

CULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF DISCOURSE: AN ANALYTICAL APPROACH

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Discourse is one of the central categories of modern linguistics and cultural studies. It is not only a linguistic unit but also a reflection of the cultural, social, and historical contexts in which communication takes place. The study of discourse is significant because it helps to reveal the worldview, values, and identity of a nation. Every society expresses itself through discourse, and the cultural elements embedded in communication become markers of national identity. Thus, discourse can be viewed as both a linguistic and a cultural phenomenon.

The term “*discourse*” has been defined in various ways by scholars. Fairclough explains discourse as “the use of language as a form of social practice”, emphasizing that language is always connected to power, ideology, and cultural relations¹. Similarly, Van Dijk describes discourse as “a form of communication that integrates text, talk, cognition, and society”. These definitions highlight that discourse is not limited to spoken or written texts, but also involves broader cultural meanings and practices².

From a cultural perspective, discourse includes verbal and non-verbal elements, such as metaphors, symbols, politeness strategies, and even silence, all of which are culturally shaped. For instance, the way people address elders in Uzbek culture reflects values of respect and hierarchy, while English discourse tends to emphasize individualism and equality. These differences demonstrate that discourse embodies cultural codes that are essential for understanding societies.

Discourse functions as a mirror of cultural identity because it encodes traditions, values, and social norms. According to Wodak, discourse is “socially constitutive”, meaning that it does not simply reflect culture but also constructs it³. For example, national narratives, folklore, and proverbs form part of discourse practices that transmit cultural heritage from one generation to another over the years.

An illustrative example is the proverb “Non topib yegan el aziz” (A nation that earns its bread is dear) in Uzbek discourse. This reflects the central cultural role of bread (non) as a sacred symbol of life and sustenance. In contrast, in English culture, the expression “time is money” reflects the value placed on productivity and economic efficiency. Both examples highlight how discourse reveals cultural priorities and ways of thinking.

Comparative studies show that different nations construct discourse according to their cultural frameworks. Tannen observes that conversational styles in American culture tend to favor directness and clarity, while in many Eastern cultures, including Uzbek, discourse is

¹ Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. Longman.

² Van Dijk, T. A. (1997). *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*. Sage.

³ Wodak, R. (2001). The Discourse-Historical Approach. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis* (pp. 63–94).

often indirect and context-dependent. This difference is not merely linguistic but deeply cultural, tied to values of collectivism, respect, and social harmony.

Moreover, discourse in political speeches, media, and literature often embodies cultural ideologies. For instance, postcolonial discourse in African nations frequently emphasizes resistance, identity, and decolonization, which are historically and culturally specific issues (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2002). Thus, discourse can be understood as a cultural piece that both preserves history and shapes future identity. Discourse not only reflects cultural norms but also conveys what scholars call the “naïve picture of the world.” This concept refers to the collective, everyday worldview of a nation—how people intuitively perceive reality, nature, society, and human relationships. As noted by Maslova, the naïve picture of the world is “a system of culturally determined stereotypes and categories that are fixed in language.” Through discourse, these categories become visible in proverbs, metaphors, and common expressions that reveal how nations organize their understanding of life⁴. For example, in Uzbek discourse, nature is often perceived as sacred and generous, as reflected in sayings such as “Yer ona, suv hayot” (“Earth is mother, water is life”), which encodes a worldview based on gratitude and respect toward natural resources.

Furthermore, discourse functions as a repository of collective wisdom that constructs and transmits this naïve worldview across generations. According to Karasik (2002), discourse is a form of cultural memory where linguistic signs preserve “models of perception” unique to each community. English expressions like “every man is the architect of his own fortune” reflect an individualistic worldview, while in Uzbek discourse the proverb “Birlik bor joyda — yengilmas kuch” (“Where there is unity, there is invincible strength”) highlights collectivism as a key cultural value. Thus, discourse does not merely describe reality but frames it, showing how each nation interprets the world through its own cultural lens.

Discourse is more than a linguistic phenomenon; it is a cultural piece that reflects and constructs the worldview of a nation. By analyzing discourse, scholars can uncover how culture is encoded in language and communication. It shows the values, traditions, and beliefs of a community while simultaneously shaping social interactions. Therefore, discourse serves as both a mirror and a tool of cultural identity, making it an essential subject of interdisciplinary research in linguistics, anthropology, and cultural studies.

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⁴ Maslova, V. A. (2004). *Лингвокультурология [Linguoculturology]*. Moscow: Academia.

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