

Critical Discourse Analysis of Class and Power in A Cup of Tea and The Necklace: An Intertextual Approach

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Abstract:

This study analyzes the representation of class and power in two short stories, A Cup of Tea and The Necklace, using the theory of Critical Discourse Analysis by Norman Fairclough and the intertextuality approach by Julia Kristeva. The main objective of this study is to reveal how the concepts of class and power are represented through the main characters in both stories and how the intertextual relationship between the two reflects broader social dynamics. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with in-depth reading techniques to collect relevant quotations. The results show that there are differences in the representation of class and power between the two main characters. Rosemary in A Cup of Tea represents the hegemony of the upper class through her wealth and social control, while Mathilde in The Necklace reflects the ambition and social pressure experienced by the lower middle class in meeting social demands influenced by capitalism. In addition, the intertextual analysis reveals that both stories are related in criticizing the social pressures that arise from capitalism, especially those experienced by women. Both highlight how social expectations shape the desires and behavior of the main characters and depict the impact of the class system on individuals, especially women, in a patriarchal society.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis; intertextuality; class and power; A Cup of Tea; The Necklace

INTRODUCTION

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a study that critically analyzes socio-historical contexts, interpersonal relationships, and cultural and political influences. The term 'discourse' is used in various aspects of discourse analysis in general (Fairclough, 1995). There are two main paradigms in the term 'discourse', namely structural and functional. Structurally, discourse is considered as a unit of language that is larger than a sentence, while functionally, discourse focuses on how language is used (Schiffrin, 1994). The emphasis on these two paradigms allows for a better understanding of how language shapes, maintains, or even challenges existing social structures and power.

This study analyzes the concept of class and power using the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach based on Norman Fairclough's theory, focusing on how language reflects social hierarchy and power in A Cup of Tea and The Necklace. Both

stories depict interactions in a capitalist society, with main characters representing the upper class and the struggles of the middle class. CDA is used to analyze the narrative, dialogue, and word choice in both stories, revealing the ideology of capitalism and class domination, as well as the power relations formed through control over resources and social status.

In addition, this study also uses a supporting theory, namely the theory of intertextuality by Julia Kristeva with an emphasis on the issue of class and power. Kristeva (1980) explains intertextuality as a way in which a text is connected to another text through hidden references, story structures, or common themes. *A Cup of Tea* and *The Necklace* present narratives that depict social pressures in a capitalist society on women marked by an obsession with status and wealth. Intertextuality can be seen in the way these two works reflect the conflict between individual desires and social norms that influence the actions of the main characters, namely Rosemary Fell and Mathilde Loisel.

This study is important to reveal the interaction between class and power in *A Cup of Tea* and *The Necklace*, which reflects current social realities. With the approach of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and intertextuality theory, this study explores how language reflects and reinforces social order. This study contributes to literary studies and understanding the role of discourse in maintaining or challenging social injustice in the era of globalization and capitalism.

There are three previous studies that form the basis for this study. The first study by Waqar & Mehmoud (2024) examines patriarchy and gender in *A Cup of Tea*, while the second study by Bella et al. (2020) discusses status symbolism in *The Necklace* without using a critical analysis approach. The third study by Zannini (2021) investigates intertextuality in the context of discourse without highlighting a particular literary work. This study fills the gap by linking the two stories through critical discourse analysis and intertextuality theory.

Therefore, this study reveals how class and power are represented in the main characters of *A Cup of Tea* and *The Necklace*? and how does the intertextual relationship between *A Cup of Tea* and *The Necklace* reflect the dynamics of class and power? Of course, this study aims to analyze the representation of class and power in the main characters of the two short stories and reveal the intertextual relationship between the two short stories in the context of capitalist society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Discourse as Social Practice

Discourse has a very crucial position in communication, where the meaning contained in it becomes the main point in an interaction. According to Fairclough (2001) Discourse as Social Practice discusses a general description of the place/position of language in society, which is closely related to language-power and language-ideology. In essence, language as discourse can be underlined to be involved with power and its ideological properties. In certain social conditions, discourse can play an important role in showing power and ideology in communication. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to and interpret the process of discourse production and how cognitive processes are formed socially. Fairclough in his book entitled *Language and Power*, second edition published in 2001, concluded that discourse as social practice is divided into four parts; language and discourse, discourse and orders of discourse, class and power in capitalist society, and dialectic of structures and practices. This study focuses on class and power in capitalist society, seeing this as an interesting research material in today's era, where power takes over social society through discourse instead of changing the ideology of society.

Class and Power in Capitalist Society

This study discusses the social conditions of discourse at the community and institutional levels, where it shows the process of discourse formation determined by social structure. Fairclough (2001) states that power relations in social institutions or social order can determine the process of discourse and ideology formation in them. In social practice, the process of forming, delivering, and receiving discourse is closely related to the economy, where lifestyle, ideology, and power are used by society which is determined by social class, where one of the determinants is economic status. This is closely related to the capitalist society system, where society tries to have an advantage to reach a certain point.

Based on the relationship between the economy and discourse production, Fairclough (2001) divides class and power in capitalist society into four parts, including; 1) Economic, state, and ideological power, 2) Power relations, class relations, and social struggle, 3) Changes in capitalism, and 4) Analysis of society and analysis of discourse. In some of these parts, it is a common term in people's lives in the world, of course the economic status of society has differences in each region. Therefore, it is not uncommon for writers to describe the economic situation and the process of discourse production in their area

during a certain period of time. Some of these works are *A Cup of Tea* by Katherine Mansfield and *The Necklace* by Guy de Maupassant.

A Cup of Tea and The Necklace Reflect on Class and Power

A Cup of Tea written by Katherine Mansfield and *The Necklace* by Guy de Maupassant present the theme of class and power through the main characters who have materialistic traits. *A Cup of Tea*, which depicts Rosemary Fell as a rich woman who uses her wealth to show off her status (Lim, 2020; Mansfield, 1922). On the other hand, *The Necklace* depicts Mathilde Loisel, a lower middle-class woman who is very obsessed with social status and wears a borrowed diamond necklace as a symbol of materialism, even though it eventually leads her to poverty due to debt (De Maupassant, 1884; Yadav, 2019). Both of these works illustrate how materialistic traits reflect tensions in class and power, with an emphasis on how social structures influence individual behavior (Levin, 2018).

Intertextuality by Julia Kristeva

The theory of intertextuality explains that texts never stand alone but are always related to other texts. Kristeva (1980) defines intertextuality as a dynamic relationship between texts that create meaning through reference to each other, either directly or indirectly. Intertextuality can be applied to analyze ideology, power, and domination in social discourse. Therefore, the theory of intertextuality understands how two short stories such as *A Cup of Tea* and *The Necklace* relate to each other in forming a picture of class and power, and how this relationship reflects the capitalist social structure.

Previous Study

Three previous studies are important references in this study. Waqar & Mehmoud (2024) used Fairclough's CDA to examine patriarchy and racial feminism in *A Cup of Tea*, showing upper-class domination through the character of Rosemary. Bella et al. (2020) analyzed prestige symbolism in *The Necklace*, highlighting Mathilde's obsession with social status, but without a CDA approach. Meanwhile, Zannini (2021) discusses intertextuality and interdiscursivity in discourse in general, but not specifically on literary works or themes of class and power.

These three studies have not combined the analysis of class and power representation in two texts intertextually. Therefore, this research offers a new contribution by integrating Fairclough's CDA and Kristeva's theory of intertextuality to examine how *A Cup of Tea* and *The Necklace* reflect each other's power dynamics in a capitalist society.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a descriptive qualitative research method. According to Creswell (2010) in research using qualitative methodology, theory is generally used as a basis for describing behavior and attitudes. There is no qualitative descriptive coefficient about the relationship between variables or numbers, this study only uses text analysis. This study applies a qualitative approach, which is intended to investigate social phenomena by analyzing data in the form of text. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) state that the purpose of qualitative research is to explore understanding of the meaning constructed by individuals in certain situations.

The short stories *A Cup of Tea* and *The Necklace* are the sources of data in this study. The theory of critical discourse analysis by Fairclough, especially discourse in social practice in the book *'Language and Power'*, is the main theory in this study and the supporting theory in this study is intertextuality analysis by Julia Kristeva, these two theories are used as tools to describe problems in order to find data presented descriptively. The researcher collected several quotes from the novel *"A Cup of Tea"* by Katherine Mansfield and *"The Necklace"* by Guy de Maupassant. The data collection technique is in the form of reading in depth two short stories, collecting data, identifying those that reflect class and power, then analyzing how the relationship between texts in the short stories. The analysis is aimed at explaining the discourse of class and power contained in each story with a critical discourse analysis approach. Furthermore, these patterns are connected through an intertextuality approach to identify the main themes that show the capitalist social structure in the text.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data in this study shows that class and power are represented in different ways in the main characters of *A Cup of Tea* and *The Necklace*. Thus, the findings of this study answer the question posed by showing that class and power are represented through different narratives in each story, while the inter-textual relationships reinforce the idea that materialism and class inequality are important elements in understanding power dynamics.

Class and Power Represented in the Main Character

A Cup of Tea

Data 1

‘She was young, brilliant, extremely modern, exquisitely well dressed’

Data 2

‘They were rich, really rich, not just comfortably well off, which is odious and stuffy and sounds like one's grandparents. But if Rosemary wanted to shop she would go to Paris’

Data excerpts 1 and 2 show in the text analysis, terms such as “brilliant,” “extremely modern,” and “exquisitely well-dressed” emphasize high social class with regard to appearance and luxurious lifestyle, which further solidifies Rosemary's position in the social structure. In the discourse practice analysis, the upper class distinguishes themselves from the middle class by mentioning lifestyle choices that only they enjoy, such as shopping in Paris, which implies mastery over access to power. In social practice, this use of language links power to material resources, emphasizing that power as well as social class is shaped not only by wealth but also by lifestyles that are maintained and constructed through everyday practices.

Data 3

“Give me those stumpy little tulips. Those red and white ones.” And she was followed to the car by a thin shop-girl’

In the text dimension, the phrase “Give me those stumpy little tulips” shows real control, where Rosemary describes her higher social status. In discourse practice, it reflects the practice of power that forms a social hierarchical structure, where store employees only carry out orders without any resistance. In social context, the relationship pattern between Rosemary who has more power and the shop assistant illustrates the class inequality often seen in everyday interactions, where people from the upper class use language to maintain their power, while those from the lower class must obey the order with little choice.

Data 4

‘I love my things. I would rather not part with them than sell them to someone who does not appreciate them, who has not that fine feeling which is so rare...’

This excerpt shows that in text analysis, phrases such as “I love my things” and “someone who does not appreciate them” convey a strong sense of ownership and reluctance to give things to people who are considered inappropriate, which shows an

assertion of power through ownership. In practice analysis, these phrases reflect the social activity of associating power with appreciation of valuables, which only someone with a “fine feeling” possesses. In a social context, this reinforces class inequality, where individuals from the upper class often determine the value and appreciation of material goods at the rate they see fit, so that they can maintain power by controlling access to goods deemed valuable.

Data 5

‘She drew her cheque-book towards her. But no, cheques would be of no use, of course. She opened a drawer and took out five pound notes, looked at them, put two back, and held the three squeezed in her hand’, So I gave the poor little thing a present of money. I couldn't keep her against her will, could I?’ she added softly’

The excerpt above shows class and power through Fairclough's (2001) three-dimensional analysis. In the text dimension, the use of sentences such as “So I gave the poor little thing a present of money” Rosemary uses money as a tool to manage the situation where Rosemary evicts Smith from her house by giving him money. In the discourse practice dimension, this action reflects a power relationship in which Rosemary relies on wealth to overcome the discomfort she feels from her husband's compliments to the girl. By giving money, Rosemary sets the situation in her favor, showing that the upper class is able to determine the future of others. In the social practice dimension, this quote shows how the capitalist system allows the upper class to utilize wealth to stay in power and normalize the dependency of the lower class. Rosemary reflects that money is the solution to solving social problems.

The Necklace

Data 6

‘I don't know exactly, but I think I could do it on four hundred francs.’

The quote above illustrates class and power in the text dimension, the phrase “four hundred francs” highlights that if Mathilde insists on the amount she has for the new dress she wants to use at the party, the action is an act of controlling her husband to satisfy her material desires. The phrase highlights the social class gap that influences Mathilde's decisions and actions. In the dimension of discourse practice, this quote symbolizes the social pressure Mathilde feels to conform to upper-class standards, even though she comes from the lower middle class. This interaction shows how class hierarchy shapes perspectives and priorities in everyday life. In the social practice dimension, the quote

reveals a capitalist ideology that equates access to material goods with social status, placing undue pressure on individuals from lower classes. Mathilde embodies how social class subordination fosters aspirations driven by power hierarchies in a capitalist society.

Data 7

‘I’m utterly miserable at not having any jewels, not a single stone, to wear,’ she replied. ‘I shall look absolutely no one. I would almost rather not go to the party.’

The quote above illustrates class and power, in the text dimension, the phrases “miserable” and “absolutely no one” express Mathilde's feelings of inferiority coming from the social hierarchy. In terms of discourse practice, pressure from the upper class emphasizes the importance of jewelry as a status symbol. Socially, capitalist ideology associates personal value with the ownership of luxury goods, thus reinforcing class differences.

Data 8

‘No . . . there's nothing so humiliating as looking poor in the middle of a lot of rich women.’

The quote above reflects class and power in the dimension of the text, the words “humiliating” and “looking poor” highlight the shame felt by Mathilde due to social structure. In discourse practice, pressure from the upper class creates social norms that regulate appearance as a marker of status. In social practice, capitalist ideology reinforces the inferior position of the lower class by making it difficult for them to meet the material standards set by the upper class.

Data 9

‘Suddenly she discovered, in a black satin case, a superb diamond necklace; her heart began to beat covetously. Her hands trembled as she lifted it. She fastened it round her neck, upon her high dress, and remained in ecstasy at the sight of herself.’

The quote above illustrates class and power through a three-dimensional analysis, the first is in the text dimension, expressions such as “beat covetously” and “remained in ecstasy” reflect Mathilde's desire to have a sign of wealth. In the discourse aspect, diamond jewelry reflects upper-class standards that shape social aspirations. In the social context, capitalist ideology links status and individual happiness to the ability to access luxury goods, which in turn reinforces inequality between classes.

Data 10

‘Madame Loisel was a success. She was the prettiest woman present, elegant, graceful, smiling, and quite above herself with happiness. All the men stared at her, inquired her name, and asked to be introduced to her. All the Under-Secretaries of State were eager to waltz with her. The Minister noticed her.’

The quote above illustrates the theme of class and power, in the text analysis the descriptions of “prettiest”, “elegant”, and the attention of “The Minister noticed her” highlight how beauty and appearance become tools to gain social recognition. In discourse practice, the admiration of the upper class reveals the fleeting dynamics of symbolic power. In social practice, the ideology of capitalism emphasizes that social standing can be achieved through material appearance, reflecting a social hierarchy that positions power based on perceptions of appearance and validation from the elite class.

Data 11

‘She danced madly, ecstatically, drunk with pleasure, with no thought for anything, in the triumph of her beauty, in the pride of her success, in a cloud of happiness made up of this universal homage and admiration, of the desires she had aroused, of the completeness of a victory so dear to her feminine heart.’

The quote above reflects class and power, in the text dimension, phrases such as “triumph of her beauty” and “universal homage” show how Mathilde gains temporary symbolic power through beauty and social recognition. In discourse practice, the homage she receives reflects temporary power relations, where social validation depends on appearance. In social practice, this quote reflects the capitalist ideology that attributes individual value to external perceptions, emphasizing the dependence of the lower class on the standards of the upper class to achieve social status.

The Intertextual Relationship between A Cup of Tea and The Necklace

Kristeva suggests that texts are always related to other texts and form meaning through the relationship between texts.

Data 1

‘She drew her cheque-book towards her. But no, cheques would be of no use, of course. She opened a drawer and took out five pound notes, looked at them, put two back, and holding the three squeezed in her hand, So I gave the poor little thing a present of money. I couldn't keep her against her will, could I?’ she added softly.’ (A Cup of Tea)

Data 2

‘Madame Loisel was a success. She was the prettiest woman present, elegant, graceful, smiling, and quite above herself with happiness. All the men stared at her, inquired her name, and asked to be introduced to her. All the Under-Secretaries of State were eager to waltz with her. The Minister noticed her.’ (The Necklace)

The two quotes above are interconnected through the theme of materialism which reflects social class and power. In *A Cup of Tea*, Rosemary gives money to show control where she thinks if there is money everything will be safe, so she chases Smith away by giving him money. While in *The Necklace*, Mathilde feels successful and powerful after wearing a diamond necklace, gaining attention and recognition from others. Kristeva's intertextuality theory shows that these two texts talk to each other about how social class and power can be achieved through material and appearance, thus making the two main characters tend to pursue material objects to gain more power.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that this research examines how class and power are depicted in *A Cup of Tea* and *The Necklace* by using Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis and Kristeva's intertextuality approach. The results of the analysis show that the struggle on class and power, where language serves to support the capitalist hierarchical structure. Rosemary reflects the wealth of the upper class and reinforces social control, while Mathilde Loisel displays the ambition and oppression faced by the middle class. The interconnections between the two stories show similar critiques of capitalist oppression of women, illustrating how societal expectations influence desires and actions. Taken together, these narratives challenge the injustices present in social structures, providing deeper insight into how discourse can maintain or counter existing forces in capitalist society. This analysis emphasizes the importance of literary discourse in addressing unjust social issues.

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