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Educational discourse and the question of discursive construction of knowledge and identity from the perspective of critical and critically oriented discourse analysis

KEYWORDS

Critical Discourse Analysis, Educational Discourse, identity formation

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this paper is to present the specific character of educational discourse in terms of the critical (CDA) and critically-oriented discourse analysis (E. Laclau and Ch. Mouffe) and to identify issues and problems that affect research concerning the discursive construction of identity. My main subjects of interest, and the key notions for the discourse-oriented pedagogy, are identity and knowledge. I will try to show how in spite of the relevance of those two notions, the use of discourse analysis in pedagogical research forces us to transcend the narrowly defined disciplinary boundaries. When it is analyzed in a critical manner the thing we call “educational discourse” expands considerably, affecting the scope of both theoretical and research-oriented interests of pedagogy itself. With regard to identity and knowledge, I try to show the inadequacies of the often employed theories of E. Laclau, Ch. Mouffe and M. Foucault, for analysis of identification processes. I argue that those processes may be successfully analyzed using the CDA framework. The issue of structural constraints that is addressed in CDA, in combination with Laclau’s theory of affective investment allow for a more comprehensive study of the conditions of possibility of the processes of identification.

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The discursive turn, apparent in the social sciences and humanities, and, particularly, its institutionalisation (Ostrowicka 2014; Ostrowicka 2016) in education and education studies as well as the spectacular turn towards the thought of Michel Foucault and the postfoucauldian research, led to the issue of identity, identity

processes and subject construction, crucial in education, to be an object of the increased interest of the researchers of education. The premise regarding their discursive character has allowed us to recognise new contexts and mechanisms of their construction, previously, only sporadically, or on the margins of the discipline, related to the interests of education, and in result, define them as educational.

Additionally, it seems, that the discursive perspective allowed for an emancipation of education studies as a science regarding the human. The discourse, in the most general sense, including its theoretical, therefore, Foucauldian roots, as one of the principal production and formation mechanisms, is a *stricte* educational phenomenon. In terms of discourse, the broadly understood processes of socialisation, inculturation and education reveal an appropriate socio-linguistic, therefore, performative character. Tomasz Szkudlarek notes that as well, regarding the subject of pedagogy, highlighted by postmodernism, as a “construct”, always something “to do”, transferred from the peripheral to the central of the humanities debate (Szkudlarek 2008: 126).

The discursivisation of education (Klus-Stańska 2009; Nowak-Dziemianowicz 2011) significantly contributed to the “omnipotentialisation” of the processes of education. Diverse variants of the public discourse, may currently be perceived as significant, in terms of processes of identity-creation in a broad context, transgressing the institutional context of education. Such approach towards the discourse of education, as a dominant instrument of social control and the principal instance, formatting human identity, transferred the perspective within the research of the processes of education, from education regarded simply as a functionally subject-ed project of social modernisation in a Western style, to education regarded as the very essence of the project (Depaepe & Smeyers 2008; Singh 2014). In regard of i.a. the aforementioned, the areas primarily unrelated to education may be taken into consideration in regard of their submission to educational rationality – “educationalisation” (Bridges 2008; Depaepe & Smeyers 2008; Smeyers & Depaepe 2008; Szkudlarek 2013) or pedagogical – “pedagogisation” (Bernstein 2001; Czyżewski, Marynowicz-Hetka and Woroniecka 2013; Singh 2014), in result analysed in the categories of the discursive-educational phenomenon.

The principal aim of the article is to present the specifics of the discourse of education in regard of the critical and critically oriented discourse analysis as well as to indicate the problematic issues regarding the research on the issue of discursive construction of identity, essential for education. The main approach presented, allowing, as it seems, to conduct more complex research on the discourse of identity, is the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), from which

perspective, particularly applied within education, the discursive concepts of the constructions of identity by Ernest Laclau and Chantal Mouffe as well as Michel Foucault, are presented as well.

Discourse of education from a perspective of the critical and critically oriented discourse analysis

In order to maintain the terminological clarity and the specifics of the discipline, it is agreed upon, to speak of the “discourse of education” in two (Hejnicka-Bezwińska 2008) or three (Ostrowicka 2014; Milerski, Śliwowski 2000) main variants: the discourse of created knowledge on education, and the discourse of teaching and learning (Hejnicka-Bezwińska 2008). The first variant consists of firstly, the historically and socially, therefore contextually, analysed statements regarding education and secondly, broad debates and discussions regarding education. The second variant consists of messages, characteristic of the school environment (Ostrowicka 2014). In the empirical research practice, the aforementioned distinction may imply the diverse analytic units and their adequate research strategies, therefore, performing its indisputably controlling function over the “terminological and methodological chaos” (ibidem).

However, each time, the defining of the “discourse of education” is performed in accordance with a previously established disciplinary criterion. The first criterion is the thematic field of statements or discussions, deciding on, whether a certain statement or discussion qualifies as educational (even if it is simply a matter of the conditions of possibility). The second criterion is, who is the author of the messages; if statements are constructed by **actors**, remaining remotely or closely related to the field of pedagogics, or even broader, of education, the discourse may be regarded as educational. The third criterion is the institution, formally and customary ascribed to the process of teaching and learning, which decides whether a certain discourse can be regarded as a discourse of a (*nomen omen*) school.

However, the currently diagnosed educationalisation or pedagogisation phenomenon, seems to distort the disciplinary borders of the “occurrence” of the discourse of, potentially, education, simultaneously indicating the, educationally relevant discursive processes of broader scope that, however, do not qualify as discourses of education in the light of the aforementioned criteria (theme, author, institution). Therefore, the “discourse of education” category is extended with rules that organise and order the discursive practices, that we can regard as, to put it in a most general manner (impervious to disciplinary defined limitations), “pedagogical”.

Such understanding of the discourse may be found i.a. within the socio-linguistic theory by Basil Bernstein, significant within the critical and interdisciplinary studies regarding the discourse. His “pedagogic discourse” theory, transgresses the narrow understanding of education and includes the social context in which social production and reproduction processes take place (Chouliaraki, Fairclough 1999:107). According to Bernstein, “[in] an important sense, pedagogic discourse, from this point of view, is a discourse without a specific discourse. It has no discourse of its own. Pedagogic discourse is a principle for appropriating other discourses and bringing them into a special relation to each other for the purposes of their selective transmission and acquisition (Bernstein 1990: 183-184, cited in: Chouliaraki, Fairclough 1999: 109).

Within such a broad perspective, the pedagogic discourse means a regulatory rule. It consists of the essential process of recontextualisation, which, according to critical accounts regarding the discourse, is a condition of the possibility of any practice to be constituted within a discourse. Based on the mechanisms of de- and relocation, it the condition of the emergence of conceptual, therefore, ideologically constructed practices and related subjectivities (Chouliaraki, Fairclough 1999:109).

As highlighted by Parlo Singh, the theory of pedagogic discourse developed by Bernstein, allowed him to transfer and extend the object of research interests, from the processes of social production and reproduction, to the inclusion of the issue of production/creation of social identities and social relations within the entire population, accomplished with the use of a discursivised pedagogic means. Additionally, the theory allowed to create the conceptual frameworks for the research regarding the “total pedagogisation of society”, developed on the idea of the performative role of the pedagogic discourse, extended over the entire society (Singh, 2014).

A similar context is considered by Tomasz Szkudlarek, who employs, within his research regarding the discourse of identity, a variant of the critical discourse theory by Ernesto Laclau. Research by Szkudlarek is additionally significant, as it grasps the two-directional tendency: “one of the primary functions of the school system is to create empty signifiers, afterwards used in non-school identity-creating factories (...). Schools are empty-signifier and subject factories, so that the subjects are ready to use them in their mission to acquire identity” (Szkudlarek 2011:122). It is accomplished by the characteristic school practice of ritual repeating, which, based on the principles of decontextualisation and abstraction of terms and concepts, depriving them of their appropriate context, allow to recontextualise them anew, blurring out their primary meaning. In result, the symbolic space pro-

duced by schools is filled with simultaneously essential and **indefinable** concepts, which await for their semantic and identity realisation (Ibidem: 122). Therefore, the discourse of education becomes a part of a discursive construction of not only single or grouped identities, but of the entire society (Szkudlarek 2007: 237). The theories of education included in the discourse may be, according to Szkudlarek, regarded as discursive, therefore ontological, instruments of creating the social objectivity, used in the remaining discursive, practices, therefore, political hegemonic processes, become responsible for the particular shape of the entire society (Szkudlarek 2016:2).

The discourse of education, conducted in such perspective, does not apply solely to a selected institution, culturally and socially ascribed to the processes of education, as well as to its interactive and communicative mechanisms, but it expands the field of what can be “thematically” regarded as educational, as well as it changes the theory of “educational” senders or users of the discourse. In the former two cases, media, political (public politics), scientific and “practical” discourses (business, administration, civil initiatives, consulting) may be regarded as potentially educational (Czyżewski, 2013: 55). In case of the latter, everyone who, in regard of their position or location within a public discourse and the broadly understood social discursive practices, take the position of the “agents of symbolic control” (Singh, 2014), or simply “symbolic elites”¹ may be regarded as the creators/users of the discourse of education (Czyżewski et al. 2014).

The extended approach towards the discourse of education allows for an interpretative combination of what occurs within institutional educations at the discursive level with broader social practice. The schools and academies that contribute to the development of the discourse of education, may still maintain “a significant meaning for the selective dissemination of discourses and their social internalisa-

¹ The “symbolic elites” category, is taken in quite a broad context and is not related to the quality of the generated discourse. According to the authors of the book on the symbolic elites discourse, the aforementioned category consists of “experts, publicists, journalists, editors, writers, authors of school textbooks, priests, scientists, businessmen, intellectuals as well as politicians, who appear in mass media. In other words, groups and people who influence the surplus of publicly available knowledge and the shape and contents of the public discourse. The symbolic elites play a significant role in establishing the hierarchy of important and unimportant issues, publicly legitimate canons of moral and aesthetic value and additionally, the models of the reception of scientific standings” (Czyżewski et al. 2014: 8). One should mention that the authors in questions draw upon the theory of one of the most influential Critical Discourse Analysis representatives, Teun van Dijk, who defines it in a strictly educational manner: “If knowledge is defined as socially certified, shared beliefs of a community, it is obvious that those groups or institutions who have preferential access to public discourse, such as that of the media, or other forms of power and authority, such as politicians, professors or priests, are in an excellent position to influence people’s knowledge formation” (van Dijk 2005: 87-88).

tion, by controlling their accessibility” (Milerski, Śliwerski 2000: 50) or, according to Bernstein’s theory, by initiating/creating the means of regulating the discursive practice, or by recontextualising the non-school discourse into a pedagogic knowledge, with the use of regulatory principles and the practice of institutional context (Chouliaraki 1998: 8). However, they cannot be accepted as contexts that exhaust the definition of what is educationally proper or relevant.

The described change in perspective allows for the development of the scholarly interests of pedagogics in areas only indirectly related to education. Such approach can be found within the projects of researching the genealogy of a neoliberal subject i.a. by Małgorzata Lewartowska-Zychowicz (2010) as well as by Eugenia Potulicka and Joanna Rutkowiak (2010). The latter examines the *stricte* educational function of the postmodern economic project, however, it was Lewartowska-Zychowicz who highlighted the essential role, for pedagogics as a discipline regarding the human, of the “reproduced in public discourse” and “seemingly educational project of identity”, fulfilling the role of an “organising principle for the conduction of educational practice” (Lewartowska-Zychowicz 2010: 9). Pedagogy, in this perspective, involves “constantly undertaken attempts of examining the discourses significant from the perspective of the shaping of identity” (ibidem: 10), education means “a type of practice of constructing identity, which remains in a close relation to discursive social practices, and the meanings created and reproduced within education, as derivatives of the dominant educational atmosphere” (ibidem: 13).

The provided list of accounts, which could be extended without effort by a bigger number of project regarding discursively oriented pedagogy and discursive educational research conducted in Poland (Boryczko 2015; Cackowska et al. 2012; Czech-Włodarczyk 2012; Dobrołowicz 2013; Popow 2015; Woynarowska 2010; Zamojska 2010) and abroad (Chouliaraki 1998; Chouliaraki 2008; Gee 2005; Kress 1996; Luke 1995-1996; Rogers 2004), is dominated by a broad understanding of education, as a social process of constructing and reproducing meanings (Szkudlarek 1995 cited in: Lewartowska-Zychowicz 2010:13), with the discursively constructed identity located at its centre.

The critically oriented discourse analysis and the issue of the discursive construction of identity and knowledge

Within the education studies regarding a broadly understood discourse of education the dominant position belongs to the aspect of identity – it is regarded as the most relevant, in the educational aspect, the effect of the affecting operation of

discourse and discourse practice. The most often accepted theoretical and research perspective is the theory of discourse and discursive processes of identity creation by Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe and Michel Foucault. The application of the aforementioned theories within the given object of research, requires a number of theoretical assertions, allowing to explain the essence of the object and the status of results provided by the research.

Most often, however, that crucial element is omitted in the description of empirical research, or solved by the employment of theoretical automatism – an auto-identification of the research within the categories of the discursive processes of identity creation. In result, it remains to be settled, whether it is a process accomplished through the discourse of identity creation, or **its construction within the discourse, therefore, its discursive vision, with which one can identify**. Simultaneously the issue, whether, and if so, on what principle, within what discursive and non-discursive conditions, the process occurs, and additionally, what are its conditions of possibility, is rarely an object of theoretical reflection. The particular issue seems to be the most crucial in terms of education. It is not simply a matter of what obligates objects (externally in regard of their representations), but additionally, of what obligates them and in what way (allows for their internalisation) and of the conditions of possibility of such an obligation.

The issue is significantly apparent in identity oriented Foucauldian research. According to David Howarth, the generally formulated theory by Foucault, in which discourses are simply “systems of discursive practice that literally constitute their objects of knowledge”, spawns numerous misunderstandings and inconsistencies even at the level of its implementation within the particular research practice. Howarth presents the example of the well-established research by Edward Said, regarding the presentation of other cultures within the Western discourse. A lack of clear declaration, regarding the ontological status of discourse, results in a number of conclusions and interpretations that prove difficult to agree upon. As Foucault’s theory does not clarify the relation between the discursive representations and real objects, and directs little attention to the issues of the material consequences of discourse, the distinction of discourses as “**systems of representations**” or “**ideas regarding**” (in this case, the Orient), or, as “**instruments of creation**” does not appear in it (Howarth 2008: 110-113). In result, the attempts to demonstrate, in a convincing way, the influence of the discursive practices within the area of identity (in this case, oriental identity) and the relations between discourse and authority, prove difficult to accomplish (ibidem: 113). The “ontological ambiguity, present within the aforementioned as well as other, in terms of the aims, analyses of the discourse of identity creation, implicates serious epistemological

consequences (ibidem: 112). Therefore, according to Howarth, the post-Marxist theories of discourse, particularly the theories by Laclau and Mouffe are more appropriate for the research of the discursive mechanisms of identity construction (ibidem: 133).

However, the research regarding the educational discourse of identity creation, according to the perspective of theories by Laclau and Mouffe, requires, which is rarely present in a particular research project, to include the crucial distinction: between the “**subjective position**” and the “**political subjectivity**” (Howarth 2008: 168-169). The former regards the place within the discursive structure, or a general field of objectivity, the latter describes the process of identification. Various positions, or their combinations, with which individuals may identify, are present within the structure. Therefore, the subjective position denotes the discursively available possibilities of identification, as well as, being shaped and stabilised, a result of the identification process (ibidem: 168-169) – accomplished in a temporarily fixed hegemonic structure.

The discursively constructed vision of various types of identity, while being other than the identity itself, assumes a form of a certain, discursively created symbolic repertoire, which may be regarded as a, more or less internally integral system of knowledge. In the classic theory of social constructivism, which proved contributive to the theoretical significance of the discursively oriented research, the internalised knowledge regarding the world enables the constitution of subjects, who consciously or unconsciously, accepted it as legitimate. Within the discussed perspective, action is non-existent without a knowledge, previously made objective, regarding action as a particular knowledge of the identity related to that action.

This way, each society possesses a prepared, to a certain degree, “repertoire of identities”, being a part of the “objective knowledge of its members”, which, due to socialisation and internalisation becomes the subjective knowledge of an individual. A particular identity becomes an identity only within a particular social world and, according to Peter L. Berger, a particular “**universe of meaning**” (see: Berger 1985). The research conducted within the aforementioned perspective, with their object being the forms and appearances of the visions of identity, within particular discourses, regard the hegemonic symbolic universe, therefore, the available subjective positions, rather than the *sensu stricto* process of forming of the political identity.

The analyses focused on grasping the identity creation/identifying process, require focusing on dislocations, fractions and ruptures within structures (Laclau 1990: 61), therefore, places/moments, where the identification begins to actualise.

According to Howarth, it is one of the reasons, for which the theory of Laclau is best applied in “**periods of revolutionary changes**”, when “**collective political entities make decisions regarding the creation and shaping of new structures (...), in which particular types of subjectivity are involved**” (Howarth 2008: 189).

One should highlight, that the situation occurs within the scope of education and regards a singular, but collectively accomplished (through institutions) process of identity creation, which, in a narrow scope, would justify accepting the research concerning the discourse of education within the categories of the processes of identification. It is justified to speak of a “constant” crisis phenomenon related to an objectively perceived development phase, that occurs at one of the levels of school education.² However, it is not a structural, but a personal crisis, therefore, generating a need of an identification process, that occurs, as should be mentioned, in regard, or in spite, of “subjective positions” and hegemonic “symbolic universes” available within the area of formal, supraformal and non-formal education. Therefore, using the distinction, as proposed by Howarth, identification decisions are made “**within a framework of structure**” (without destabilising it) rather than “**regarding the structure**” (i.e. in a situation of a *nomen omen* structural crisis) (Howarth 2008: 188-189). However, the research regarding the universe and the process of identification are two different analytic issues. One could risk a hypothesis, that the research regarding the processes of identity creation, located within the Laclauan perspective (although not exclusively, as the issue regards other discursive research, including the postfoucauldian studies) are often located, where the flexible application of the Laclau project is significantly impeded. Focusing on the analysis of the potential, future form of political identities, or on the previously constituted, available subjective positions or visions of identity present in various discourses, the research discusses no potential relevance regarding the process of identity creation accomplished by additional means. In result, we can apprehend the available, and based on the hegemonic principle, relatively perpetuated identity repertoire, within the current symbolic universe, however, we know nothing of its real meaning. Therefore, the essential feature, i.e. the conditions and possibilities of choice and of accomplishing identification remain unclear.

According to Wiktor Marzec, an apparent increase of the significance of the psychoanalytic theory, particularly the Lacanian psychoanalysis, results, within Laclau’s theory, from the limited nature of the theory of discourse, based mainly on the poststructuralist thought (Marzec 2013:41): “considering the processes of

² It is being noted by Monika Popow, who, while justifying the location of her research, regarding the discursive, textbook construct of nation, as located in middle school, refers to the Eriksonian theory of forming identity, in which crisis plays a major role. (Popow 2015: 48-49).

constructing political identities, as game-like, signifying and possible to describe with generalised rhetoric, allows for researching their form alone. However, the research regarding discourse is unable to provide information about the potential decisive in terms of the integrity of political identities and the very *spiritus movens* of identification” (ibidem: 41).

Affective investment (Laclau 2009: 66) assumes that role in Laclau’s subsequent works. In terms of affective investment, the discursive practice of binding the discursive field into one, therefore creating objectivity, is generated by the primary need (individual or collective) of fulness. Therefore, the constitution of the entirety is related to the “radical investment”, consisting of raising a particular meaning to the “dignity of the Thing”, resulting in the meaning becoming a reflection of the mythical one (Laclau, *On Populist Reason* 2005: 113). In the words of Laclau, “we can conclude that any social whole results from an indissociable articulation between signifying and affective dimensions” (ibidem: 111).

In regard of the aforementioned, the (post)Laclauan discursive studies, take a direction, that is contributive theoretically and scholarly to Laclau’s theory, i.e. the postlacanian and psychoanalytic directions, including the “political logic of *jouissance*”, allowing to conduct careful demonstration regarding the potential causes of the increased “**libidinal cathexis**” of particular identifications (Marzec 2013: 42). As presented by Marzec, such research would consist of the “analysis of a social *sinthome* – pleasure, present in all social devices and processes” (ibidem: 42).

The described direction, regards mostly the “affective” potential included within discourses, which allows for a relatively (however, not implying that it is conscious) unrestrained process of identification. Simultaneously, it does not undertake possible, structural and discursive limitations, mostly present when speaking of the process of constituting identity “within the structure” (instead of “in regard of the structure”), therefore, in a field of a hegemonic symbolic universe.

The phenomena of constructing of identity and its related knowledge, perceived in the categories of a complex symbolic universe, consisting of a series potential subjective positions or identity repertoires, awaiting to be drawn upon, may be scholarly and theoretically developed (with promising results) on the ground of the critical discourse analysis, which after a series of theoretical arrangements, proves to be a cognitively promising addition to the above-mentioned theories. Additionally, the discussed approach, apart from its well developed assortment of methodological instruments, including an expanded set of techniques, required for the research regarding the discursive research techniques (Marzec 2011), is also equipped with a vast repertoire of interesting theoretical solutions.

Interdisciplinarity of the critical research on discourse

No doubt, the processes of the discursive construction of knowledge, identity and social relations, crucial regarding the perception of school and education, are situated within the CDA field of interests (Fairclough 2001; van Dijk 2005). Therefore, the theory of discourse, knowledge, authority, hegemony and discursive practices as well as of the relations between them, and the institutional aspect, as well as various social practices, allows the CDA representatives to speak of their input within the **theory of education**. According to the scholars, who employ CDA, allow them insight into the processes of learning from perspectives often unseen by other accounts (Fairclough 2004a; Rogers 2004a: 246; Luke 1995-1996: 12).³

The exponents of the critical approach towards the discourse analysis, recognise mainly the interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and multidisciplinary (Wodak 2001) character of the research and the following necessity of creating relatively complex, therefore, providing complementary description of social phenomena (ibidem), theoretical models consisting of proper interests and research issues. The research is not dependent on a particular scientific discipline, but rather, the “issue” motivation, secondarily influencing the distinctions within a broad critical approach (Gouveia 2007: 47).

One should highlight, that the research practice of the critical discourse analysis is related to an explicitly defined theoretical base (Meyer 2001: 17), allowing for the description of the means of understanding of the object of research, the available means of providing solutions to the given research issue, as well as an interpretation of results. As mentioned in the introduction, finding a unified theoretical attitude within the CDA, proves difficult. Creating a firm theoretical background consists mainly of the pragmatic criterion (Mouzelis 1995 citing Weiss, Wodak 2007: 7), therefore, it is dependent on each selection of assumed research aims, and constitutes a synthesis of diverse social and linguistic theories (Chouliaraki, Fairclough 1999: 16). According to Gilbert Weiss and Ruth Wodak, the principal question asked within the framework of the CDA, is not the question, whether we need a main theory, but rather, it is a question regarding the sort of conceptual instruments, adequate for solving a particular research issue (Weiss, Wodak 2007: 7).

³ I expand on that subject in the article *Critical Linguistic Awareness and the Positive Discourse Analysis. On the educational implications and “constructive” education projects of critically oriented discourse theories* (*Krytyczna Świadomość Językowa i Pozytywna Analiza Dyskursu. Czyli o edukacyjnych implikacjach i „budujących” projektach pedagogicznych, krytycznie zorientowanych teorii dyskursu*) (Starego, 2017).

The use of instruments provided by diverse theories, requires their terminological unification. Unification is accomplished at a meta-conceptual level, focusing on matters such as ontology of the social, or the constitution of subjectivity, etc. (ibidem: 8). The principal task is not to create of a simply synthesis, but to achieve a compatible integration. In the above terms, Weiss and Wodak, recall the concept of the “communicative conceptualisation” by Pierre Bourdieu. The concept consists of an active and productive processing of theoretical instruments, created within a particular tradition, distinguishing from the pious approach to some canon authors that results with a “ritual recitation”, “imitativeness” or “eclecticism” (Bourdieu 1997 cited in: Weiss, Wodak 2007: 9).

Study within the CDA perspective is characterised by a variety of theoretical principles, heterogeneity regarding the data selected for analysis, assumed methodology and the approach to linguistic and grammatical matters (ibidem: 12). A particular object of research requires multiple aspects of analysis: linguistic, historical, political, sociological, psychological (ibidem), educational (Chouliaraki 1995; Fairclough 2005), economic (Chiapello, Fairclough 2002), or anthropological (Bellier 2005), which places CDA within the interdisciplinary scope.

However, the aforementioned interdisciplinarity, which Theo van Leeuwen (2005: 3-7) described as integrationist (as different from the centralist and pluralist⁴). It is related to the premise regarding the insufficiency of particular scientific disciplines, for providing a satisfying analysis of social issues, **therefore the very orientation regarding the object of research**. Interdisciplinarity denotes the use of a combination of diversified methodologies and theories, maintaining a distribution of competence between disciplines, so that they would be complementary mutually and in regard to the newly-established whole (see: ibidem).

A similar approach is promoted by Norman Fairclough and Lilie Chouliaraki, who distinguish between the transdisciplinarity of CDA, and a shallow, in their opinion, understanding of interdisciplinarity, as a simple and insignificant, in shaping the character of each discipline, but focused on the problem, a combination of theory and methods. In contrast, transdisciplinarity means a translation or internalisation, therefore, a mutual agreement and “processing” of particular categories, theories or methods, within the scope of the object of research, which are

⁴ Within a centralist model, one discipline is situated within the centre of interdisciplinary relations, and from that position, defines its relation to other disciplines. A significant disciplinary border is set within this model, as it determines the areas of possible, interdisciplinary cooperation. The pluralist model denotes focus on the research issues, solved by an equal, mutual effort of particular disciplines, while maintaining their autonomy and self-sufficiency. The object of research is examined from various perspectives simultaneously (van Leeuwen 2005: 3-7).

dependent on the “exotropic” potential of the theory, therefore, its open attitude to the dialogue with other theories (Chouliaraki, Fairclough 1999: 112-113).

The critical orientation of research regarding discourse, considered within this perspective, particularly the potentially complex research approach that is CDA, is “exotropic”. Therefore, the object of its research, i.e. the discursive aspects of contemporary social reality and its internal transformations, within a thematic field shared among various theories, which in the most general sense relates to a dialectic relation between the social system, and social action (ibidem: 113). According to Fairclough, an irreducible (in terms of discipline), diverse character of social phenomena may successfully contribute to the development of knowledge, built within the scope of particular sciences, while the lack of transdisciplinary dialogue (see: Fairclough 2005)⁵ significantly impedes the ability to comprehend the numerous elements of social life, which “naturally” are not divided according to disciplines, or remain in the scope of only one discipline, but are intertwined (ibidem: 67).

However, in a broader perspective, transdisciplinarity may contribute to the processes of social change (Fairclough, web source: <http://www.cddc.vt.edu>), which in turn constitutes one of the principal, distinct for CDA non-critical and discursively and linguistically oriented research, studies regarding discourse.

“Criticality” within the critically oriented discursive research

The specifics of CDA, or in a broader sense, the critical approach regarding the discourse analysis, is no result of the acclaim of a particular method model or disciplinary theme, being considered as dominant, but of a principal aim of research procedure, being the search for relations between discourse and social inequalities (Tomanek 2008: 31). Therefore, CDA is, in the basic sense, a **“critical research perspective”** (Meyer 2001: 14; van Dijk 2001: 96), or an analysis of discourse **“with an attitude”** (van Dijk 2001: 96) – social, political and particularly critical involvement.

⁵ One should mention, that Fairclough uses the category of “transdisciplinarity”, in contrast with “interdisciplinarity” or “post-disciplinarity”. The first is regarded as an interdisciplinary dialogue, leading to the sole development of each discipline, by internal unification of their particular logics. The second, is a thematically motivated involvement of numerous disciplines, without the aim of changing their scope of research. The third is a transgression past the traditionally defined disciplines, without simultaneous theoretical and methodological speculation (Fairclough 2005: 54, 67).

One of the exponents of CDA, highlights a number of basic means of understanding “criticalities”, that predicate on the critical self-identification of CDA. The primary mean is the critique of an established social order and its asymmetric social relations. Therefore, CDA may be perceived in the category of a mean, or instrument of social critique, due to the focus on the relations between language, authority and domination, the location of specific linguistic analyses in a broader social context (see: Billing 2007) as well as tackling essential social issues, particularly the role of discourse in creating and reproducing relations of authority resulting in social inequalities (van Dijk 2001: 96; van Dijk 2007: 2).

According to the principles of the critically oriented social science CDA claims “emancipatory objectives” (Fairclough 2001: 125) and defines own identity within the categories of “solidarity with the oppressed” (van Dijk 2001: 96) (the poor, the socially excluded, and subjected to gender, sexual or race oppression). Fairclough writes of a much more significant social science project, with CDA serving as its sub-project, or a critical project on a smaller scale (Fairclough 2004: 202). CDA poses questions regarding responsibility, interests and ideologies, similarly to other critical sciences. As the ideological dominance is most often related to the hegemonisation of particular interests, and as such is subject to naturalisation, the aim of the critically oriented discourse analysis is “denaturalisation”, i.e. presenting relations between discourse and an oppressive social structure (see: Fairclough 1999).

However, the particular understanding of “criticality” within CDA tradition is varied (Wodak 2001), almost all of its exponents draw upon the tradition of critical practice of the Frankfurt school (Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno or a second-generation exponent, Jürgen Habermas), Marxism (hegemony theory by Georgio Gramsci), French theory of discourse (Michel Foucault) and of ideology (Louis Althusser, or Michel Pêcheux), contemporary post-Marxism in its various forms (hegemony theory by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe) as well as theory of literature (dialogic theory of Michaił Bachtin and intertextuality theory of Julia Kristeva) (Chilton 2005).

In consideration of the aforementioned critical theories, Weiss and Wodak highlight the principal premise of CDA, regarding the critical-dialectic character of the theory, which role is not limited to generating general statements on the laws of social life, but is related to the challenges of enlightenment, regarded as a profound understanding of the historical and social situation of the actors (Weiss, Wodak 2007: 2) as well as making visible, that which is hidden (in a form of intervention in social practice) (Fairclough, Wodak 2007: 258). Therefore, the questions regarding the conditions of constitution of knowledge and identity, the

modes of creating discourse, and their participation in the constitution of the social, and the persistence, i.a. due to discursive means, of the relation of authority within the framework of a particular society (Wodak 2001: 11-12).

Discursive construction of knowledge and identity in a perspective of the critical discourse analysis

However, the CDA serves as an excellent addition to the theories of the discursive construction of identity, dominant within education, one should mention, that not all of its theoretical deductions remain in accordance with the premises set out by Laclau and Mouffe as well as Foucault. However, despite the fact that the suggested differences regard difficult, and sometimes irreconcilable ontological issues, they are not significant to a degree, where they would be unable cognitively contributive theoretical consolidations, and particularly, impede the empirical research practice. A substantial number of concepts and ideas of the CDA may be successfully included within the discourse theory (Marzec 2011:192). Moreover, the conceptual solutions to the problematic themes present within the theories by Laclau and Mouffe as well as Foucault, signify a more convincing perspective of the analysis of the processes of identity creation.

However, in terms of the first element listed, the exponents of the critical discourse analysis highlight a relatively common, theoretical provenance of both projects and express the possibility of including numerous crucial solutions to own speculation (e.g. the theory of articulation and difference, or nodal points, Chouliraki, Fairclough 1999: 123-124), they also indicate a presence of a number of debatable issues, such as the, present within the theories by Laclau and Mouffe, idea of **unconditional convergence/contingency** or the distinction between discursive and non-discursive phenomena, disregarded by the mentioned authors.⁶

⁶ Within the theory by Laclau and Mouffe, the discursive processes are considered at an ontological level. Therefore "discourse is the primary terrain of the constitution of objectivity" (Laclau 2009: 63) and plays a fundamental role in constituting and shaping of social reality (Laclau, Mouffe 2007: 117-118). Despite the *explicite* expressed Foucauldian provenance, the distinction between discursive and non-discursive practice is disregarded. According to Laclau and Mouffe: "every object is constituted as an object of discourse" meaning, that in a symbolic field, exist only the objects which possess ascribed meanings, depending upon the "structuring of a discursive field" (**Laclau, Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, 107-108**). The CDA perspective however is distanced from the radical constructivist approach, which assumes that reality is constructed entirely in a social manner and, particularly, that it is constructed discursively or textually. As highlighted by Fairclough, it is dominated by a realist, rather than an idealist approach, with the realist approach related to the limitations of constructivism, and based on the clear demarcation between *construction* and *construing*.

The main objection, linking all the doubts, regarding the theory by Laclau and Mouffe, is a presence of a consequent theory of structural boundaries. According to Fairclough and Chouliaraki, what is lacking, is the theory of structure, not only within the categories of a temporal closure, but also in a relative, therefore, open and subject to change, constancy and persistence. Without the two, an explanation and description of the causes of the major potential of some social forces to initiate change, as the generation of articulations and nodal points, is impossible. Moreover, the absence of reference to the structure, renders the distinction between significant and less significant practices, therefore the definition the necessary conditions of the actualised (within discourse) process of **conjunction (?)** (Chouliaraki, Fairclough 1999: 125-126).

However, according to CDA premises⁷, the level and form of accidentality of the social as well as the relations, in which people remain in regard of discourse, vary depending on each of their standings in the social structure (class, gender, etc.). The accidentality is structurally limited, and one of the principal results of the discursive construction of the society is the reproduction of structures (Chouliaraki, Fairclough 1999: 125-126). That does not imply however, that within the CDA, we face a concentration based on structural conditions or with a dominance of structure. Contrarily, the theory of language, discourse and discursive practices, developed within the CDA, is an attempt to transgress the sociologically significant problem of the dichotomy of “structure and action”⁸ (Fairclough 2001; Fairclough 2004; Fairclough 2009), on which I shall expand in the **subsequent** part of the article.

A similar situation is to be found in Foucault’s thought. Despite the theoretical debt, taken on from the author of the *Archaeology of knowledge* (Chilton 2005; Fairclough 2009), some of the elements are subjected to transformation in CDA, or even discarded, however, for different reasons, than the above-mentioned ideas of Laclau and Mouffe.

In regard of Foucault, a remark is necessary, that the exponents of CDA, recognise (in opposition to Howarth) his significant input into the development of the crucial problem of the material effects of discursive practices, crucial for the

Therefore, it implies a possibility of constructing a textual representation, or imaginations regarding the social reality, influencing its change, however, the very change is limited by numerous non-semiotic and contextual factors, depending on the current reality, and its exponents, etc. (Fairclough 2004: 230).

⁷ The main premises of CDA are described elsewhere (Starego 2012; Starego 2012a; Starego 2012b).

⁸ The subject is discussed in detail elsewhere (Starego 2011).

critically oriented discourse research, especially in the context of the generation of social identities. According to Fairclough, the problem of the discursive construction of the self, the subjectivity or social identities, prioritised by Foucault, should be the main object of interest within the theory of discourse, theory of language and within discursive analyses (Fairclough 2009:44-45). That does not mean however, that his theory is entirely acclaimed. The main objection, not only regarding the “archaeological”, but also the “genealogical” phase, is the excessive structuralist sympathy related to the reduction of the subjective agency (ibidem: 45).

As Fairclough highlights, the aforementioned results from a basic deficit within the Foucauldian theory, i.e., the lack of an adequate theory of practice (ibidem: 57). The “discursive practice” category, although used by Foucault, is reduced to its own opposite, a generative principle, a “system of anonymous, historical rules”. The lack of distinctive features of practice, that would secure it from an inevitable reduction to a structure, and the lack of a developed theory of influence of practice on the forming and reshaping of the very structures, entails an impossibility of grasping of the mechanisms, crucial to CDA, of change, and in result, an impossibility of answering to the question regarding the conditions of possibility of maintaining that which is, but also a question regarding alternatives. Within a CDA approach, the structures are simultaneously reproduced and modified within discursive practices. The crucial, in a theoretical manner, matter is the description of causes and modes regarding the procession of this dynamic (ibidem: 58).

The admission of the “constitutive” vision of discourse as well as the theory of the shaping, through discursive practices, of objects and social subjects requires, according to Fairclough, an inclusion of an idea of boundaries rooted in the material reality and in already constituted objects, that is often discarded by the post-structuralist discourse theories. From such perspective, the theory by Foucault, while undermining the constitutive effects of discourse, cannot cope with the less schematic vision regarding the influence of discursive practices on social identities, which are generated in result of interactions with the already formed. As highlighted by Fairclough, social subjects are not simply a passive object of the discursive mechanisms of positioning, but agents capable of acting, that negotiate their relation with different types of discourses, at their hand and for their use. Therefore, the constructive vision of discourse should be considered from a viewpoint of a dialectic relation, between the discursive practices and the already constituted reality (ibidem: 60-61).

One of the basic CDA features is the dialectical theory of social reality (Harvey 1996) drawing upon the belief regarding the existence of a mediated relation between discursive practices and areas, or context, in which actions are embedded

(such as: institutional frameworks, social structure, or various social situations) (Weiss, Wodak 2007: 22; Fairclough 2001: 30). According to Weiss and Wodak “on the one hand, the situational, institutional and social settings shape and affect discourses, and, on the other, discourses influence discursive as well as non-discursive social and political processes and actions. (Weiss and Wodak 2007: 22). Within the critical discourse analysis, discourse, in its most general meaning, is perceived as a social practice constituted, essentially, not only by the actions of the social agents but also by their structural limitations (Fairclough 2001: 23).

Although the research within the CDA area, is not, in a degree similar to the theory by Laclau and Mouffe or Foucault, concentrated on the analysis of the processes of identity creation (as in the matters of changes), the theory of the discursive process of constructing reality, developed within its boundaries, includes that particular element, as significantly constitutive.

Fairclough highlights three, basic objects of discursive affection. First, the social identities, subjective positions, social subjects and types of “me”, second, social relations, and three, systems of knowledge and beliefs. They all remain in a close relation with the threefold role of language, deduced from the Hallidayan theory of language functions: “**identity-creating**”/”**textual**”, responsible for the process of the discursive constitution of social identities; “**interpersonal**”, related to the modes of establishing and negotiating social relations between the participants of discourse; and “**ideational**”, describing the practice of signifying the world, its processes, beings and relations (ibidem:64).

The discourse alone, within the CDA, consists of a practice representing and forming objects and positioning people as social subjects (Fairclough 2009: 3-4).⁹ Therefore the individual is always located within the social, and the social consti-

⁹ Fairclough describes the presentational and formative feature of discourse as follows: “I see discourses as ways of representing aspects of the world – the processes, relations and structures of the material world, the mental world of thoughts, feelings, beliefs and so forth, and the social world. Particular aspects of the world may be represented differently, so we are generally in the position of having to consider the relationship between different discourses. Different discourses are different perspectives on the world, and they are associated with the different relations people have to the world, which in turn depends on their positions in the world, their social and personal identities, and the social relationships in which they stand to other people. Discourses not only represent the world as it is (or rather is seen to be), they are also projective, imaginaries, representing possible worlds which are different from the actual world, and tied in to projects to change the world in particular directions. The relationships between different discourses are one element of the relationships between different people – they may complement one another, compete with one another, one can dominate others, and so forth. Discourses constitute part of the resources which people deploy in relating to one another – keeping separate from one another, cooperating, competing, dominating – and in seeking to change the ways in which they relate to one another” (Fairclough 2004: s. 124). The issue of the aforementioned “subjective positions and “resources” will be discussed in detail below.

tutes the essential condition of individual action: **“individuals are enabled to act, as far, as the internalised social conventions allow them to”** (Fairclough 2001: 23). As presented by Fairclough, **“that which is partially presupposed within the concept of social practice, is that people are able to act by being limited: people are able to act under the condition, that they act within the limitations defined by the types of practice, and types of discourses”** (ibidem: 23).

One can clearly see, that, however, in the process of constituting reality, the discursive practices play a major role, it is difficult to speak of an entirely independent process of discursive creation. Contrarily, current discursive practices are accomplished within the ground of what previously constituted as a material, social reality, and they remain in a close dialectic relation (Fairclough 2009: 60). Moreover, the creative power of discourse practices results from these dimensions of social structure, which constitute their direct or indirect limitations: norms and conventions, their relations, identities, and institutions. (ibidem: 64).

A similar idea of relative limitations is present in the discourse theory presented by Laclau. According to Laclau, not every **phenomenon** may be an object of the identification investment. The historically determined, normative order is the decisive determinant, by setting bounds of the arbitrariness of representation (Szkudlarek 2016: 100). However, the operationalisation of the aforementioned statement seems difficult, as the statement positions itself within a degree of generality, which finally, allows for no explanation.

However, within the critical discourse analysis, due to the presence of the premise regarding the significance of discursive and non-discursive processes (Fairclough 2001; Fairclough 2004; Fairclough 2009) in the constitution of the social and of the individual and collective identities, as well as focusing on the issue of change and its structural and local conditions of possibility, the aforementioned issue becomes one of the crucial elements of discourse research. The theory of limitation, previously mentioned, is considered by CDA in two areas: non-discursive and discursive.

Regarding the former, Fairclough states, that experiencing the social and the varied institutions of the social, where action is conducted, is structured by a “social order”, a demarcation line, dividing particular social space into the types of its embodied situations, bound to similarly varied types of practice. In terms of discursive phenomena, the “order of discourse” becomes the principle, as it structures the discursive space into various types of discourse. Therefore, one cannot consider a particular or current social practice, and by analogy, a particular, current discourse, without referring to the previously mentioned (Fairclough 2001: 24).

However, that does not imply a unidirectional determination. Any possibility of change results from a reflexive relation: social structure, as the order of discourse, both constitute a product of social practices and their particular, adequate situations, where action takes place, as well as of types of discourse including the ones currently created. Both areas, discursive and non-discursive, remain in a mutual, dialectic relation. The social structure determines the discourse, and simultaneously is an effect of the discourse (including the mentioned “lower” levels) (Fairclough 2001: 31).

However, the issue of the place of the subject, therefore the individual and collective processes of identity creation, within the aforementioned, remains. The exponents of CDA, similarly to Laclau, or Foucault, employ the subjective positions category, which, in their opinion, allows to grasp the phenomenon of the discursive limitations related to action. As previously highlighted, such limitations constitute the condition of possibility of action, determining the creativity of subjects, and, in a further perspective, determine the possibility of change, including the structural level.

Regarding the given situation, the varied types of discourse, as limiting, determine the type of assets used by subjects. Therefore, in the process of production, distribution or interpretation of discourses, people make use of the orders of discourse and the discursive practices, which constitute the form of previously internalised, cognitive “members’ resources”. In result of internalisation, they are established in “people’s heads”, determining their varied, social and discursive actions. Varied, as the resources described, in spite of their social rooting, are dependent on the inherent reality of the social relations of authority, which determine their unequal transmission and distribution (Fairclough 2001: 20). In other words, the “members’ resources” as well as a particular framework of social practice (e.g. the inequalities along with their consequences, present within the social reality), which determines the internalisation and the means of using the resources, and within which the production and interpretation of discourse and knowledge is accomplished, constitute the type of the constitutive limitations that determine action.

Context, or a situation, in which certain social or discursive practice takes place, is another limitation. Similar to the aforementioned “members’ resources”, a “mental map” of the social order is being used, as a result of a previous internalisation of possible interpretations, regarding the nature of the given context or situation (Fairclough 2009: 82). An alternative to the described logic, is the theory of “mental models” by van Dijk, which provides additional emphasis regarding the role of the discursively constructed knowledge of the members, within discursive

processes. Similar to the previous example, it draws upon the belief that discourse production and comprehension is context-dependent. (van Dijk 2005: 71).

According to van Dijk, defining the context within the categories of environment or situations, in which the use of language occurs, proves insufficient, as a result of an insufficiently apprehended theory of cognitive influence. However, the relation of dependence between context and a particular discourse, present in the sources, or social communication is the main issue here. However, the attempts to explain the dependence, deprived of a cognitive interface, is prone to the dangers of deterministic reduction. According to van Dijk the “mental model” term provides such an interface (ibidem: 74-75). The concept draws upon the premise, that agents possess a mental representation regarding the features of a social situation, in which they act, create, comprehend and interpret texts as well as sentences.

Knowledge proves an essential element of models defined in such manner. According to van Dijk “knowledge in discourse processing is pervasive” (ibidem: 71). Therefore, comprehension and generation of discourses (understanding of words and sentences, creating sense, creating semantic macrostructures) is dependent on the shared knowledge of the participants. Language users need, primarily, the general knowledge of the world, secondarily, the knowledge on the particular communication situation, and finally, tertiarily, general knowledge on knowledge, that they have; participants of any discursive situation must constantly present knowledge regarding other participants, or the very discursive situation, in which they participate (ibidem: 71-72).

Applying the aforementioned premise in CDA, implies the research focus not only on the social conditions of possibility and effects of the work of discursive structures, but also on the socio-cognitive aspect of these processes. Cognition, accomplished within a context of beliefs shared by a given society, implies a process of a mutual influence, accomplished between discourse and society. The cognitive structures are considered, simultaneously, at the individual and the social level (in context of the authority of ideologies, norms, and values) (ibidem: 87).

However, one should highlight, that the very process of the discursive forming of social knowledge, therefore, indirectly, social identities, is not homogeneous, but rather dependent on the recipient/subject (considered within the categories of a particular subjective position) assumed within the process. The relations of authority and ideologies, inherent within social and discursive practices, determine who and in what way may use the available discursive universe (see: Fairclough 2009).

As presented by Fairclough, the social and individual reception of discourses is dependent on their inherent, particular interpretative principles (regarded as

coherence). In regard to the above-mentioned, discourse has a meaning for someone, who is able to equip it with a meaning, therefore, to follow its equipped principles of reception. Therefore, the subjective positions, contained within discourses, interpellate particular subjects, capable of using them (Fairclough 2009: 73-74). Therefore, the discursively constructed, available "identity repertoire" is socially limited, at the most fundamental level of process production. The mechanism, however not considered within the principle of unidirectional determination, may explain the reason, why some identity options possess an increased potential for their embodied libidinal investments, but also, why some particular groups of people are more inclined, to decide on such investments.

The issue of the direct relation between representational resources and the forming of particular identities, requires an analytic inclusion of the symbolic/discursive and publicly available identity repertoire, but also structural and material conditions of a given social-historical-political context as well as the current social stratification. As highlighted by Kress, by analogy to Fairclough, the language and discursive resources are, similarly to cultural and economic resources, unequally distributed, and are dependent on the class, gender, age, ethnic, racial, professional or even religious determinants (Kress 1997: 16).

Therefore, the process of an individual and collective habitus formation is not entirely ductile. The means, in which a given representative instrument is used within an identity creation project, is often limited. However, the transformative, in terms of identity and subjectivity production, potential of representative resources, available to the diversified social groups, is also subject to differentiation (ibidem: 27). Similar to the processes of identity creation, it is not entirely ductile in "use"; the representation resources contain, present and embody their deposited social history and the history of own generation, which additionally limits their social and individual employment (ibidem: 18).

Final remarks

The theoretical and methodological approach towards the identity oriented educational research, presented in the article, does not exhaust the varied repertoire of possible critically oriented discourse analyses, abundant with innovatory solutions. The approach may not be optimal, for the research regarding the process of constructing identity within discourse, by discourse, or with the influence of discursive practice. However, it allows to examine, theoretically and methodologically, the process of identity construction, essential for education, in a complex

manner, aware of its crucial processes and the social phenomena, therefore, allowing to avoid unnecessary reductions, hypostases and practices of creating the theoretically attractive artefacts or heuristic fiction.

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