

Representation of Social Actors in J. Krishnamurti and Alan Watts' Philosophical Speeches: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

This study, through the lens of Theo van Leeuwen's critical discourse analysis model, investigates the representation of social actors in the lectures of two renowned philosophers, namely J. Krishnamurti and Alan Watts. The analysis of the transcribed lectures of the selected philosophers examined the representation of social actors with an emphasis on frequencies of inclusion, exclusion and the morpho-syntactic mechanisms employed in these speeches to exclude social actors. . The results showed that the social actors were represented differently in some discursive features: Krishnamurti, in his lecture(s), addressed a wider range of audience, beyond those people who were physically present in front of him. He deliberately avoided assuming the role of a teacher, and speaking as a 'we' to a 'one.' Alan Watts, on the other hand, was more involved with 'I' and 'you', present here and now in the lecture room.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis (CDA), inclusion/exclusion pattern, representation, social actors

INTRODUCTION

Speech is a social practice; "social practices are socially regulated ways of doing things," as defined by van Leeuwen (Leeuwen T. V., 2008, p. 6). The best way to understand this concept is to think of a lecture as a genre, defined as "a linguistically realized activity type" (Martin, Lexical Cohesion, Field and Genre: Parcelling Experience and Discourse Goals., 1984a). A lecture is a social practice, which is "regulated to different degrees in different ways" (Leeuwen T. V., 2008, p. 7). The focus of this paper is tailored under the microscope of van Leeuwen's CDA model. As a research framework, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an ideology detector. Its practitioners employ different theoretical orientations in uncovering the creeping ideologies and asymmetry in texts they wish to approach. "What unites critical discourse analysis is neither methodology nor theoretical orthodoxy, but a common goal: the critique of the hegemonic discourses and genres that effect inequities, injustices, and oppression in contemporary society"

(Leeuwen T. v., 2009). This paper's aim is not to uncover any of the items mentioned above. This paper is set to see how social actors of a lecture are represented in Krishnamurti and Watts' speeches. The speech selected for analysis, is the lectures of two renowned philosophers, namely J. Krishnamurti and Alan Watts. The former philosopher's goal in life was to set man free, and the latter to decipher eastern philosophy for the western audience. In a philosophical lecture, there are four social actors: the speaker, the audience, the collective 'we', and a typical human being (referred to as 'one' or 'human beings'). They gave many a lecture on the philosophy of life to many an individual. Each had his own purpose of doing so.

Krishnamurti

J. Krishnamurti is regarded as one of the greatest spiritual teachers of the twentieth century. His only concern was "to set man absolutely unconditionally free" (Krishnamurti J. , 1974). To do so, through a large number of recorded (and unrecorded) speeches, he put forth his radical views towards life 'with a disarming simplicity,' according to the back cover of his book, *The Flight of the Eagle*. Part of Krishna's teaching is about self, or more accurately, 'no self.' In one of his lectures, he states that "Our relationship is a process of self-isolation; each one is building a wall of self-enclosure, which excludes love, only breeding ill will and misery" (Krishnamurti online, 2014). The reason this paper is written is the curiosity of the researcher about Krishna's obsessive and explicit attempts to deemphasize his self; he deliberately censors the pronoun, "I" in his speeches, and constantly refers to himself as "the speaker" or "he." This obsession led to a critical discourse analysis of one of his speeches in comparison with another philosopher who was influenced by Krishna: Allan Watts.

Allan Watts

Alan Watts or Alan Wilson Watts was a British philosopher, writer, and speaker who popularized and interpreted Eastern Philosophy for the Western audience. The choice of one of his lectures came, again, out of the curiosity of the researcher, as explained above. The content of his lectures were similar in many ways to those of Krishna. For instance, in the selected lecture of the current paper, he says, "...your personality is your idea of your "self", your image of yourself, and that's made up of how you feel [about] yourself, how you think about yourself thrown in with what all your friends and relations have told you about yourself. So your image of yourself obviously isn't you any more than your photograph is you or any more than the image of *anything* is it" (Watts, 1977).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The representation of social actors has been the focal point of numerous studies in the literature. These studies make use of van Leeuwen's model to uncover injustice of many kinds in the deep layers of different types of discourse. That is why the closest ones to the present paper will be reviewed below.

Nasser Rashidi and Alireza Rasti (2012) adopted and adapted Theo van Leeuwen's model of the representation of social actors to expose the morpho-syntactic modes through which social actors (5+1 and some other countries) involved in Iran's nuclear activities discourse. The probed social actors were represented in news reports of four Western quality papers. These news media, each to some or great extent, dealt with the issue of imposing or tightening sanctions on Iran. The following newspapers were the source of data in the study: The Economist, Express, The Washington Post, and The New York Times. Using the five sets of categories explained above, they showed "the possible asymmetrical patterns in representing a variety of social actors involved, in particular the actors associated with the Western camp and the Iranian government on the issue of the sanctions" (ibid). The conclusion drawn from this paper revealed that there was an ideological bias in full force against Iran.

In another study, Bustam, Heriyanto, & Citraresman (2013) aimed to discover the exclusion strategies used by one of English language newspapers in Indonesia, The Jakarta Post Newspaper, in representing the social actors in the case of FPI's rejection to Lady Gaga's performance in Indonesia. Their model, exactly like the previous study and the current paper, belonged to van Leeuwen. However, they adapted it differently from the previous study. They only focused on exclusion strategies and their subcategories: suppression and backgrounding. The results of the study showed that "the exclusion strategies mostly used are suppressions; there are 95% of suppressions. The suppressions are linguistically realized by passive agent deletion, which is 10%, 80% by nominalization and process nouns, and 5% by non-finite clauses. The Jakarta Post Newspaper only used 5% of backgrounding in the news. Almost 90% of exclusion strategies go to the pro social actors of this case. The pro group is excluded because The Jakarta Post Newspaper wants to drive the readers' attention to the other actor (the victim) which here is Lady Gaga and her supporters as the Con group (ibid).

Kabgani (2013) embarked upon another similar journey to explore the hidden ideologies and biases in texts. In his paper, the van Leeuwen's (1996) CDA framework was used to examine an article from a British broadsheet newspaper, the Guardian. His adaptation of the model was rather different from the previous studies, mentioned. He chose eleven elements from the comprehensive framework. The focus of his study was on the representation of Muslim women in non-Islamic media.

Sahragard and Davatgarzadeh (2012) utilized elements of van Leeuwen's framework (1996) as the criterion for the analysis of the linguistic representation of male and female social actors in the Interchange Third Edition. They adopted and adapted Theo van Leeuwen's model of the representation of social actors for the fact that this is the only comprehensive framework in CDA studies that lend itself very nicely to the analysis of discourse when representation of actors are looked at from a social standpoint.

THE STUDY

This paper looks critically at the textual channel (transcriptions) through which Krishnamurti and Alan Watts communicate; the aim is to see comparatively how the social actors of a philosophical lecture are represented in the discourses of the two philosophers.

Given the objective, the following research questions were advanced.

- 1) Are the social actors in the two speeches more included or excluded?
- 2) Are the morpho-syntactic mechanisms employed by these great teachers to exclude social actors, especially their own selves, similar?

Generally, this study is important in that it aims to see if one can consciously manipulate the representation of one's own self in discourse. Many a study has looked upon this through newspapers where inclusion and exclusion of social actors are done rather subconsciously or without the control of the discourse makers. A journalist can exclude a whole country from its active presence in a matter without knowing he/she is doing so because what a journalist writes is a reflection of a deep-seated belief. Here, with Krishnamurti and Alan Watts, what we deal with is not the same; they talk about the state of no self in different ways and it is worth a probe to see how they deal with the pronoun, "I" as well as other typical social actors of a lecture. Specially, Krishnamurti's lecture is of more significance here since this work is primarily based on his explicit and deliberate attempts to avoid referring to himself, as 'I'.

Data Collection Procedures

The materials used in this paper for analysis is taken from two sources. The first one is the book, *the Flight of the Eagle*, which comprises Krishnamurti's lectures. The first chapter of this book, titled Freedom, is chosen. It is his second public talk given by him in London in 1969. Of course, since it was a rather long lecture and its analysis would not be technically easy, one thousand words of his transcribed speech, starting from the beginning were selected. The choice made here is based on no particular reason. This book in general and this talk in particular are chosen randomly out of his many other books and recorded talks. In this way, the researcher bias in his sample selection is controlled.

The second source is from the book, *The Essence of Alan Watts Volume 4*. This book is a collection of Watts' speeches on different philosophical matters. A one-thousand-word excerpt was selected in exactly the same manner described above.

The data then was analyzed using Theo van Leeuwen's powerful socio-semantic categories of the representation of social actors. Also, since van Leeuwen's framework, in its entirety, can be applied only to a huge corpus dealing with diverse issues and social groups, only one set of categories, related to the representation of social actors,

from his model was found to be of relevance to analyzing the data here. This category includes inclusion/exclusion, which is delineated in the following.

The van Leeuwen's Morpho-Syntactic Inventory of Representational Choices

This paper, in dealing with the discourse of Krishnamurti and Watts, capitalizes on a mainly linguistically-oriented conceptual framework proposed by Theo van Leeuwen. In the words of van Leeuwen (Leeuwen T. v., 1996), "There is no neat fit between sociological and linguistic categories, and if Critical Discourse Analysis, in investigating for instance the representation of agency, ties itself in too closely to specific linguistic operations or categories, many relevant instances of agency might be overlooked." In his influential article on the representation of social actors, van Leeuwen (Leeuwen T. v., 1996) introduces "a sociosemantic inventory of the ways in which social actors can be represented". His model allows the critical enquirer to "bring to light ... systematic omissions and distortions in representations" (Leeuwen T. v., 1993). To this end, one morpho-syntactic category of his inventory was used in this study to scrutinize the data. This category will be briefly explained below.

The adopted and adapted model used in this paper deals entirely with van Leeuwen's dichotomy of inclusion/exclusion. Exclusion is divided into two subcategories: radical and less radical (partial) exclusion. The first subcategory "leave[s] no traces in the representation, excluding both the social actors and their activities" (Leeuwen T. v., 1996). For this reason, it can become discoverable in comparative studies; hence, its absence in this article.

Partial exclusion falls further into two subclasses: suppression in which "there is no reference to the social actor(s) in question anywhere in the text" (Leeuwen T. v., 1996), and backgrounding in which the excluded social actors in a specific activity comes up later in another part of the discourse. In backgrounding, the social actors "are not so much excluded as de-emphasized, pushed into the back-ground" (Leeuwen T. v., 1996).

Suppression can be detected in different ways e.g. through agentless passive voice, non-finite clauses, nominalizations and process nouns, and finally via certain adjectives. Backgrounding can be identified in the same way as suppression, "but with respect to social actors who *are* [italics in the original] included elsewhere in the text" (Leeuwen T. v., 2008). It can also be realized through the following three ways: ellipses in nonfinite clauses with *-ing* and *-ed* principles, in infinitival clauses with *to*, and in paratactic clauses.

Furthermore, the researcher identified the following major social actors in these public talks. They included:

- I. The speaker himself (I, my, mine,...)
- II. The audience (you, yours, your...)
- III. Both I and II collectively or the audience or all human beings and the speaker, together (we, us, our...)

IV. A typical individual (one, oneself, person, somebody, another...)

The existence of the first and second social actors in a lecture is axiomatic. However, the third and the fourth ones are usually detectable in the genre of talking about life. The speaker of a lecture creates the third type. It is the 'you' and 'I', which equals 'we.' The fourth type of social actor is passively present in philosophical lectures. It is an individual or a human being that is addressed all the time as if it were present and sitting right in front of the speaker among the audience. Without this social actor, the speaker would not be able to deliver the full form of the philosophical lecture, social practice or genre.

DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

To gain optimal result, this paper employs mixed method of QUAL+quan nature. As for the most prominent side of this paper, the qualitative side, one thousand words of each speech were selected. Then each one was divided by its sentences. That is each sentence was typed in one separate line. Then van Leeuwen's adapted model was applied to every sentence attentively and meticulously. Every sentence was probed with a high degree of attention so no designated social actor would be missed.

As for the quantitative aspect of the paper, all the counts were summarized in the tables 1 and table 2 in the form of frequency and percentage. These tables then helped the process of comparing the two philosophers' speeches and answering the research questions.

Table 1. Exclusion/inclusion in J. Krishnamurti's lecture

	Total	Inclusion	Exclusion	Suppression	Backgrounding
The speaker himself	4	(100%) 4	(0%) 0	(0%) 0	(0%) 0
The audience	8	(25%) 2	(75%) 6	(66.5%) 4	(33.5%) 2
A typical individual	45	(51%) 23	(49%) 22	(45.5%) 10	(54.5%) 12
The speaker and everybody	26	(69%) 18	(31%) 8	(37%) 3	(63%) 5

Table 2. Exclusion/inclusion in Alan Watts's lecture

	N	Inclusion	Exclusion	Suppression	Backgrounding
The speaker himself	57	(94%) 53	(6%) 4	(0%) 0	(100%) 4
The audience	26	(77%) 20	(23%) 6	(33%) 2	(67%) 4
A typical individual	16	(87.5%) 14	(12.5%) 2	(100%) 2	(0%) 0
The speaker and everybody	14	(78.5%) 11	(21.5%) 3	(0%) 0	(100%) 3

FINDINGS

On close analysis, the underlying inclusion/exclusion pattern yielded some interesting results. To demonstrate these results, the following quote from Krishnamurti's speech (Krishnamurti J., 1969) is going to serve an important purpose:

“...Don't accept, if I may suggest, what the speaker is saying; the speaker has no authority whatsoever, he is not a teacher, he is not a guru; because if he is a teacher then you are the follower and if you are the follower you destroy yourself as well as the teacher...”

In all most all his addresses, Krishnamurti stated similar words, as above. He referred to himself as 'the speaker' or 'he.' He also encouraged his audience not to 'accept what the speaker is saying.' In fact, the frequency of the latter statement is considerably high. This was the reason that the enquirer began writing this paper. As can be seen in table 1, unlike Allan Watts, who included himself 54 times (94%), Krishnamurti was not eager to include himself as a social actor in this excerpt from the selected lecture. Unlike Krishnamurti, Allan Watts excluded himself at times (only 6%). However, this exclusion was in the form of backgrounding. That is he only deemphasized himself, and there was no suppression, in which finding a social actor becomes rather difficult.

In terms of representing the audience as the social actors in their lectures, both philosophers followed the same pattern as described above. Krishnamurti appeared as unwilling to include his audience as he was to include himself. He seems not to accept the role of a teacher, which was statistically proven above. He also does not appear to approve of the role of a learner from his audience. He referred to people in front of him only eight times, and he included them only 25%; he excluded his present listeners 75%, which was 66.5%, suppressed and hard to recognize and only 33.5%, backgrounded and traceable in the discourse. On the other hand, Alan Watts referred to his audience 26 times (almost over three times more than Krishnamurti). Out of this, he included them 77%; he more backgrounded his audience (67%) than suppressed those (33%). Statistically speaking, in Allan Watts' lecture, his self and his audience are highlighted social actors.

When it comes to referring to an individual or a human being in general, as is customary in the social practice of a philosophical lecture, Krishnamurti appears to be occupying a higher ground as can be seen in tables 1 and 2. The same conclusion seems to be true as one looks at the statistics on the collective reference to the speaker and the audience in the form of the pronoun, 'we' and alike.

In line with his meticulous attention to exclude himself and his audience rather consciously in his lectures, Krishnamurti includes more often the typical 'one' and the collective, 'we.' He included these social actors 51% and 69% out of 45 and 26 times of referring to both, respectively. He tends to background these more than he suppresses them. Allan Watts shows a lower number of counts in this regard: 16 and 14 times respectively. As mentioned before, in his lectures his self and his audience are represented more colorfully.

CONCLUSION

One of the merits of CDA is that through exploring the ways social actors are represented in the texts, one can infer ideology, identity, and power structures and their reflection in particular texts. In the same way, this study attempted to uncover the trace of the core value of the speakers about the social actors presented in their lecture and the strategies being applied to represent these actors. The obtained results highlight the magnificent performance of the orator in terms of consistency between their goals, beliefs, values, dreams and their words.

The present study tried to track down the ideological attitudes two prominent philosophers attach to the social actors of their lectures. The van Leeuwen's model provided the enquirer with a good framework for analyzing the data. Overall, the patterns emerging from the one selected category of van Leeuwen's model seem to point out that Unlike Allan Watts, Krishnamurti is not willing to include his self and his direct audience in his lectures. He seems to be speaking to a wider range of listeners than those sitting in front of him. He seems to be more universally oriented than Alan Watts appears to be. Experiments with more data, which allow the use of more relevant morpho-syntactic categories, will be bound to shed new light on the differential representation of the social actors in the lectures of these two philosophers.

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