



## CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: IRANIAN BANKS ADVERTISEMENTS

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### ABSTRACT

*The present study tried to analyze an array of banks advertisements in an Iranian socio-cultural context. The selected commercials are analyzed critically from a top-down as well as a bottom-up point of view. The framework is that of the Fairclough's (1992) which embraces three aspects of discourse presenting some closely-related layers called 1) description of textual analysis 2) interpretation of production and reception and 3) explanation of social conditions which affect production and reception. The findings of the study revealed CDA can be an appropriate method to detect the manipulative language of advertised texts which invested on cultural, social and ideological values to in turn acknowledge some services and convince people to trust them.*

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**Keywords:** Critical Discourse Analysis, discourse text, semantic strategies.

### OVERVIEW

CDA emerged in the 1980s as an attempt to synthesize language studies and social theory (Fairclough, 1992). While Van (1985) views CDA as the study of the relationship between discourse and power, (Fairclough, 1992) perceives a bilateral relationship between discourse and social structure, since discourse is controlled by social structure, and at the same time controls social conventions. Similarly, (Gee, 1999) believes discourse connects texts to specific social practices, hence language study is not separable from political aspects and issues like social status, and power. Some social practices mobilize certain groups to obtain their privileges and power and pave the grounds for discourse producers to access to goods and services in society by convincing people that their ideological interpretation is just reality. CDA clearly exposes and hence resists social inequality and injustice as one of the goals of this method is unveiling the hidden aspects of discourse which supply creation and maintenance of unequal power relations (Wodak, 1996; Fairclough, 2003).



As a type of intentionally created discourse, an advertisement can instigate and manipulate viewers to exercise presuppositions that stem from the producers' particular view of the world. Circumstances of ads production has attracted CDA practitioners (Hart, 1987; Cook, 1992; Williams, 2003) to scrutinize texts critically. Fowler (1991) states that events and ideas never communicate neutrality "because they are transmitted through the medium that contains certain structural features which, in turn, are impregnated with social values that form some perspective on events."

### Statement of the Problem

Money and investment have become complex issues in Iranian lives as concern for low income and increasing prices have multiplied dramatically over the last thirty years in tandem with concerns about saving and making more money. Nowadays that money and economy problems are the greatest worry for Iranian families, advertisers do not hesitate to invest on people's need and harvest the manipulated minds. As a result, tension is expected between the effects of the words used in the advertising texts, and the intended meaning, which is a far cry from the endorsed words.

On the one hand, although the inevitable presence of mass media and public communication system magnifies the importance of discriminative reading, writing and even watching and listening, the entanglement of discourse issues is ignored. As Foucault (1975) argues, the agencies and individual who have the knowledge to manipulate language can control people with impunity; that's why enormous objectives and wishes are manifested via language. On the other hand, almost all people watch TV advertisements heedlessly and may judge the overall message of advertisement as informative and impartial. Getting familiar with the tremendous alternation that alluring sounds, a piece of song, a simple conversation, and some pure colors generate is prerequisite for living in a society which is interwoven with instructive discursive elements. Enlightening such perplexities is possible under CDA scrutiny, where each action receives its suggested purpose, and each word reads its partial load. CDA could unveil the misunderstanding, biases and inspirations which color the words and frame the screens of the tube.

### Research Questions and Hypotheses

In this research the following two research questions came out of the contemporary problems and requirements:

1. How can we detect manipulation of realities and ideologies in Banks' commercials through the framework suggested by (Fairclough, 1992)?
2. Are there mechanisms of manipulation in the discourse of Banks' commercials? How are purposes manifested in Banks' commercials?



### Critical Discourse Analysis: An Overview

The portrayal that Halliday (1994) suggested for language as “social act” has united most CDA advocates to draw an adhesive connection between the structure of language and the structure of society. That is why Fowler *et al.* (1979) argue that the choice of grammar and vocabulary for individuals is not arbitrary but ideologically based. Furthermore, the term discourse includes all forms of language (spoken interaction, written texts and visual texts) and practices, and since in CDA, discourse as a social practice is underscored (Wodak, 1996), the only concern is not language.

As Kress and Van (1990) argue CDA as an effective tool sheds lights on unequal power relations in public discourse by showing how public discourse often serves the interests of the powerful forces over those of the less privileged. Some social groups know how to arrange linguistic elements to affect ordinary people’s preferences. A more desperate situation is when the lay people unconsciously make the power distance deeper since they are not aware of the facts which are their immediate rights.

Advertisements, either written or spoken, are discourses that may employ social power abuse, dominance, and inequality, and eventually change and maintain social practices. CDA questions the ongoing process of an event; how the event – e.g., bank advertising - maintains the present social structure or supposedly changes or revise it (Bloor and Bloor, 2007). Almost all CDA followers working on advertisements argue that we may consciously or unconsciously be influenced or even misled by the persuasive language of advertising or persistent marketing (Gully, 1996; Lunga, 2006; Woods, 2006; Bloor and Bloor, 2007). They almost believe that the study of texts like advertising is legitimate and common for CDA to work on.

Expectedly, discourse as a social practice entails disguise and fabrication. It can serve particular interests, while misleading others. CDA voluntarily engages in understanding how social practices are prone to select certain structural possibilities and then exclude certain forms (Faiclough, 2003). Such forms of selections and exclusions continue over time in advertisements. On the other hand, as Shohamy (2001) as well as Pennycook (2001) (Pennycook, 2001)(Pennycook, 2001)(Pennycook, 2001)(Pennycook, 2001)(Pennycook, 2001)(Pennycook, 2001)(Pennycook, 2001)(Pennycook, 2001)(Pennycook, 2001) agree, critical studies could be valid if make contribution to knowledge and enhance social life conditions.

Whereas CDA is preoccupied with issues of power and inequity, there are critics who expect CDA to provide in-depth analysis and insights in developing countries where economic problems make people vulnerable to constructed discourse. To counteract that criticism, dealing with the discourse



of banks' advertising is a new call. Banks' advertising critical discourse analysis can offer deep insights in the analysis of questions related to linguistic and pictorial resources.

### **How Come Advertisements?**

Reviewing advertisement-related literature, one can find that adds, although short and scanty, are complex and interdisciplinary in nature (Woods, 2006; Bloor and Bloor, 2007). As Woods, (2006) argues, while a handful of advertisements might be informative without trying to persuade people to act, the inexorable aim of most advertisements is to promote the sale of some goods or services. Consequently, it is challenging for ordinary people to distinguish the persuasive advertising from informative programs and spot the discursive elements. Due to the fact that the power of media is undeniable, it might be customary to study this issue through CDA. That is, in order to find about the hidden purposes, fabricated realities, power mismatches between costumers and servers, culturally charged phrases, and eventually misinterpreted genres (Hall *et al.*, 1980; Davis and Watson, 1983; Collins *et al.*, 1986; Woods, 2006) a CDA look might be quite effective.

As illustrated by some researchers (Nava, 1997; Williams, 2003) advertisements make use of inter-textual elements and purposefully exploit familiar genres like TV shows, police serials, or special TV programs which people follow most. In addition to exploiting persuasive elements, advertisers are explicitly aware of their target audience. They know precisely when their target audiences are watching TV and they are told which programs and what times could embrace their means. A great deal of time as well as money charges the final art of advertisements to exactly identify the target audience. They know exactly the answers to questions of who, when and where of the costumers and how much they need a specific good or some target service.

As a form of communication, (Woods, 2006) defines advertising as a common hit in a piece of music or film and also the “cutting edge of modern art”. This study, assumes that nobody, including the researchers, could pretend that s/he is not mesmerized by the memorable form of advertisements which explicitly exploit catchphrases, catchwords, mottos and slogans and tactfully arranged structures. Kids and even elderly people verbalize the words and phrases exploited by advertisements and practice them in daily conversations. For example, the cutie, who performs in the advertisements produced for Sehat Cleansing Products, is so well-known that one cannot say the name of any of Sehat products without reminding that girl.

## **METHOD**

### **Theoretical Framework**

Sifting through all the available approaches and facing with the enormous range of suggested ways, one may doubt which one to choose, however, the present study refers to Fairclough (1992), three-



dimensional framework to analyze the Iranian banking advertisement. The paper aimed to unveil the interests embedded and problems prescribed by the copy writers in the manifestation of each advertisement through exploiting specific textual, discursive, and contextual features of banking advertisements.

Embedded in the (Fairclough, 1992) three-dimensional framework are three aspects of discourse which present some closely-related layers called 1) description of textual analysis 2) interpretation of production and reception and 3) explanation of social conditions which affect production and reception. To describe the text as a whole, the type of the text, the sequence of the materials and the overall layout and even visual or auditorial aspects of the text are considered. To interpret the text, the relationship perceived within different processes of the text at the level of production and reception is analyzed. The study scrutinized the discourse of advertisements with more details which include items such as perspectives, presence and absence, the sounds of advertising discourse, rhyme and rhythm; then for manipulation of meaning, presupposition, personalization, personification, elatives, and topicalization were detected. At the level of explanation, discursive processes were analyzed to reveal the reason for choosing the particular linguistic forms and functions regarding the Iranian cultural, social and even historical realities; in the analyzed texts the sequences are sometimes slightly mixed or alternated to match the natural flow of ideas in the texts.

Besides language, other useful tools are within the advertising reach to construct language, endorse it with lucrative and promising grammar as well as words, and finally meet the culturally-preferred and socially-decorated norms, and hence boast the success of advertised services. In this study, however, only those specific semiotic and linguistic aspects that make up the text and those which are relevant to illustrate how power relations function, how financial problems are constructed and how magically-fulfilling solutions would be invented were noticed; there are still other issues like idioms, and code switching prevalent in similar adds which might be practical issues for further research.

### **The Data and Data Sources**

A corpus of 16 commercials broadcasted on Iranian national television was subjected to a quantitative analysis. The commercials were collected between 9 to 11 p.m., the time when most people are watching news or family series. TV commercials are preferred to the written medium of the press and magazines since they attract more viewers and integrate more elements to eventually convey the message and meet the purpose. That is, the latter displays certain linguistic features and phonological schemes, such as rhyme (4.1.4) while in addition to this quality, television commercials, provide unique paralinguistic features, and contain a higher proportion of “block” or “disjunctive” language (Leech, 1963), hence broadcasted at specific times. All



television commercials used in this study ran for a maximum of fifteen or thirty seconds in winter 2010 and spring 2011.

## CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: IRANIAN BANKS ADVERTISEMENTS

### Level One: An Analysis of the Whole Advertised Texts

As the first step, the genre and the framing of the text is considered. The type of the genre specifies the structure of the text and explains why the text is embedded in its final structure. [Leech \(1963\)](#) argues that although the language of advertisements displays an individual style, it should not be ranked as an incomplete form of language. For example, newspaper headlines follow some specific form of language. That is why we analyzed the discourse of TV commercials as a unique whole, not in terms of its disjunctive and unique grammar, because as a genre it represents specific characteristics.

Contextual knowledge is prerequisite to grasping the message of advertisements. In fact, “the social situation in which a statement occurs, is a vital element in our interpretation of the message of advertisements” ([El-daly, 2011](#)). The situational context determines form and interpretation of a statement. However, other issues like verbal context which includes the position of a given statement in relation to other statements preceding and following it also play crucial roles in forming a message. That is, such different contexts affect discursive formation and the purpose for articulating the discourse of a special TV commercial.

Investing on people's beliefs and even religious ideologies, banking advertisements place viewers in such a way that they begin to seek the solution to their magnified problems in the advertised services and promised rewards. Ad producers exploit different systems to signify their thoughts. First, visual magnifiers intrude the texts. For example, the color used as the background of most banks' commercials symbolized hope and happiness; the sky and the sea are selected for the background. Blue, symbolizes purity, generosity, and happiness; green lands are back grounding the voice over, as green is culturally and religiously connected to Iranians' value; the air is pure, clean and all blue; no pollution, no dust; an atmosphere which all people around the world are dreaming about. Second, certain dialogues as well as the reward announced enthusiastically, position the viewers in a situation to associate Iranian banks as help. For example, since owning a car is mostly one of the families' dreams, while announcing the rewards, it is emphasized that some facilities in forms of loans are considered for this purpose (for example, Bank Mellat, Spring 2010; broadcasted from Chanel 2):

(1) [...] be alaveyetashilat-e kharid-e khodro (besides facilities to buy cars)

Third, the numbers articulated are delicately synchronized, and echo close sounds; for example, all the announced rewards (1) begin with “d” sound (Bank Mellat, Spring 2010); (2) begin with word *hezar* meaning thousand in Persian (Bank Melli Spring 2010); or (3) begin with word *haft* which means seven in Persian, (Bank Keshavarzi, Spring 2010). The whole transcription of Bank Keshavarzi, Spring 2010 comes in Appendix A.

Forth, the choice of numbers and even words are culturally laden. For example, the deadline for opening an account is seven. Seven is a holy number and symbolizes luck, during the history even nowadays, for Iranian people; since advertisers know this, they intentionally include this number in the text:

(2) Baray-ebazkardan-e hesabdar Bank Keshaverzifaghat 7 roz-edigar ( Bank Keshavarzi; April, 2010). (To open an account in Bank Keshavarzi just on 7 days ... ) The word 7 is used and the modifier just emphasizes the deadline and indirectly announces that within the deadline, enough costumers open accounts in the bank.

Fifth, the use of holy names and religiously important days are other strategies. The anniversary birth of Shia Imams are days that producers justify the number of their rewards; e.g., as we are getting closer to birth of Hazarat-e Fatemeh (A.S), our holy prophet’s daughter, or as soon as Ramadan, the month of fasting for Muslims, begins new draws of rewards are announced. It could be said that banks want to connect themselves to people’s feeling and religious values and show off that they adorn and respect what other people respect. Furthermore, dark clouds in the back ground of most commercials are fleeting and the generous blue sky appears in which the name of an Iranian banks appear; not surprisingly, the emergence of light in the background of the advertisements synchronizes the symbol or the image of a particular Iranian bank.

Not only inanimate objects and ideological values, but people from different ages are used in commercials to symbolically widen the scope of banking commercials. The images of people who are rushing to the banks represent awareness of prosperous ends. In one case, the man who is sleeping portrays a state of simplicity and idealness while the woman is sharp and clearly reiterates that she has already opened an account. Women have crucial roles in such advertisements. These women are non-model looking women and look traditional homemakers who care about family financial problems since they encourage not missing the fortune and investing their money in the banks. This choice may highlight banks, which are sympathetic to the challenges imposed on Iranian women; almost in all the broad casted advertisements women are among the role players, hence representing all Iranian women. (Nightingale, 1990) states that the portraits of women suggested as audience of TV by add writers are housewives and mothers who are expectedly



“family oriented”; she continues that advertisers want women as consumers not as women. This policy is highly profitable for add developers (Puustinen, 2006).

Besides gender factors, representatives of different generations are used in TV commercials to offer the banking services. The youth are casted in banks' ads. Juxtaposing the promising words and energetic young boys who encourage their parents to open bank accounts for them has several implications. As parents, we should shoulder our responsibilities by taking care about our children's future. The old who are independent and happy after their retirement also show the result of trusting on bank services. Furthermore, in Iranian culture, the elder people are respected and their sayings and ideas represent something we can trust on. The last but surely not the least outstanding feature in commercials is the use of poems. In daily conversation and even in academic lectures quoting some verses from Hafiz or Saadi, two well-known Iranian poets, endorse the elite speakers as someone educated and connected to Iranian culture. Advertisement copywriters do not hesitate to invest on this powerful tool and march their words in a poetic shape, to attract more attention and again display their faithfulness to Iranian culture and art. For example, consider the following advertisement.

(3) Ba ye ehsas-e khob o ghashangparveneha par migiran (as a result of your good feeling, butterflies fly) The use of rhyme, rhythm and the song display Iranian people's interest in poems and rhythmic language; moreover, flowers and butterflies with purple and pink colors appearing in the background display an atmosphere of joyfulness and happiness, which is also related to the first mentioned item.

### Perspectives

The link which the copy writer draws between the participants in each TV commercial, producers of the advertisements, and the viewers reveals useful insights into social relations; it represents the way identities are constructed and power relations are maintained. All the highlighted aspects and still more enable the advertisers to create their ambitious perspective - banks care about people not their own interests. Visual and auditoria aids endorse the advertised text. The grey color is gradually replaced by light and the blue atmosphere illuminates the scene. The words along with people from different ages and both sexes show usefulness of bank services for viewers. All these may imply that the benefits meet interests of people from different ages.

Most of the time the participants do not directly talk to viewers, but they are naturally talking within their own community, which represents Iran. This kind of relationship, which can be theorized among the three dimensions of image and the participants within producers, viewers and customers is described by different critiques. Kress and Van (1990) argue that how participants gaze at the viewers helps to interpret the social relation between represented participants and the



viewer. The gaze might be interpreted as request or a demand, an offer, or a suggestion and even a criticism. In the analyzed TV commercials, the participants' behavior displays a kind of helpful offer, not even request; the participants are happy because they have opened accounts and try to persuade viewers to do the same.

### **Presence and Absence**

Advertisement copy writers consciously decide to give prominence and de-emphasize, or even omit some elements. In the texts through foregrounding and back grounding the words related to rewards appear in bold and disappear smoothly synchronized with an intensely broadcasted assuring voice. The name of the bank is announced clearly and the sign of the bank lingers for a while on TV screen.

Despite these supposedly happy images, some consequential factors aspects are absent. Everyone knows that there are some punishments for customers who may fail to behave according to the regulations. They never talk about the interest rates for the loans that people receive. Moreover, most banks need deposits before giving loans. For example, if a customer obtains a loan with 50000000 RLS (\$50000), he should pay back 57500000 RLS to state banks and 60000000 RLS to most private banks. Moreover, it is said that banks offer some facilities for people to buy, for example cars (4.1); however, the amount and types of facilities are not mentioned. What appears on the screen is an image of new brand car, not the number of installments and banks' interest rate.

### **The Sounds of Advertising Discourse**

To amplify the attention taking effects of texts, advertisers refer to particular people to read the text. The specific voice chosen goes hand in hand with the visual elements and has an equal importance. Woods (2006) asserts, "the timber of the voice" is a determining factor; for voice, he has some classifications called 'seductive, smooth, friendly, cheerful, honest or authoritative...". Considering, his classification, we believe the voice over in banking commercials is seductive, apparently honest as well as authoritative. The accent of the voice-over is not always formal; instead it is mostly colloquial which in turn follow some purposes.

Different voices represent different lifestyle and personalities. Banking TV commercials begin with an accent free voice to reveal authority as well as formality. And they develop through some regional accent to display intimacy and trustworthiness. This strategy helps the bank advertisers to promote their services, and to appeal to a wider range of audience. When they are announcing a bond offer they use a person from Tehran and to counteract the limits and to extend the scope of this accent they use customers who have regional accents. The conversations role-played engage viewers. The viewers are sometimes talked to directly and asked to open an account to benefit from the bond offer.



Otherwise, viewers are regarded as spectators of a romantic or comedy sketch. In one show, a young man is watching commercials. The promoted services and opportunities are very appealing for the person (4). Such texts may go with the audience who are stimulated by sitcoms or hummers:

(4) Emsalhavasetanra jam konid! (Be cautious this year)! It is repeatedly used as a slogan, but the person who is so immersed in the services suggested by the bank that forgets to wear on his pants before going out and in the final part he says:

(5) Havasbaraadammemizaran ! (They take away our attention!) The word "havas" meaning "attention" is played with to provide a hilarious sitcom and meet the final purpose of the commercial producers: grasping the attention of viewers.

The desired lifestyle, for viewers, will be represented by those who are better-off because they have opened a banking account. Since the advertising language aims to preferably remain persuasive and attractive, the old slogans for the same banks are replaced by new words called neologism. As Woods(2006) argues, "advertising language is frequently maintained" to extend the meaning beyond the breadth of the facilities offered. The language is a descriptive one hence the number of adjectives exaggerating the quality of the services in advertisements are more than other types of discourse.

### Rhyme and Rhythm

Referring to Leech (1963), Gully (1996) argues that rhyme, alliteration and parallelism specifically regularize the pattern of language in Arabic advertisements. On the other hand, as it went on, looking historically into Iranian cultural taste, one can easily conclude that they are interested in poems and rhetorical devices. In everyday life even lay people mix some verses with their speech in order to appeal their interlocutors. Parallelism positively colors Iranian advertising. Likewise, Leech (1963) believes that parallelism works as a cohesive element in advertising language. In TV commercials, the need to parallelize the short and disjunctive language is more vital. The time of presenting the text and the space for writing some words are so limited that if some certain devices are not called upon the result would not be an attention taker product. Unlike English bank advertisements (Woods, 2006), the presence of parallel language in Persian commercials is undeniable. For example, in the following pieces of some commercials, the bond offers are displaying in particular queue:

(6) Bist opanjhezar-o yekjayezy-e 10 million rially, ...( 25001bonds each having avalue equal to RL10000000000,...)



(7) Devist-o yekjayeze-e 10 million rially, .... (facilities to buy Peugeot 407 including 25000000000RLs in cash,...)

(8) Be alavetashilatkhariidkhodro, ... (Besides providing the possibility to buy cars, ...) [Bank Melat] In (6) and (7) above, some strategies are employed to produce a rhythmic discourse. First, the underlined words like “jayeze” meaning prize and “10 million Riels”, equal ten thousand dollars, are repeated in two consecutive sentences, to create an attractive rhyme. Next, the reduced form “o” meaning and is added to increase the poetic sense of the statement; furthermore, words “bist” and “devist” have close pronunciation and regarding the value they equal 20 and 200 respectfully. This practice is boasted through appearing 250 RL coins moving on the screen for a while. In another example, the two adjective phrases having similar forms signify rhythm and the rhyme of the text. The assuring voice-over adds to the rhyme of the language.

(9) Khedmatynovin ,harakatiiazim, ... (a new service, a great move, ...) Another outstanding feature created as rhyme in Iranian bank advertisement is similar to the rhyme heard in bargaining of some goods, however, here the generosity of the bank when appreciating customers' investment is emphasized.

(10) Jayezeyebozorg in dore: 1200 jayezey-e naghdiaryek be arzesh 25000000000 rialfaghatbakhshiaz 654200 jayezefaghatbakhshi as javayez in doreBankMelihastand. (The jackpot of this investment reward is 1200 bonds in cash each equal 25000000000 RLs. These are just some part of 65400 bonds offered by Bank Melli). If we listen to some form of sales while the seller and the customer are talking about the issue and the final cost, we may recognize the rhythm. Rhyming as well as rhythmic techniques of classical prose is also used. The epic rhyme of Ferdosi's poems is used in nowadays dialogue role-played to advertise some products. Alliteration is another technique to produce parallelism in texts. In fact in alliteration the initial consonant of words forming a pattern are the same. Although Gully refers to [Leech \(1963\)](#) to argue that stress pattern determines alliteration, for Persian, which almost lacks stress as meaning distinguishing feature, similar initial sounds are created. In the example provided for rhythm, you see that the bond offers begin with the consonant /d/. This sound is the beginning of numbers 20, 200, and 250 in Persian.

## MANIPULATION OF MEANING AT SENTENCE LEVEL

### Presupposition

Some utterances allow the listener to go beyond the syntactic forms and semantically presuppose facts mentioned inexplicitly in the utterances. A well-known example which presupposes a violent character on the part of the husband might be "have you stopped beating your wife". Moreover, it is



also presupposed that the man is married. In the following commercials for the offer, which is announced as cash rewards, we hear:

(11) Be hamrahe 201 komakhaziney-ekharid-e pezho 407. (Besides 201 offers to buy Peugeots 407).

(12) Tashilatkharidkhodro, ... (offers to buy cars). In the first example, the advertiser feels so close to the audience that not only presupposes that he is going to buy a car, but even the brand of the car is specified - " Peugeot 407". Other examples are: "Dobare" meaning again, "inbar" meaning this time and "hamchenin" meaning too. These phrases are frequently used by advertisers, especially Banks' TV commercials to presuppose that using bank services is prevalent among people, and viewers have participated in the previous draw. They have a choice to test their luck *again, this time*.

### Personalization

Banks' advertising through TV commercials targets a vast number of people due to the predicted time and the specific programs; therefore, they appear in certain ways. The exact number of target audience who might be watching the suggested services is not known for advertisers. However, they use pronouns like *you* to involve viewers in their dialogues and thereby "engineer" a 'semantic strategy' (Woods, 2006). For example, pronouns like "shoma" (you) and reflexive pronouns like "khod" and "khodetan" (yourselves) are used to direct the viewers as someone familiar and close; someone who has experienced the services and the generosity of the banks. In these examples, the target audience is identified to endorse the strategy. In some cases, even banks are personalized with "we" although not directly. To whom this "we" refers to is not identified; to the manager, to the cashier, to the clerks, the banking system, and so on. Consider the following sentences.

(13) Shoma ham Khadamatbankdary-eelectronicivanovin-e maratajrobekonid. (You too, try our modern and electronic banking services).

(14) Azetamad-e shomasepasgozarim. (Thank you for trusting us). The underlined pronoun *ma* (we) and the attached pronoun "im" (us) are used here to personify the bank. However, the reference is not specified since a handful of specific jobs are connected to bank clerks ranging from the manager, to cashier to copy writer and so on. On the other hand, viewers are addressed with familiar pronouns "shoma" (you) to intensify the familiarity of audience with banks' services.

(15) Shomamitavanidbaeftetah-e hesab, ... (by opening an account, you can ...)

(16) Bank- e melat, bank-e shoma. (Bank Mellat, your bank).



(17) Bank-e melliIran hamishedar distress-e shomast. (Bank Melli Iran is always within your reach.)

(18) Etemad-e shomasarmaye –e mast. (Your trust is our wealth).

### Personification

Through attributing human characteristics to inanimate organizations and objects, bank advertisers may fill the gap between the services and the real world as you will see in the following example.

(19) Bank-eseпах 86 sale shod.(Bank Sepah is 86 now).

(20) 77 saleftekharbashomabodan. (Honored to be with you for 77 years.) In the mentioned examples, the image of an old man is attributed to banks which are inanimate. Not only banks are personified, but they are aged and experienced. Old people are symbols of experience, friendship and trustworthiness in Iranian culture. This phrase also presupposes (previous section) that this experienced man has sacrificed his life providing services for people and to celebrate his 86<sup>th</sup> we can open an account.

(21) Hedye ye bank melat be shoma it is Bank Mellat's reward to you

You know the ability to give presents is attributed to human beings who are animate. In the last example, however, the bank acts as a person to highlight the importance of the bank.

### Elatives

As salient in advertisements for specific purposes, the use of comparative and superlative adjectives in banks' advertisements is not ignored. Copywriters have mentioned that the services and the rewards of a specific bank are better, the best and the first in its kind, although indeterminate. It means that comparatives are not qualified and are rather vague since it is not clear "better than what", or "the best for what".

(Leech, 1963) also argues that comparative adjectives in advertisement discourse are meaningless since the standard of comparison is not mentioned. The ambiguity might be outstanding in the following indefinite adjectives.

(22) Bishtarinsood, the highest profit

(23) BishtarinJavayez, the highest rewards

(24) Bankesepahnokhostin bank Irani Bank Sepah, the first Iranian bank

(25) Bank eghtesadnovin, Nokhostin bank Khososi Bank EghtesadNovin, the first private bank

(26) Barat cart tazmini bank saderatbaray-e avalin bar dar Iran



In the first two examples, “sood” meaning profit, and “jiavayezeh” meaning rewards are the highest, however, it is not specified higher than what profit, or reward. That is the audience is not informed the earlier rewards or other banks' profit rate. Although in the last three examples the superlative is identified, it is used to catch the attention of the viewer because when we hear something "is the first" in something, it comes to our mind that the services are the best. The experience has qualified the bank to be the first; however, the types of the services, which are the results of the experience or pioneership, are not determined.

### Topicalization

A typical technique to emphasize elements at sentential level is topicalisation. Persian is a free word order language, and the canonical SOV specifies the formal use of language. The verb is marked for tense and aspect. That is a verb usually agrees with subject for both person and number (Anvari and Givi, 1996; Mahootian, 1997; Jabari, 2003). Persian is a pro drop language, which tolerates null subjects, hence a topic prominent language; therefore, its rich inflectional system compensates for the free word-order and the null subject parameter. That's why depending on the importance of the information carried by different words, we can move specific elements to the beginning of the sentence. Consequently, copy writers put words related to bond offers and services at the beginning of the sentence. Read the following examples:

(27) Bistopanjhezarojekjayeze dah million rialli, be hamrah-edevistoyekkomakhazine-yekharid-e pezeo [...] javayez-e sherekatdarhesabhay-eghorekeshi-e in doremibashand. Twenty five- hundred and- one rewards each valued 10000000000 RIs, as well as two hundred and one loans on buying Peugeots 407 and [...] are rewards for opening a saving account in this term. The underlined part of the sentence is the subject and it preferably should appear at the beginning of the sentence, while object of the sentences which carries the most important information for the advertiser developers comes first. About 80 percent of the commercials announced interest rate and rewards at the beginning of the sentences. Other cases of topicalizations happen when the name of the bank is announced first. This happens when a salient characteristic or service is showed off.

(28) Bank-e Sepah, nokhostin bank Irani. ( BankSepah, the first Iranian Bank). While the name of the bank is topicalized in (28), it is emphasized that this bank is the first Iranian bank, not other banks. As a result, more experiences and more services are implied, as Sepah is a pioneer in Iranian banking system.

### Level Three: Contextualized Interpretation

Interpreting advertisement business contextually unveils the socio-economic and cultural norms that are present in the Iranian context. The government may not be in a promising economic position, neither in a good international economic situation due to a range of sanctions which are



imposed politically. Such political issues are deserted in the present study; however, these sanctions implicitly have impacts on third parties, people. When external investments are banned there is no choice to hang to internal options and remedy the ruined situation; that is, banks strive to lure economically affected people to achieve their purposes. On the other hand, the increasing inflation rates in the society hamper people's financial aims.

On the other hand cultural values which characterize the Iranian people could be traced to their religious beliefs. GhafarSamar *et al.* (2007) found that lower socioeconomic class tries not to give proper values to the way the members of the other classes speak in order to underestimate them. Religious considerations may explain some of their reasons for doing so, as according to religious beliefs what ranks people is not wealth but virtue and abstinence. On the contrary, people from high socioeconomic class hold fairly realistic views concerning the attributes belonging to lower class and middle class people. It could be inferred that those who produce the advertisements are well aware of the needs, priorities and even power distances between people from different economic backgrounds and correctly put their time, money and energy to employ different discursive elements to entice them to do what the adds expect them to do. Cultural values like respecting women and experienced people are other attributes which are already known to add developers.

## DISCUSSION

1. How can we detect manipulation of realities and ideologies in Banks' commercials through the framework suggested by Fairclough (1992)? The findings of the study supported the fact that Critical Discourse Analysis can be an appropriate method for the detection of manipulative language; the very implicit ideas buried under special techniques and elements which fulfill advertisers could be highlighted through CDA analysis. Thanks to CDA highlights, it become more or less transparent how, like many other texts, particularly those produced by the socially-or-economically in-power parties, advertisement texts can be considered a hybridized text which is pregnant with competing discourses. The findings go with those of Lee and Thang (2010) as well as Sidripoulou (2009). In fact, discourses of adds announce the best financial practices for the least amount of money is opening a bank account. The needs could simply be met through the promises that banks provide. This analysis has revealed that the discourses evident in banking adds can be seen as constructed and enriched by discursive tension (Lee and Thang, 2010). That's why it was possible to render CDA as a tool, to make explicit various aims hidden in ideologically, and of course financially, invested discourses of banks' advertisements. The overall voice of all advertised texts is seemingly factual and informative, but in reality such texts were complex representations and constructions of social practices connected to ideological positions and power relations in the society, hence in need of CDA lights.



2. Are there mechanisms of manipulation in the discourse of Banks' commercials? How are purposes manifested in Banks' commercials?

Since the first dimension of Fairclough (1992), discourse as text, has as its aim the study of the textual features of discourses. That is discourse as a text is prone to examine how an advertisement text was designed in particular ways and whether the same text could be represented in other shapes. The analysis revealed advertisement producers exploit different systems to signify their thoughts including visual magnifiers like the color of the background, the use of sky and the sea; they suggest Iranian banks as help since they provide some facilities in forms of loans; they deliberately choose special words which are culturally rich like numbers, e.g., seven, which are ideological values. Furthermore, people from different ages and from both genders are exploited to symbolize the general scope of the bank services. Even poems are mentioned to add a flavor of art to the overall prescribed services. The blue perspective taken by text producer is an assuring one which can replace the grey uncertainties; these findings also support what both Woods (2006) and Lunga (2006) suggested. Likewise, in advertisements foregrounding and backgrounding are deployed to amplify the prizes and marginalize the punishments that people receive and the profits that banks obtain. The assuring sound of advertisements instills in customers mind the truth of investing; the presupposed actions and thoughts mentioned in the discourse of advertised texts connects audience closely to the benefits of investments (Bloor and Bloor, 2007). Generally the examined choices of the linguistic forms of texts, as well as other aspects of discourse pertain to the second dimension of Fairclough (1992) framework. CDA depicted the role of such textual features in producing or resisting the systems of ideology, cultural values, and even religious preferences.

CDA identified discursive practices, like presuppositions, and examined the process of advertisement production which are preceded by wasting a great deal of money in production, display, distribution and consumption of the ads. The second dimension of framework considers the concept of inter-textuality. Inter-textuality refers to "the property texts have of being full of snatches of other texts, which may be explicitly demarcated or merged in, and which the text may assimilate, contradict, ironically echo, and so forth" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 84). For example, in the advertised texts banks are personified and the audience is directed as you. That is, according to Woods (2006) public viewers are personalized to bridge the distance between the producers and people. As Fairclough (1992) argues, in terms of production, an inter-textual perspective questions the historicity of texts, that is, "texts historically transforming the past – existing conventions and prior texts – into the present" (p. 85).

The unqualified comparative adjectives where the other side of "better" is not clear are also used. Tropicalizing profits which syntactically play the role of objects in the sentences (Jabari, 2003) is another strategy pervasively used in advertisements of this type. As far as consumption and



receiving services are concerned, inter-textuality asserts that it is not just the text content that shapes interpretation; rather, readers and viewers have other elements for interpretation process; In the past, at the present time, and possibly in the future, people are eager to buy something which is better and avoid objects which do not worth buying. Likewise, since text interpretation is not deserted from the cultural, ideological and social values we carry, advertiser did not hesitate to invest on these issues and use structures which are even religiously supported as “Insha-Allah” meaning God willing, which almost all Muslim people use when they want to ask for God help, or indirectly announce the unquestionable power of God; this phrase accompanied by other phrases like “baham yarishoma” meaning if you help, take all responsibilities from banks and handled it to people and God, not bank managers and agents. In fact a method of presupposition is injected at the level of word choice.

The third dimension, discourse as social practice, concerns advertised text’s socio-cultural practices in relation to context, and the social identities and social relations that advertisements have impacts on within the Iranian context. Advertisements particularly draw on the concepts of ideology, power and hegemony to illustrate the function and consequences of discourse in (re)producing or transforming unequal power relations. For Fairclough (1992), the ideological workings of discourse in maintaining or transforming relations of power are facilitated by hegemony, which is seen to be the predominant organizational form of power in contemporary society although it is not the only one. The banks know that Iranian people adorn agencies that act according to Islamic Rules and in fact resent non-loyal institutions that do not do so. Gramsci (1971) argued that hegemony is intellectual and moral leadership used by the dominant groups to maintain their dominance by persuading people that the relationship of domination is natural and inevitable. That is banks are in a position to give service, because they are born to do so and people would invest in banks as they are usually labeled as customers and consumers. Similarly, combining the concept of intertextuality with hegemony, (Fairclough, 1992) reveals how hegemony naturalizes unequal power relations and builds them into people’s common sense understanding in the production, distribution, and consumption process of discourse. Thanks to CDA, the interpreted texts mirror the socio-economic and cultural norms that are present in the Iranian context. The economic chaos our government is grappling with due to a range of international sanctions and other sources not related to this study is well mirrored in the discourse of advertisements, they know people have no other choices due to increasing inflation rates to obtain some loans to buy houses or cars.

As third parties, people are severally affected by economic problems and the banks strive to lure this economically fragile party to achieve their purposes. Therefore, it could be inferred that discursive elements used for production, distribution, and consumption (including interpretation) of advertisement texts, is an attribute of hegemonic struggle which pertains in varying degrees to the “reproduction or transformation not only of the existing order of discourse

(for example, through the ways prior texts and conventions are articulated in text production), but also through that of existing social and power relations” (Fairclough, 1992).

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the Amalgamation of social theory and discourse analysis, CDA is rendered to describe, interpret, and explain the ways in which discourse shapes, is shaped by, represents, and is represented by the social world (Rogers *et al.*, 2005). CDA therefore, can help to make transparent the connections between discourse practices, social practices, and social structures; connections that might be enigmatic to the layman. The outstanding role of language in production, maintenance and change of social relations of power is nothing new. This salient role of language particularly through the ideological workings of media discourse to construct stereotyped assumptions, hatch concession, acknowledge dominance and typify inequality have long been perceived and well theorized (Fairclough, 1989).

In spite of advances in studying the social aspect of language, what craves more attention is the application of such attainments to wider citizenship education. As researchers we have been negligent in failing to address critically enlightened movements and fill the caveat related to our reflexive role as researchers. (Rogers *et al.*, 2005). Positioned among advertisements perceivers, we are cognizant that we are not merely text analysts who remain on the periphery, but we also hold histories of participation, what Fairclough (1992) describes as “members resources”, or what Gee (1999) calls as “cultural models”. Such resources and models embrace our beliefs and shape our assumptions and values within the contexts we lived in. These resources may even interact with our knowledge as well as reality which are in turn connected to the analysis of the education policy or study. It could be inferred that, as researchers we have share some cultural and ideological with other people from our society; we are however, aware of such resources thanks to practitioners who have informed us. CDA directed this and similar studies (Lunga, 2006; Woods, 2006) to unveil how advertisements reflect and manipulate reality within a specific ideological system via implicit messages based on what is said and left unsaid. The very ideological system which is constructed and reconstructed by advertisements discourse/texts may serve certain groups to maintain their privileges, power and access to goods and services in society. The discourse of advertisements is so naturally developed that may convince people that their ideological interpretation is just reality, and if they do not succumb to the advertised suggestion they may not have the opportunity to win rewards, to get loans and eventually to buy houses. Although there are many ways of conducting CDA, Rogers *et al.* (2005) observe that most analysts seem to center their analysis to uncover both the choices of linguistic elements in the discourse of the advertised texts and on the texture of that discourse; the texture or the manner in which different elements of ads were associated or tied together can form a cohesive unity and rectified the opaque side of each message in the



advertisements. No doubts, manipulative language is here to stay, to determine our life chances and circumstances, and control our real roles in the economic, political, cultural and social domains of Iranian society; therefore, ascivilized citizens, it is clear that we need more educational projects which can raise our students' consciousness of various forms of manipulation and power struggle in Iranian history and contemporary society and break through the hierarchy of ranking people in predestined agendas. Following [Brown \(2004\)](#), we teachers, are responsible for providing our students opportunities to effectively learn about social and moral subjects and to scrutinize different aspects of an entity. Language classes could be replete with informative issues of different topics. What should be modified in curricula is limited focus on linguistic factors alone, which could be expanded by issues which enhance the art of critical thinking ([KoupaeDar et al., 2011](#)). All in all, this analysis has revealed that the discourses apparent in advertisements can be seen as speculative, attractive and laden with discursive tensions. In using CDA as a tool, it has been the intention of this article to possibly raise consciousness about the ideologically invested discourses to which we are viewers, and consumers; we are not merely service consumers, but we may unconsciously intake their suggested teaspoon ideas. Finally, I would like to use Fairclough's inspiring statements to end this paper: "Resistance and change are not only possible but continuously happening. But the effectiveness of resistance and the realization of change depend on people developing a critical consciousness of domination and its modalities, rather than just experiencing them" (1989, p. 137).

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**Appendix A:** Sample analysis of Bank Keshavarzi advertisement, broadcasted April 2010 from Channel 2, National Iranian TV

### **Transcription**

Be paseGhadrdanivaesteghbalebinazireshomahamvatananeazizva be monasebat-ehaftad o haftominsalagard-etasis-ebank-ekeshavarzitedd-e haftado haft jayeze-yevizieye 200 milionrially be hezarohaftsadohaftadjayezey-eyeksadobistmilyonrially in dorehesabhayegharzolhasane pas andazbank keshavarziafzode shod.

Bank-ekeshavarzibank-ehame-ye mardome Iran.

### **English Translation**



To thank you, dear compatriots for your appreciation and incomparable warm welcome (to bank's plans and services) and on the occasion of 77<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Bank Keshavarzi's establishment, a number of 77 rewards worth of 200 million Riel are added to 1770 rewards each worth of 120 million Riel of current draw of saving accounts in Bank Keshavarzi.

Bank Keshavarzi, all Iranian People's Bank.

### 1. Level one: Analysis at text level

Analysis at text level				
Foregrounding	Presence	absence	The sounds of advertising discourse	Rhyme and rhythm
Ghadrdanivasepas = Thanks	1. Haftado haft; Jayeze; (77 ; rewards) 2. saving accounts	1. Banks' interest rate; 2. People's unsatisfied requirements and objection 3. Checking accounts	Assuring, fast, and persuasive.	1. Haftado haft, haftado haft (77,77); Yeksadobist, devist (120,200);

### 2. Level two: Analysis at sentence level/ word choice

Analysis at sentence level/ word choice				
Presupposition	Personalization	Personification	Elatives	Topicalization
1. Ghadrdanivaesteghbale bi nazir-eshoma; (your (people's) appreciation and warm welcome 2. afzode shod ( is added)	1. tashakor, ghadradani, ..., (to thank you); 2. shomahamvatanane aziz (you dear compatriots)	Bank Keshavarzi	Binazir (uncomparable)	Be paseghadrdani; (in order to thank you)haftado haftominsalagardetas isebankekeshavarzi

### 3. Level three: Contextualized interpretation

#### contextualized interpretation

1. Economic problems: sanctions; increasing inflation rate; low income.
2. Iranian social and cultural values: e.g., the roles of elderly people, and women; interested in poetic speech.
3. Iranian ideological priorities: e.g., strong religious beliefs.