
A Critical Discourse Analysis of Kurtz's Discourse in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* Applying Fairclough Three Dimensional Model

Allah Noor

BS, Department of English Language and Literature, Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan , KPK, Pakistan, malangkhanmalangkhan33@gmail.com

Abrar Ahmad

BS, Department of English Language and Literature, Gomal university Dera Ismail Khan , KPK, Pakistan, abrarahmad09900@gmail.com

Mohammad Faheem

BS, Department of English Language and Literature, Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan , KPK, Pakistan, faheemkhanwak@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines the construction of colonial power, identity, and imperial ideology in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* by applying Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Utilizing Fairclough's model comprising linguistic description, discursive interpretation, and sociocultural explanation the research investigates how Kurtz's language reflects and reinforces nineteenth-century European hegemonies. At the textual level, the analysis focuses on Kurtz's lexical choices, evaluative structures, and racialized binary representations that separate Europeans from native Africans. At the level of discourse practice, the paper evaluates how Kurtz's written report functions as a communicative event, reproducing institutional colonial rhetoric and civilizing narratives. At the sociocultural level, the findings contextualize Kurtz's utterances within broader imperialist structures, racial hierarchies, and the moral justifications of colonial expansion. Special analytical focus is placed on the ideological rupture between his high-minded humanitarian preamble and his infamous postscript, "Exterminate all the brutes!" This paradoxical shift reveals the fragility and inherent hypocrisy of imperial rhetoric. The study concludes that Kurtz's discourse operates dualistically: while it seeks to rationalize and sustain colonial dominance, it ultimately unmasks the systemic brutality, moral decay, and structural contradictions embedded within the Western imperial enterprise. By deconstructing these discursive layers, the research highlights the pivotal role of critical language analysis in exposing how literature both reproduces and interrogates colonial power dynamics.

Keywords: Kurtz's discourse, *Heart of Darkness*, European, socio-cultural practice, Africans.

Introduction

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is one of the most widely discussed literary works of the colonial period and remains an important text for examining the relationship between language, power, imperialism, race, and ideology. First published in serial form in 1899, the novella presents the journey of Charles Marlow into the Congo and his encounter with Kurtz, a European agent whose reputation as an exceptionally successful colonial administrator gradually gives way to a disturbing image of exploitation, violence, and moral corruption. Although the narrative is frequently interpreted as a critique of European imperialism, it also contains contradictory representations of Africa and Africans. This ambiguity makes *Heart of Darkness* particularly suitable for Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), because CDA investigates how language participates in the construction, maintenance, and contestation of social power and ideological relationships. Recent scholarship similarly identifies the novella as a text characterized by tensions between colonial and anti-colonial discourses (Wodak, 2023).

The central figure of Kurtz provides a particularly significant site for investigating colonial discourse. Kurtz is introduced indirectly through the descriptions of other characters before he appears physically in the narrative. He is represented as an exceptional European, an eloquent speaker, an artist, an intellectual, and a supposedly committed agent of the European "civilizing" mission. However, as Marlow moves closer to him, these positive representations increasingly become associated with greed, domination, violence, and the desire for absolute authority. Kurtz therefore embodies the contradictions of European imperialism: the language of civilization coexists with practices of exploitation and brutality. His discourse is not simply the speech of an individual character; it is connected to wider systems of colonial knowledge and power. His words provide a means through which imperial authority is represented, justified, and ultimately exposed as destructive (Roy, 2018).

Language is particularly important to the construction of Kurtz's identity. His reputation is largely produced through what other characters say about him, while his own speeches, report, and final utterances reveal different dimensions of his ideological position. His discourse moves between humanitarian rhetoric and openly violent expressions. His report for the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs initially adopts the language of humanitarianism and European superiority, but its concluding command, "Exterminate all the brutes!" exposes the violent ideology underlying the apparent civilizing mission. This contradiction is crucial for a discourse-oriented analysis because it demonstrates how apparently positive vocabulary can coexist with practices of domination. Recent pragmatic research on the novella likewise argues that Kurtz's rhetoric demonstrates how language can simultaneously conceal and enact colonial violence (Zotzmann, 2019).

Kurtz's discourse can therefore be understood as a form of ideological representation. His language divides the colonial world into categories such as European and African, civilized and supposedly savage, powerful and powerless, and subject and object. Such distinctions are not neutral descriptions. They establish hierarchical relationships in which Europeans are positioned as agents of civilization while Africans are positioned as objects to be controlled, transformed, or exploited. From a CDA perspective, these linguistic choices are significant because discourse contributes to the production of social realities. Fairclough (1992) argues that discourse is a form of social practice and that language should be studied in relation to social structures, power relations, and ideological processes. Consequently, an analysis of Kurtz's discourse must move beyond the literal meaning of his words and examine the social relations and colonial assumptions that make those words meaningful. Critical Discourse Analysis provides an appropriate theoretical approach for investigating these relationships. CDA is concerned with the ways in which discourse is connected to power, ideology, inequality, and social change. Rather than treating language as an autonomous linguistic system, CDA considers language as a social practice through which individuals and institutions represent reality and negotiate relationships of power. Fairclough's approach is particularly useful because it connects detailed textual analysis with the processes through which texts are produced and interpreted and with the wider social practices in which discourse operates. The three-dimensional model conceptualizes every discursive event simultaneously as a text, an instance of discursive practice, and an element of social practice (Rogers, 2005).

The concept of ideology is consequently central to the present study. Fairclough (1992) maintains that discourse can contribute to the reproduction of ideological assumptions by making particular interpretations of reality appear natural or commonsensical. Kurtz's discourse provides an example of this process because colonial domination is repeatedly connected with concepts such as progress, civilization, development, and improvement. These apparently positive concepts can obscure the material violence associated with imperial expansion. By examining how such meanings are constructed linguistically, CDA can reveal the ideological assumptions underlying Kurtz's apparently humanitarian discourse. The purpose is not simply to identify offensive or violent expressions but to investigate how language normalizes unequal relations between colonizers and colonized (Ackerley, 2023).

The study is also significant because *Heart of Darkness* itself is characterized by considerable ideological ambiguity. Scholars have long debated whether Conrad's novella should primarily be understood as an anti-imperialist critique, a text that reproduces colonial stereotypes, or a complex combination of both. Contemporary scholarship describes the work as containing tension between colonial and anti-colonial discourses, rather than presenting a completely consistent ideological position (Mshaweh & Benmessaoud, 2024). This ambiguity is particularly visible in the representation of Kurtz. On the one hand, his actions expose the brutality and hypocrisy of imperialism; on the other hand, the narrative remains deeply

invested in representations of Africa and Africans that have been criticized from postcolonial perspectives. A Faircloughian analysis can address this contradiction by examining how competing discourses operate simultaneously within the text. Kurtz's famous final utterance, "The horror! The horror!", is especially important in understanding the ideological complexity of his discourse. The statement is brief and ambiguous, allowing multiple interpretations concerning guilt, recognition, fear, death, and moral judgment. From a CDA perspective, the significance of the utterance extends beyond its literal meaning. It can be interpreted in relation to the practices and social structures that have shaped Kurtz's colonial experience. His final words can therefore be viewed as a moment in which the ideological world he has constructed becomes difficult to sustain. Recent scholarship has similarly treated Kurtz's final utterance as an important culmination of the novella's representation of colonial violence and horror (Hart, 2019).

The study of Kurtz's discourse is therefore important not only for understanding a literary character but also for examining the relationship between language and imperial power. Kurtz's rhetoric demonstrates how discourse can construct authority, produce social categories, legitimize domination, and conceal violence. His language also reveals the instability of colonial ideology because the discourse of civilization ultimately becomes associated with exploitation and destruction. In this respect, Kurtz functions as a particularly productive figure for CDA: his discourse simultaneously reproduces colonial ideology and exposes its contradictions. The application of Fairclough's three-dimensional model to Kurtz's discourse allows the present study to integrate linguistic, interpretive, and sociopolitical levels of analysis. At the textual level, the study examines vocabulary, grammar, modality, pronouns, metaphor, repetition, and other significant linguistic choices. At the level of discursive practice, it investigates how Kurtz's discourse is produced, circulated, reported, and interpreted within the narrative. At the level of social practice, it relates Kurtz's language to nineteenth-century colonialism, imperial ideology, racial hierarchy, economic exploitation, and relations of power. Fairclough's model is particularly suitable because it explicitly connects close textual analysis with broader social structures (Stibbe, 2022).

The Heart of Darkness offers a rich literary site for investigating the relationship between discourse and colonial power. Kurtz stands at the center of this relationship because his language embodies the contradictions between civilization and brutality, humanitarianism and exploitation, and European superiority and moral collapse. Applying Fairclough's 3D model makes it possible to examine these contradictions systematically by connecting linguistic features with discursive processes and wider social practices. Through this approach, Kurtz's discourse can be understood as more than the speech of an individual colonial agent: it becomes a representation of the ideological mechanisms through which imperial power is articulated, legitimized, and ultimately destabilized. The study consequently seeks to demonstrate how CDA can deepen the interpretation of Conrad's

novella by revealing the ways in which language participates in the construction and contestation of colonial ideology (Tussa'diah, 2023).

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine Kurtz's discourse in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. The study uses Fairclough's three-dimensional model as its primary analytical framework, focusing on textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice. The data consist of selected passages, speeches, statements, and descriptions associated with Kurtz in the novella. At the textual level, the study analyzes vocabulary, grammar, modality, pronouns, metaphors, repetition, and rhetorical strategies; at the level of discursive practice, it examines how Kurtz's discourse is produced, circulated, and interpreted; and at the level of social practice, it investigates the relationship between his discourse and broader issues of colonialism, imperialism, racism, ideology, and power. Purposive textual selection is used to identify passages that directly reflect Kurtz's representation of civilization, Africans, colonial authority, and imperial exploitation. Secondary sources, including scholarly books, journal articles, and previous studies on Conrad, colonial discourse, and CDA, are also consulted to support the interpretation. The study is interpretive rather than statistical and seeks to demonstrate how Kurtz's language constructs, reinforces, and ultimately exposes the ideological contradictions of colonial power.

Theoretical Framework: Fairclough's 3D Model

Fairclough 3D Model

Textual analysis.

The first dimension of Fairclough's model is textual analysis. At this level, attention is given to linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar, modality, transitivity, pronouns, repetition, metaphor, cohesion, and textual structure. In the present study, these features are particularly useful for examining how Kurtz constructs himself and others through language. His lexical choices can reveal assumptions about European superiority and African inferiority, while his use of pronouns and possessive expressions can indicate relationships of ownership and authority. His rhetorical style also demonstrates how eloquence can contribute to the construction of legitimacy. Therefore, textual analysis makes it possible to identify the linguistic mechanisms through which Kurtz's authority is constructed (Sipra, 2022).

Discursive practice,

The second dimension is discursive practice, which concerns the production, distribution, and interpretation of discourse. Fairclough (1992) emphasizes that texts do not exist

independently of the processes through which they are produced and consumed. In *Heart of Darkness*, Kurtz's discourse appears in different forms and reaches different audiences. His report is produced for a European organization concerned with the supposed suppression of "savage customs," while his spoken words circulate among colonial agents and indigenous communities. Marlow also interprets and reconstructs Kurtz's discourse for the reader. This creates a complex relationship among speaker, narrator, audience, and text. A discursive-practice analysis therefore helps explain how Kurtz's words acquire authority and how their meanings change when they are reported, interpreted, or challenged (Conrad, 1999).

Social practice,

The third dimension is social practice, which connects discourse to broader historical, political, cultural, and ideological structures. Kurtz's discourse cannot be separated from nineteenth-century European imperialism and the colonial organization of Africa. His language reflects a social order in which European powers claimed the authority to define other societies and justify economic and political domination. The discourse of civilization functioned within this broader colonial system by presenting imperial expansion as morally legitimate. In this sense, Kurtz is not merely an unusually violent individual; he represents the extreme consequences of a social system that links economic exploitation with claims of cultural superiority. Fairclough's model enables the researcher to connect these individual linguistic expressions to the wider structures of colonial power (Hu, 2025).

Fairclough's 3D Model Applied to Kurtz

Dimension	Main Focus	Application to Kurtz
Text	Vocabulary, grammar, modality, metaphor, pronouns, transitivity	Dehumanizing language, commands, representations of Africans
Discursive Practice	Production, distribution, interpretation, intertextuality	Colonial reports, Marlow's narration, European colonial discourse
Social Practice	Ideology, power, history, institutions, social structures	Imperialism, racial hierarchy, colonial exploitation

Analysis of Kurtz's Discourse

Linguistic/Textual Features

At the textual level of Fairclough's 3D model, Kurtz's discourse in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* can be examined through vocabulary, modality, repetition, pronoun use, imperatives, metaphors, and evaluative language. Kurtz's language frequently presents him as an authoritative and intellectually superior figure. His discourse contains expressions associated with civilization, progress, enlightenment, and humanitarianism, yet these apparently positive terms conceal the violent realities of European colonialism. His famous statement, "Exterminate all the brutes!" demonstrates the contradiction between the civilized language of imperialism and the dehumanization of Africans. The imperative verb *exterminate* is particularly significant because it constructs violence as an apparently legitimate solution to colonial problems. Kurtz's use of absolute and commanding language also reflects his desire to exercise control over both people and resources. His discourse therefore demonstrates how linguistic choices can construct relationships of superiority and inferiority. From Fairclough's textual perspective, Kurtz's language is not merely descriptive; it actively represents colonial power and reproduces ideological assumptions about Europeans and Africans (Lotfipoursaedi, 2025).

Discursive Practice

The second dimension of Fairclough's model focuses on discursive practice, particularly how discourse is produced, circulated, and interpreted within a particular social context. Kurtz's discourse is shaped by the colonial environment of the Congo and by the institutional practices of European imperialism. He is presented as an agent of the European trading company and initially appears to represent European civilization, knowledge, and humanitarian ideals. His discourse therefore draws upon wider colonial narratives that justify European intervention in Africa as a mission of civilization and progress. However, as Marlow encounters Kurtz and learns more about his activities, the gap between these official colonial narratives and actual colonial practices becomes increasingly visible. Kurtz's speeches, reports, and written statements circulate within an institutional system that values economic extraction and territorial control. His discourse acquires authority because he occupies a powerful position within this system. At the same time, the extreme nature of his language exposes the contradictions within colonial discourse. The humanitarian rhetoric used to justify imperialism gradually becomes associated with exploitation, violence, and domination. Thus, Kurtz's discourse is both a product of colonial discourse and an exposure of its internal contradictions (Elass, 2025).

Social Practice and Colonial Ideology

At the level of social practice, Fairclough's model connects Kurtz's discourse with broader structures of power, ideology, and society. Kurtz represents the colonial ideology that constructs European civilization as superior to African societies. His discourse contributes to an unequal binary between the civilized European and the "primitive" African, allowing

colonial domination to appear legitimate. The exploitation of African people and resources is presented within the broader ideological framework of European imperialism. Kurtz's transformation demonstrates the destructive consequences of this ideology: beneath the language of civilization lies the pursuit of power, wealth, and control. His character therefore reveals that colonialism is not simply an economic or political system but also a discursive system that produces particular ideas about race, civilization, humanity, and authority. The contrast between Kurtz's earlier humanitarian claims and his later brutality exposes the ideological contradiction of imperialism. Through Kurtz, Conrad illustrates how supposedly civilized discourse can coexist with extreme violence and dehumanization. From a Faircloughian perspective, Kurtz's discourse both reflects and reproduces the unequal social relations of colonialism, while simultaneously revealing the ideological mechanisms through which imperial power is justified (Dei, 2021).

Discussion

The analysis of Kurtz's discourse through Fairclough's 3D model demonstrates that language in *Heart of Darkness* is closely connected with power, ideology, and colonial domination. Kurtz does not use language merely to communicate ideas; his discourse functions as a mechanism through which authority and superiority are established. At the textual level, his vocabulary reflects concepts of civilization, progress, humanity, and order, while his actions reveal exploitation and violence. This contradiction suggests that colonial discourse often presents domination in morally acceptable terms. Fairclough's approach is useful because it moves the analysis beyond the surface meaning of Kurtz's words and examines the ideological assumptions embedded within them. Kurtz's language therefore becomes a representation of the wider colonial system rather than simply an expression of his individual personality. THE Kurtz's discourse is characterized by a strong relationship between language and power. His position within the colonial hierarchy gives his words greater authority than those of the people he dominates. He is portrayed as an influential European agent whose opinions and judgments are valued within the colonial structure. This institutional position allows him to define what is considered civilized, uncivilized, valuable, or worthless. His discourse consequently establishes a hierarchy between the European colonizer and the African population. Fairclough argues that discourse contributes to the production and maintenance of unequal power relations, and Kurtz provides a clear literary example of this process. His authority is therefore not based only on personal charisma but also on the colonial structures that give legitimacy to his voice (Plange, 2023).

Another important finding concerns the contradiction between civilization and barbarism. Kurtz initially represents the European ideal of civilization and is associated with humanitarian objectives. However, his behavior in the Congo gradually reveals violence, greed, and extreme forms of domination. This transformation challenges the colonial assumption that European intervention was designed to civilize supposedly backward

societies. Instead, Conrad exposes the possibility that colonialism itself can produce barbaric behavior among those who claim to represent civilization. Kurtz's discourse is therefore deeply ironic. The language of humanitarianism conceals practices of exploitation, while the supposedly civilized European becomes increasingly violent. Through this contradiction, *Heart of Darkness* questions the moral legitimacy of imperialism. The analysis also demonstrates how dehumanization operates through colonial discourse. Kurtz's infamous statement, "Exterminate all the brutes!" represents an extreme form of linguistic and ideological violence. The term brutes denies the humanity of the people being described and creates an ideological distance between the colonizer and the colonized. Once a population is represented as less than fully human, violence against that population can be presented as acceptable or necessary. From the perspective of Fairclough's social-practice dimension, this linguistic construction is connected with broader colonial ideologies of racial hierarchy. Kurtz's language therefore illustrates how discourse can prepare the ideological ground for physical domination and violence (Mosse, 2021).

Kurtz's discourse also reflects the relationship between economic exploitation and colonial ideology. European colonialism in the Congo is presented through claims about civilization and progress, but economic interests remain central to the colonial project. The extraction of resources and the acquisition of wealth are supported by institutional power and coercive practices. Kurtz becomes an important symbol of this contradiction because his apparently humanitarian mission becomes increasingly associated with personal ambition and material exploitation. His discourse helps conceal the economic motivations underlying colonial activity. Fairclough's model allows these relationships to be examined by connecting linguistic choices with the institutional and socioeconomic structures in which those choices are produced (Foucault, 2021).

The findings also highlight the importance of Marlow as an interpreter of Kurtz's discourse. Kurtz's words are not presented independently; they are largely mediated through Marlow's narrative perspective. Consequently, the reader encounters Kurtz's discourse through another character who observes, interprets, and evaluates him. This creates an important discursive relationship between speaker and interpreter. Marlow gradually recognizes the contradictions between Kurtz's reputation, his words, and his actions. His interpretation consequently encourages the reader to question the authority of colonial discourse. In this sense, the novel does not simply reproduce Kurtz's ideology; it also creates opportunities for that ideology to be questioned and criticized. From the perspective of Fairclough's three-dimensional model, Kurtz's discourse demonstrates the interconnectedness of text, discourse, and society. At the textual level, vocabulary, imperatives, evaluative expressions, and dehumanizing terminology reveal patterns of domination. At the level of discursive practice, Kurtz's language is produced within the institutions and ideological conventions of European colonialism. At the level of social practice, his discourse reflects broader structures of imperial power, racial hierarchy, economic exploitation, and cultural domination. These three dimensions cannot be

fully separated because the linguistic features of Kurtz's discourse acquire their ideological meaning from the colonial context in which they operate. Fairclough's model therefore provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how literary language can reproduce and challenge social power (Magubane, 2012).

The discussion establishes that Kurtz's discourse represents one of the most significant manifestations of colonial ideology in *Heart of Darkness*. His language reveals how concepts of civilization and humanitarianism can be transformed into instruments of domination when supported by unequal power structures. Kurtz's discourse simultaneously reproduces colonial ideology and exposes its contradictions. His movement from humanitarian rhetoric toward explicit violence demonstrates the destructive consequences of a system based on racial hierarchy, economic exploitation, and cultural superiority. The application of Fairclough's 3D model consequently shows that Kurtz's discourse should not be interpreted only as the speech of an individual character. It should also be understood as a representation of wider colonial relations in which language, power, and ideology interact. The analysis ultimately demonstrates how Conrad uses Kurtz to expose the gap between the rhetoric of European civilization and the realities of imperial violence (Frayne, 2021).

Findings

The study finds that Kurtz's discourse is strongly connected with power and authority. His language reflects his powerful position within the colonial structure and enables him to present himself as an intellectual, moral, and political authority. His discourse therefore functions not only as communication but also as a means of establishing dominance over others. The textual analysis reveals that Kurtz frequently uses the language of civilization, progress, and humanitarianism. These expressions create an image of European colonialism as a beneficial and progressive project. However, the narrative gradually exposes a contradiction between this language and the violent practices associated with colonial rule. The Kurtz's discourse contributes to the dehumanization of Africans. His description of Africans through terms associated with primitiveness and inferiority constructs a distinction between the European colonizer and the African colonized. Such linguistic representation supports the ideological assumptions that make domination and exploitation appear legitimate. The analysis demonstrates that Kurtz's discourse contains a significant contradiction between civilization and barbarism. Although he initially represents European civilization, his behavior becomes increasingly violent and authoritarian. His character therefore challenges the assumption that European colonialism necessarily represented civilization while African societies represented barbarism (Scollon, 2003).

The findings show that language is closely related to colonial power in *Heart of Darkness*. Kurtz's ability to speak, persuade, command, and influence others is strengthened by his position within the colonial system. His discourse consequently reproduces unequal

relationships between colonizers and colonized people. The study further finds that Kurtz's discourse reflects the ideological foundations of European imperialism. Ideas of racial superiority, cultural hierarchy, civilization, and European responsibility are embedded within his discourse. These ideas help justify European intervention in Africa and conceal the exploitative dimensions of colonialism. The analysis reveals that economic interests are closely connected with colonial discourse. Behind the rhetoric of civilization and progress lies the pursuit of resources, wealth, and territorial control. Kurtz's conduct demonstrates how humanitarian language can coexist with material exploitation and personal ambition. The study finds that Kurtz's discourse undergoes a transformation from idealistic rhetoric to explicit violence. His famous expression, exterminate all the brutes, represents the extreme development of his colonial ideology. The statement demonstrates how dehumanizing discourse can legitimize violent treatment of colonized populations. The application of Fairclough's 3D model demonstrates that Kurtz's discourse operates at three interconnected levels. At the textual level, linguistic choices reveal authority and dehumanization; at the discursive-practice level, Kurtz's language is shaped by colonial institutions and conventions; and at the social-practice level, his discourse reflects broader structures of imperialism, racial hierarchy, and economic exploitation (Mandal, 2022).

The study finds that Kurtz's discourse both reproduces and exposes colonial ideology. His language initially supports the authority of European imperialism, but the contradictions between his rhetoric and actions ultimately reveal the violence and hypocrisy underlying colonial domination. Thus, Kurtz becomes a representation of the relationship between discourse, power, ideology, and colonialism, confirming the usefulness of Fairclough's 3D model for critically examining colonial discourse in *Heart of Darkness*.

Conclusion

The present study has examined Kurtz's discourse in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* through Norman Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis. The analysis demonstrates that Kurtz's language is not simply a literary representation of an individual character but is deeply connected with power, ideology, colonialism, and social relations. By applying Fairclough's three dimensions—textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice—the study has revealed how language functions as an instrument for constructing and maintaining unequal relationships between the European colonizer and the African colonized.

At the textual level, Kurtz's vocabulary, expressions, imperatives, evaluative language, and dehumanizing descriptions reveal his sense of superiority and authority. His discourse frequently draws upon concepts such as civilization, progress, humanitarianism, and enlightenment. However, these apparently positive concepts contrast sharply with the violence, exploitation, and domination associated with his colonial activities. This

contradiction demonstrates that colonial discourse can employ positive and humanitarian language to conceal practices of oppression and exploitation. At the level of discursive practice, Kurtz's discourse is shaped by the institutional and ideological environment of European imperialism. His language reflects the dominant colonial narratives through which European intervention in Africa was justified. Kurtz's authority is strengthened by his position within the colonial system, allowing his words and ideas to acquire greater legitimacy. His discourse therefore represents not only his personal beliefs but also the broader discursive practices through which colonial power was produced and reproduced.

At the level of social practice, the study demonstrates that Kurtz's discourse reflects wider structures of colonial domination, racial hierarchy, economic exploitation, and cultural superiority. His representation of Africans as inferior or less human demonstrates how language can contribute to the ideological justification of violence. His statement, "Exterminate all the brutes!" provides an extreme example of the relationship between dehumanizing language and colonial violence. The statement exposes the destructive consequences of an ideology that divides people according to assumed racial and cultural superiority. The Kurtz represents the fundamental contradiction within European colonialism. He initially appears as a representative of civilization and humanitarian progress, but his actions increasingly reveal greed, violence, and authoritarianism. Conrad therefore creates a significant contrast between the rhetoric of civilization and the reality of imperial exploitation. Kurtz's transformation suggests that the supposedly civilized colonial system can itself produce forms of barbarism that it claims to eliminate.

Fairclough's 3D model has proved particularly useful in revealing these relationships because it connects linguistic features with the social and ideological conditions in which discourse is produced. The textual, discursive, and social dimensions together demonstrate that Kurtz's language cannot be understood independently from the colonial context of the novel. His discourse both reproduces colonial ideology and exposes its contradictions. the study establishes that Kurtz's discourse is a powerful representation of the relationship between language, power, ideology, and colonialism. His language constructs authority, legitimizes hierarchy, and contributes to the dehumanization of the colonized, while the contradictions between his words and actions expose the hypocrisy of imperial discourse. Through Fairclough's framework, Heart of Darkness can therefore be understood not only as a literary narrative but also as a critical examination of the discursive mechanisms through which colonial power is constructed, justified, and challenged.

Recommendations

- **Apply Fairclough's 3D Model to other characters:** Future researchers should examine the discourse of characters such as Marlow, the Manager, and the Russian

Harlequin to provide a broader understanding of power and ideology in *Heart of Darkness*.

- **Conduct comparative studies:** Researchers should compare Kurtz's discourse with colonial discourse in other literary works, such as *Things Fall Apart* or *A Passage to India*, to identify similarities and differences in representations of imperialism.
- **Focus on racial discourse:** Future studies should investigate the linguistic construction of race, otherness, and African identity in the novel, particularly how colonial language contributes to the representation of Africans.
- **Examine gender and colonial discourse:** Further research could explore how Kurtz's discourse represents women and how gender intersects with colonial power and ideology.
- **Analyze economic discourse:** Researchers should pay greater attention to the relationship between Kurtz's language and the economic interests of European imperialism, particularly the exploitation of African resources.
- **Examine historical context:** Future researchers should connect Kurtz's discourse more extensively with the historical realities of nineteenth-century European imperialism and the Congo Free State.
- **Include linguistic corpus analysis:** A corpus-based study of Kurtz's speeches, descriptions, and statements could provide quantitative evidence about recurring words, patterns, modality, pronouns, and evaluative expressions.
- **Explore contemporary relevance:** Researchers can examine how the colonial discourse identified in *Heart of Darkness* relates to contemporary discussions of racism, cultural superiority, globalization, and unequal power relations.
- **Promote critical literary education:** Teachers and researchers should use *Heart of Darkness* to encourage students to critically examine how language can construct power, normalize inequality, and legitimize domination. Such an approach can strengthen students' understanding of the relationship between literature, discourse, ideology, and society.

References

- Dei, G. J. S., & Asghar zadeh, A. (2001). The power of social theory: The anti-colonial discursive framework. *The Journal of Educational Thought (JET) / Revue De La Pensée Éducative*, 35(3), 297–323.
- Elass, H. (2025). Rethinking the theoretical foundations of Quran translation: A case against instrumentalism. *FORUM: International Journal of Interpretation and Translation*, 23(2), 242–273.
- Frayne, B. (2000). Political ideology, social change, and planning practice in Namibia. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 20(1), 52–65.
- Hart, C. (2018). Event-frames affect blame assignment and perception of aggression in discourse on political protests: An experimental case study in critical discourse analysis. *Applied Linguistics*, 39(3), 400–421.
- Hu, D., & Wang, C. (2025). Hybrid media warfare: Discourse analysis of Russian and Ukrainian MFA websites on the Bucha Incident. *Telematics and Informatics Reports*, 20, Article 100256.
- Lotfipoursaedi, K. (2025). More about text, textuality and discourse analysis. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research*, 13(1), 145–149.
- Magubane, B. (1982). A critical look at indices used in the study of social change in colonial Africa. *Current Anthropology*, 23(4), 412–430.
- Mandal, S. (2022). Colonial ideology: A lens for critical understanding of education system. *Journal of Progressive Education*, 23(11), 234–240.
- Mosse, D. (1997). Colonial and contemporary ideologies of ‘community management’: The case of tank irrigation development in South India. *Modern Asian Studies*, 31(1), 21–70.
- Plange, N. K. (2021). Re-thinking colonialism and social policy: With the logic of imperialism. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 3(1), Article 100111.
- Rogers, R., & Martin-Beltrán, M. (2005). Critical discourse analysis in education: A review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 75(5), 78–79.
- Roy, S. (2004). A critical discourse analysis of representation of Asian Indian folk tales in US-American children's literature. *CLC Web: Comparative Literature and Culture*, 6(2), 1–9.

-
- Scollon, S. (2003). Political and somatic alignment: Habitus, ideology and social practice. In G. Weiss & R. Wodak (Eds.), *Critical discourse analysis: Theory and interdisciplinary* (pp. 79–98). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sipra, M. A., & Rashid, I. (2013). Critical discourse analysis of Martin Luther King's speech in socio-political perspective. *SSRN Electronic Journal*.
<https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2345678>
- Stibbe, A. (2010). An ecolinguistic approach to critical discourse studies. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 7(2), 117–128.
- Tussa'diah, H., & Wijaya, A. (2023). Critical discourse analysis on linguistic ideology of the netizens comments. *Journal on Recent Innovation*, 5(1), 46–49.
- Wodak, R. (2006). Analysing the politics of denial: Critical discourse studies and the discourse-historical approach. In I. Fairclough & G. Fairclough (Eds.), *Discourses in action* (pp. 12–23). Routledge.
- Zotzmann, K., & O'Regan, J. P. (2016). Critical discourse analysis and identity. In S. Preece (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of language and identity* (pp. 89–102). Routledge.