts. As for its limitations, the study relies on a limited corpus of organizational texts that

may privilege dominant voices and overlook counter-discourses. Findings reflect a specific historical moment in a rapidly changing environment, and the interpretive nature of CDA means that researcher positionality inevitably shapes the analysis. As for its implication, the study highlights identity entrepreneurship as a strategic discursive process through which institutions legitimize particular visions of national belonging. It also signals the need for more pluralistic narratives, as homogenizing discourses risk marginalizing segments of society and constraining inclusive social development.

Notes

1. Kamil A. Mikhael, PhD in languages and translation, is Linguist and Researcher, Beirut-Lebanon.
2. GulfTalent is a leading online recruitment portal in the Middle East, used by over 10 million experienced professionals from all sectors and job categories. GulfTalent is founded in 2005 and run by a seasoned team of young professionals.

   https: www.guftalent.com/about (Accessed on June 10, 2025)
3. https://www.gulftalent.com/uae/jobs/civil-project-engineer-456424 (Accessed on April 27, 2025)

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