

MODERN SRI LANKA STUDIES

A Journal of the Social Sciences

MODERN SRI LANKA STUDIES

Volume



University of Peradeniya

Vol. XIV, No.02, 2023

University of Peradeniya

MODERN SRI LANKA STUDIES

A Journal of the Social Sciences

Modern Sri Lanka Studies is a bi-annual journal of the Social Sciences published by the Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. It publishes research articles, review papers and book reviews related to Social Sciences submitted by researchers in local and foreign universities and research institutes. A double-blind review process ensures the academic integrity of the journal.

ISSN 1391-121X

Copyright: © 2023, Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya

All right reserved: No parts of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, photocopying or otherwise without the permission of the editors. The opinions expressed in the articles, review papers and book reviews are not necessarily those of the editors and the publisher.

Subscriptions and orders:

Annual subscriptions rates inclusive of postage: Sri Lanka (individuals) Rs. 800 and (Institutions) Rs. 1000; SAARC countries 1200 Indian rupees; all other countries 25 US dollars. Orders and cheques should be made to the Managing Editor, Modern Sri Lanka Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya, Peradeniya 20400, Sri Lanka.

Submission and any other information:

For the submission of papers and any other correspondence, write to Editor/s, Modern Sri Lanka Studies,
Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya,
Peradeniya 20400, Sri Lanka

For Author Guidelines and other information, visit www.arts.pdn.ac.lk. For electronic submission and other information, contact one of the Co-editors through msgunarathne@yahoo.com/ Alawathukotuwa.manoj@arts.pdn.ac.lk

MODERN SRI LANKA STUDIES

A Journal of the Social Sciences

Vol. XIV, No. 02, 2023

**Faculty of Arts,
University of Peradeniya,
Peradeniya,
Sri Lanka**

MODERN SRI LANKA STUDIES

A Journal of the Social Sciences

Editorial Board

Co-editors:

Dr. M. Sriyani Gunarathne

Dr. Manoj Alawathukotuwa

Managing Editor:

Mr. Ashvin Wickramasooriya

Editorial Committee:

Professor Fazeeha Azmi

Dr. W.D.S.K. Premasiri

Dr. W.M.S.K.M. Thoradeniya

*** Acknowledgements**

The editorial team thanks Mr. G.G.J. Chamodya for technical editing and Ms. Aravidi Ariyaratna for copy editing.

MODERN SRI LANKA STUDIES

A Journal of the Social Sciences

Contents

Analysis of Landslide risk using Geoinformatics applications in North West of Gangawatakorale Divisional Secretariat Division in Kandy District, Sri Lanka	01
Ashvin Wickramasooriya	
Storytelling for Empowerment and Inclusion: Learning from Freedom Writers (2007) for Human Rights Education (HRE)	17
Kalpani Dambagolla	
Critical Discourse Analysis and Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model: Theory and Method	33
Navarathnam Sivakumar	

Analysis of Landslide Risk Using Geoinformatics Applications in North West of Gangawatakorale Divisional Secretariat Division in Kandy District, Sri Lanka

Ashvin Wickramasooriya

Department of Geography, University of Peradeniya

Abstract

Landslide vulnerability in the Kandy district has increased with the increase of population in the area and urban expansion within the last 20 years. As an initial step to analyze the landslide risk in North West of Gangawatakorale Divisional Secretariat Division landslide hazard map has been introduced using the Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis method and Geoinformatics applications. The landslide hazard map has been introduced considering six main factors that contribute to creating landslides i.e. geology, surface deposits, slope, hydrology, land use, and landform. The weights for each factor and rank introduced by the National Building and Research Organization are considered for the analysis. A landslide hazard map has been created by overlaying the created weighted thematic layers. Thereafter landslide vulnerability map has introduced using socioeconomic conditions in the area. By combining a landslide hazard map and a vulnerability map, a landslide risk map has been introduced. South Western parts of the study area and Northern parts of the study area can be considered as very high landslide risk.

Keywords: Landslide; hazard; vulnerability; risk

Introduction

Landslide is one of the common natural hazards in Sri Lanka. National Building Research Organization (NBRO) has demarcated ten landslide-prone districts which included Kandy district. Generally, landslides occur in lands over 300 meters above the mean sea level of Sri Lanka. (Cooray, 1984) [1]. According to K. Dahanayake (1986) [2] “A landslide is falling down mud, sediment, sand, gravel, boulders from high elevation place to low elevation place through slope due to gravitational force of the earth”. In an article written by R.M.S. Bandara (2003) [3] on “Landslide in Sri Lanka” he stated that a lateral displacement is a slow, gentle circular movement of a soil mass laterally or downwards along the slip surface can be termed as a lateral or downward displacement while a debris flow is a downward flow of muddy water and soil, stone, as well as clay and gravel. The importance of assessing the landslide-prone areas in hill country showed by Abeysinghe, A. M., et. al. (2005) [4].

There are no records of in-depth studies about landslides in the study area, as this area has not experienced severe landslides. However, many landslides have occurred recently in and around Kandy city. Because of significant human intervention, the physical setting of the area has been changing, and if this trend continues, the triggering of landslides may increase in Kandy and its surrounding areas. To analyze potential landslide hazardous and risk areas, geoinformatics related technology can be utilized. Arulraj, M. et al., (2002) [5]

suggested a GIS-based approach to landslide management and planning. Also landslide hazard mapping in Sri Lanka has been introduced by Bhandari, R. K., et. al. (1994) [6]. Further, Evany Nithya, S. and Prasanna, P. R., (2010) [7] showed how GIS and Remote Sensing techniques can be integrated to classify landslide hazard zonation. Lallianthanga, R. and Laltanpuia, Z.,(2013) [8] apply geoinformatics technology and utilized satellite imagery data to identify landslide risk areas. Results of similar studies i.e. integration of geoinformations and remote sensing techniques conducted for the analysis of landslide hazard, vulnerability and risk by Legg, C. (1994) [9], Naim, W. M., et. al. (2011) [10], Wickramasinghe, K. M. (1997) [11], Pushpakumara, T. et al. (2003) [12], Sangrawee, P., et. al. (2017) [13] and Rahaman, S. A., et. al. (2014) [14] are used to complete this study.

There were few landslides occurred in the past in and around Kandy city. Therefore, demarcate landslide hazard zonation and landslide risk closer to Kandy city is very important to minimize the impact of future landslides in the area. Thus, this study focused to apply geoinformatics techniques to analyze both human and physical factors which can be influenced to create landslides risk in the North West of Gangawatakorale Divisional Secretariat Division and to introduce landslide risk map for the area. It has been observed that there are many settlements and other human activities introduced in this area during last one to two decades which can be increased landslide risk in the North West of Gangawatakorale DSD in future. Geographic Information System (GIS) and Remote Sensing techniques has been utilized to create and demarcate both landslide hazard as well as landslide vulnerable sites in the study area. These maps are used to produce the landslide risk map of the North-West Gangawatakorale DSD. The created landslide risk can be utilized for planning of development projects, human settlements, etc.

Study Area

Gangawatakorale DSD has 76.2 sq.km of land. Study area is North-West of Gangawatakorale District Secretariat Division. (Figure 1).

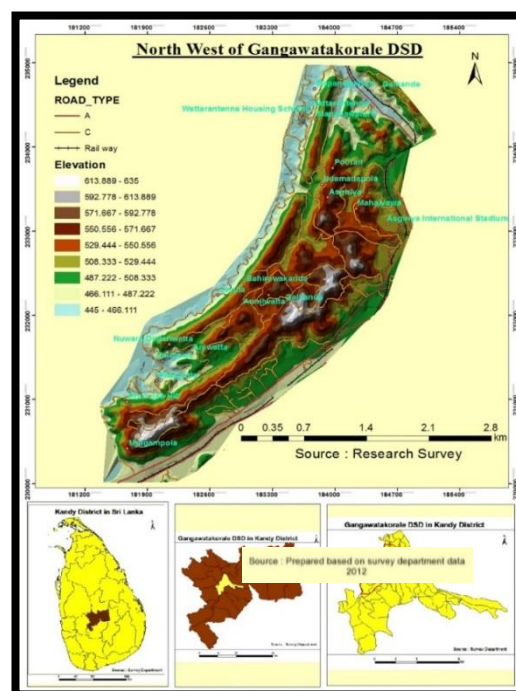


Figure 1. Study Area

Out of 64 Grama Niladari Divisions in Gangawatakorale DSD, there are fifteen GN Divisions included in the study area. They are Wattaramthanna, Pitakanda Gama, Mapanawathura, Poornawatta East, Poorna Watta West, Asgiriya, Nuwara Dodanwala, Bahirawakanda, Ihala Katukale, Katukale, Katukale West, Anniwatta East, Aniwatta West, Welata and Gatambe. As the study area is included in Kandy city, it is governed by the Kandy Municipal Council. Generally this study area is located approximately from latitude $7^{\circ} 17' 12.74''$ N to $7^{\circ} 19' 07.04''$ N and longitude $80^{\circ} 36' 29.24''$ E to $80^{\circ} 37' 48.35''$ E.

Kandy district situated in the Central highland and it is 445m -1600m height from the mean sea level. Its Eastern side is bounded to Mahaweli river and it is 448m height from the sea level. This study area is generally above 500 m (1600 feet) from mean sea level (Mean elevation). The highest elevation is 637.27 m and the lowest elevation is 444.88 m. Also this area comprises part of Kandy plateau. Slope is more important condition for landslides. Generally this area has gentle slopes is bounded by declivities ranging from 10% to 6 1/2% which in turn give place to much steeper slopes, and over 20%. Also relatively gentle slopes extending for, fairly wide stretches around Kandy area.

Methodology

1. Data Collection

Both primary and secondary data are used for this study. Secondary data related to landslides include natural and human factors influence on landslides as well as methods and techniques of landslides analysis, maps, aerial photographs and satellite images are collected from various institutes. Field observations, information collected from field measurements, etc. are used as primary data.

2. Data Analysis

Landslide zonation map has prepared using weighted overlay analysis and Multi Criteria Decision Analysis methods. Weighted overlay analysis method with the integration of GIS techniques is one of the best analysis methods for introduce risk maps. Based on the NBRO criteria, six main factors or parameters are used for landslide hazard analysis. Those factors include:

- Bedrock geology and geological structure
- Surface deposits (colluviums and residual soil)
- Slope range and category
- Hydrology and drainage
- Land use and management
- Land form

Except those factors, rainfall can be considered as the main triggering factor to create landslides. However, as the study area is small the rainfall intensity is more or less uniform over the area. Therefore, it cannot be considered as a mapping attribute or a factor. The landslide hazard map has created based on ranking system and weightages introduced by the NBRO. Each factor has divided into sub factors based on the influence of different conditions within a factor to create a landslide. Total weightages of sub

factors are equal to weightage of the factor and total weightage of all factors is 100% (Table 1).

Table1. Ranking and Weightages of Factors (Criteria for relative rankings, NBRO [16])

Rank	Factors	Weight from 100%
01	Slope range and category	25%
02	Bedrock geology and geological structure	20%
03	Hydrology and drainage	20%
04	Land use and management	15%
05	Surface deposits (colluviums and residual soil)	10%
06	Land form	10%

3. Analysis of factors contribute to create landslide hazard zonation map

First main factors effect on occurrence of landslide were identified as recommended by the NBRO. As different factors contribute to occur landslides in different manner, NBRO's criteria of allocation of weightage for different parameters and ranks for different conditions within a factor has been used to produce the landslide zonation map. Different zones are demarcated as very low risk, low risk, medium risk, high risk and very high risk in 1:10000 scale.

4. Weighted geology map

According to bedrock geology and geological structure weighted geology map can be classified in to three categories. Based on their contribution to create landslides, different weightages and ranks assigned by NBRO have considered to create weighted geology map. Overlay of all geology thematic maps prepared for sub factors i.e. lithology, amount and direction of dip, and deviation angle total weighted geology map has been introduced (Figure 2).

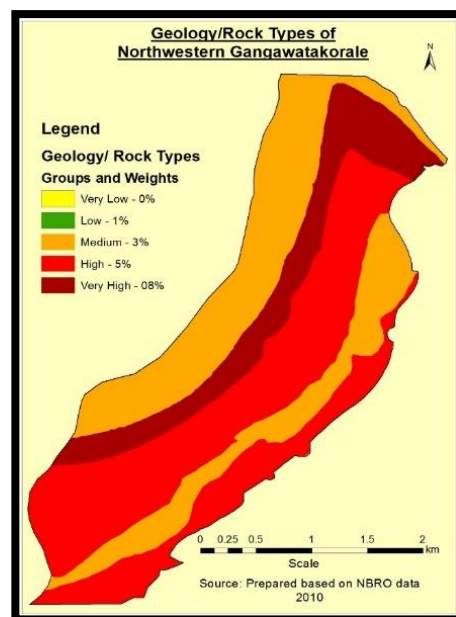


Fig. 2 Weighted Geology map

Geology factor can be categorized into five i.e. very high, high, medium, low and very low based on the influence of geology sub factors on creating landslides. According to the weighted geology map, central part of Northwestern of Gangawatakorale DSD has very high landslide hazardous areas while very low hazardous areas can be identified along the Mahaweli river as a narrow strip. However, large extent of the study area is within medium weighted (hazardous) category.

5. Weighted surface deposit / soil map

Surface deposit is another factor which influence on causing landslides. Therefore, it also considered in analyzing landslide hazard in Northwestern of Gangawatakorale DSD. There are two types of soils found in Sri Lanka i.e. colluvium soil and residual soil (Tennakoon, 1994) [15] so as in the study area. In a few locations there are rock exposure can be identified. During the field work soil types and their thicknesses are recorded. Using field data and morphology of the land, soil type and elevation polygons were created according to NBRO criteria. Weighted map of overburden in study area has created based on available soil types and there thicknesses. Residual soil which over 8 m thicknesses belongs to very high category.

This category spread about half of the study area. Residual soil in between 2 m to 8 m of belongs to medium category and spread in the North part of the study area. Exposed rocks do not much contribute to occur landslide therefore, those areas belongs to very low category. Colluvium soil in the study area can be seen in valley areas closer to Mahaweli river. Its influence on landslides is high therefore it belongs to high category according to NBRO criteria.

At top of the mountain regions in the study area bare bedrock can be identified and residual soil layer less is than 2 m which belongs to very low and low category. The weighted soil map of the study area is shown in Figure 3.

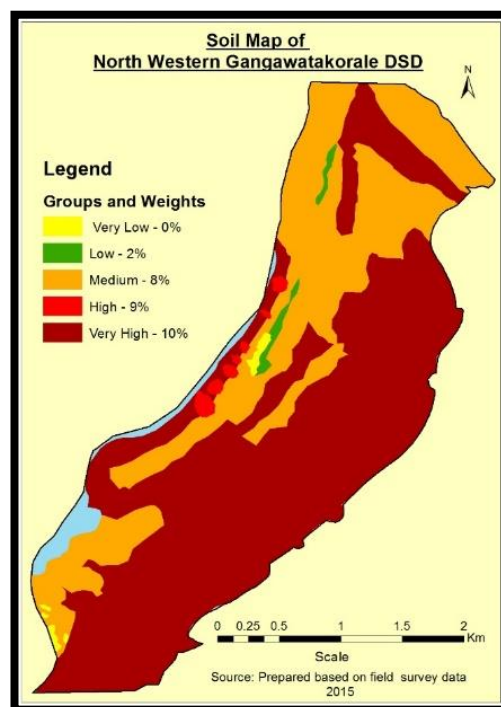


Fig. 3. Weighted soil map

6. Weighted slope range map

Slope angles can be identified as another factor that determine the landslide risk in the study area. However, low angle category is the highest slope distribution category in the area. The second highest slope distribution is the very low angle category. Closer to Mahavali river, very low slope can be identified. High angle category is scattered in different areas in North Western of Gangawatakorale DSD. The total extent of very high slope area is about 0.071684 sq.km. High slope angle area is about 2.139121 sq.km while medium slope angle is distributed in about 0.7111948 sq.km. Low slope angle is distributed in about 2.726522 sq.km and very low slope angle distributed in about 2.551583 sq.km. Based on the slope angles and the NBRO criteria of landslide hazard has analyzed and introduced the weighted slope map for the study area (Figure 4).

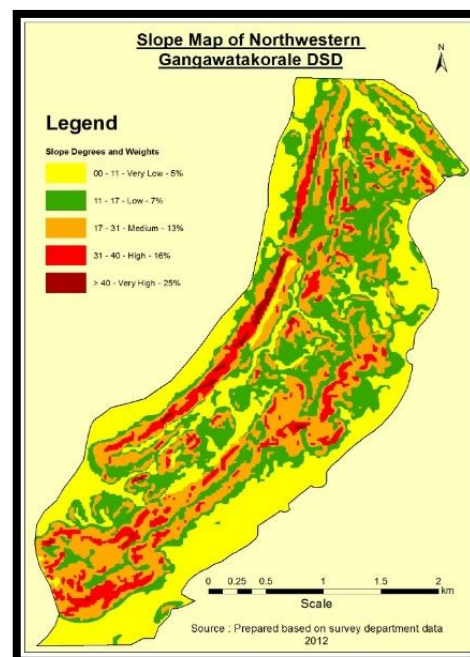


Fig. 4 Weighted slope map

7. Weighted hydrology and drainage map

Hydrology and drainage are also directly as well as indirectly affect to create landslides. NBRO has recommended that these factors influence to accelerate the landslides process and therefore, these factors has assigned 20% out of total weightage. Further, these factors have divided in to four sub categories based on their conditions to create landslides. Mahaweli river is the main hydraulic source and which has considered to analyze the drainage pattern of North Western part of Gangawatakorale DSD. Other than the main river, there are some streams such as Mada Ela, Urawala Ela, Pita Ela, Hali Ela, Ma Oya connected to Mahaweli river in different locations. The drainage system of the area includes Mahaweli river, streams mentioned in the above and few other small water ways. Drainage relief map, basin area map, basin shape map, drainage density map and

proximity to water bodies map are used to introduce the weighted hydrology and drainage map (Figure 5).

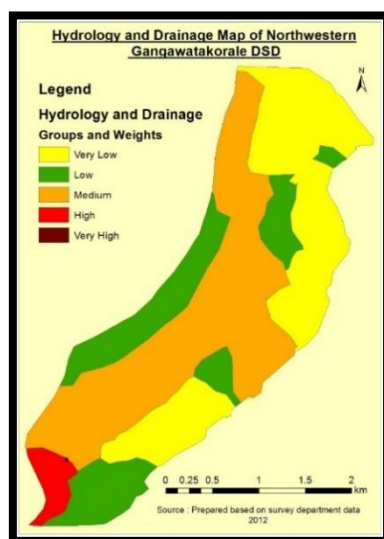


Fig. 5 Weighted hydrology and drainage map

8. Weighted land use and land use management map

Many areas closer to Kandy town consist of buildup areas. Other than built up areas, there are some paddy lands, tea cultivations, coconut cultivations and other vegetation areas exist in the study area. Natural vegetation types in the study area, includes scrub lands, marsh lands and barren lands (grass lands). Play grounds, cemeteries, home gardens and few other human constructions are also found closer to Kandy town. Weighted land use types and management map has created considering land use types and management methods which are influenced to create landslides. However, some land use types and management methods are not directly influence to create landslides. According to NBRO criteria, this factor has divided in to three sub classes based on their contribution to create landslides. Home gardens, play grounds, cemetery and build up areas has very low influence while well managed tea, paddy and coconut lands are belongs to medium influence category. Scrub lands, marsh lands, water bodies are included to very high influence category (Figure 6). There is scrub lands in the central part of the area are within a landslide prone area.

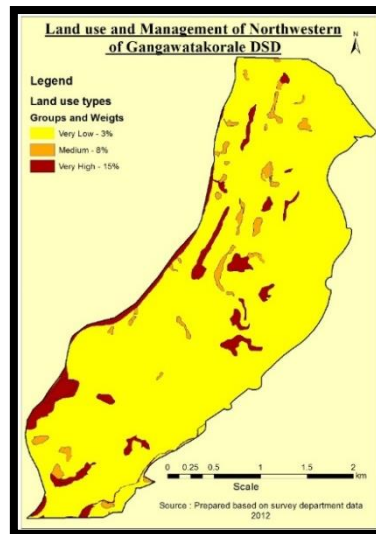


Fig. 6 Weighted land use and land use management map

9. Weighted landform map

According to linguistic factors of NBRO this has assigned high weightage. Distribution of landforms in the study area directly influence for landslides. Landform features such as plateau, hill slope, mountain slope, water bodies etc. are exists in the study area. Effect of these landform types on landslides, differ one from the other. According to landform types and their contribution to form landslides, the study area has divided in to very high, high, medium and very low categories (Figure 7). Very high category can be found close to Mahaweli river, ridges or peaks of the mountains. At central part of the study area there are high and medium category land forms. Close to Kandy city, very low and medium category landforms exist.

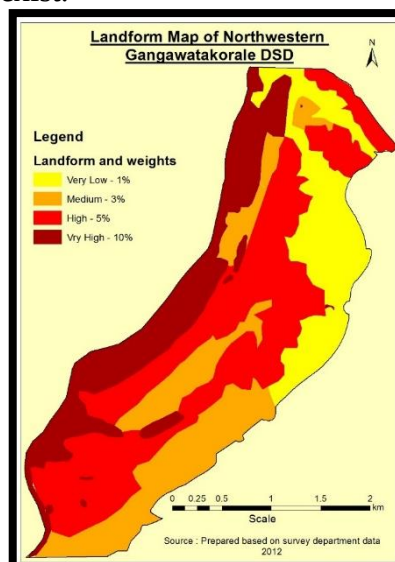


Fig. 7 Weighted landform map

10. Demarcation of Landslide Hazard in the North West of Gangawatakorale Divisional Secretariat Division

By over layering all weighted thematic layers which are contribute to create landslides i.e. bedrock geology and geological structure, surface deposit / soil, slope, hydrology and drainage, land use and land use management, and landform, landslide hazard zonation map has been introduced for the Northwestern part of Gangawatakorale DSD (Figure 8 and Figure 9).

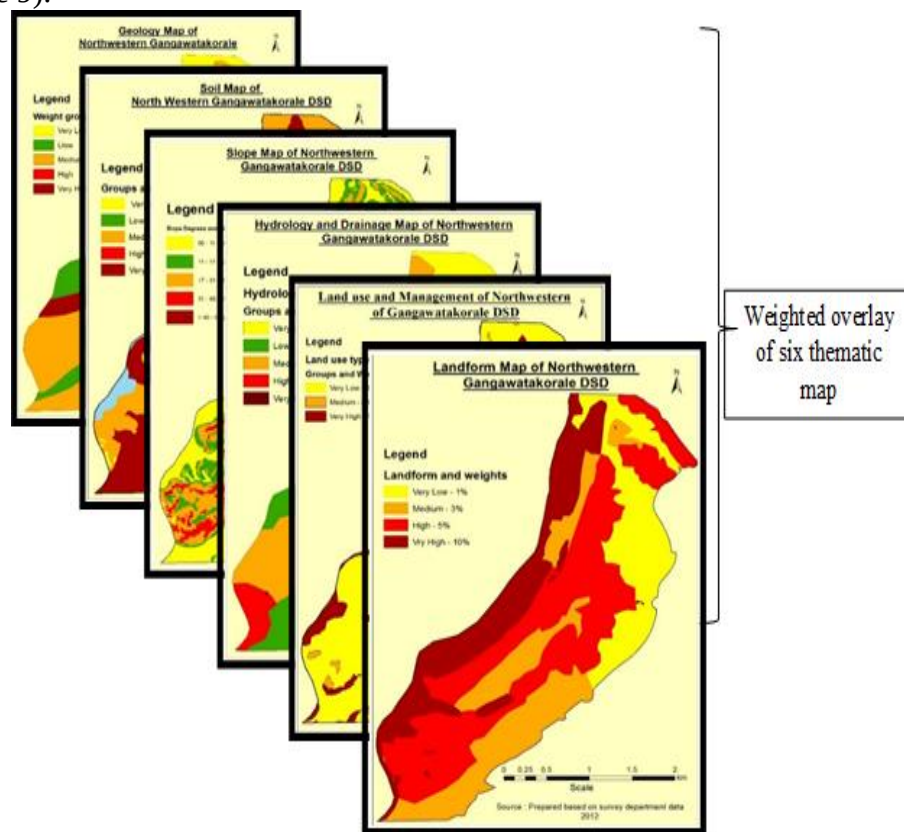


Fig. 8 Weighted overlay of six weighted thematic layers to introduce landslide hazard map

“Landslide are not like to occur”, “Landslide to be expected” and “Landslides are most like to occur” area covers about 1,350 sq.km (27%), 450 sq.km (9%) and 50 sq.km (1%) respectively (Figure 10). However, these areas are scattered within the study area.

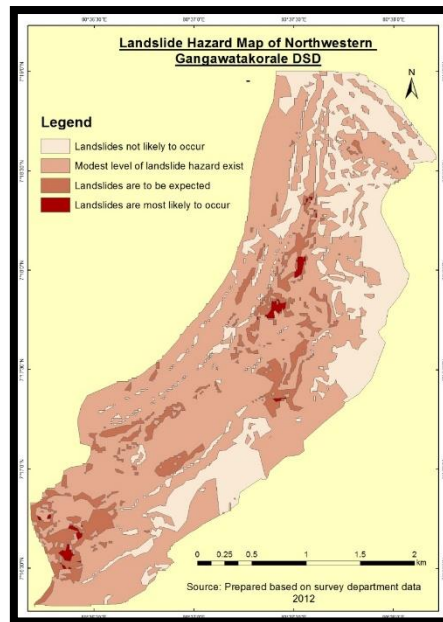


Fig. 9 Landslide hazard zonation map of the Northwestern Gangawatakorale DSD

The landslide hazard in the area has been categorized in to four categories as in the Figure 9 and Figure 10.

1. Landslide not like to occur (1st category)
2. Modest level of landslide hazard exist (2nd category)
3. Landslides are to be expected (3rd category)
4. Landslides are most likely occur (4th category)

The entire study area is about 5.002 sq.km. Out of this area, about 3,151 sq.km is belongs to modest level of landslide hazard category i.e. about 63% of study area.

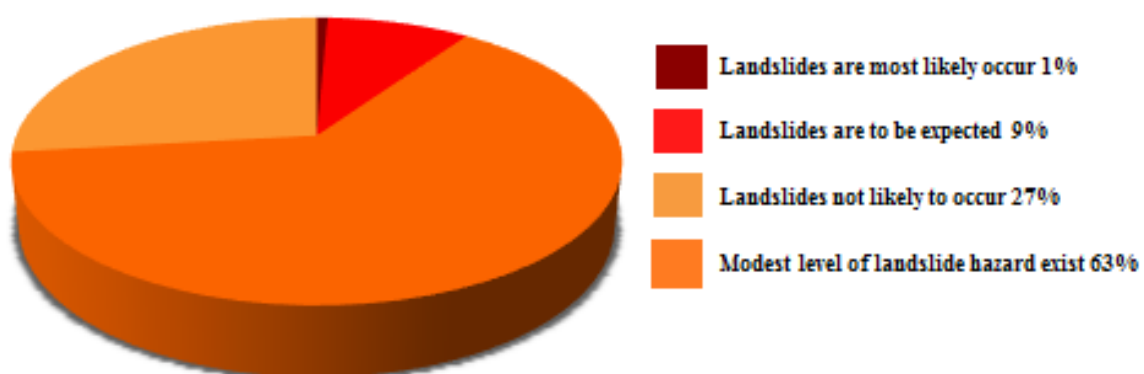


Fig. 10 Landslide hazard zonation categories

11. Preparation of landslide vulnerability map

Using the building distribution map prepared by the Department of Surveying in 2017, the building density map of the study area has created. Also using Grama Niladari (GN) boundary map of 2017 prepared by the Department of Survey and 2017 population data obtained from the Statistic and Census Department, population density map has created

for the study area. These two maps are utilized to create landslide vulnerability of the study area using weighted overlay procedure (Figure 11).

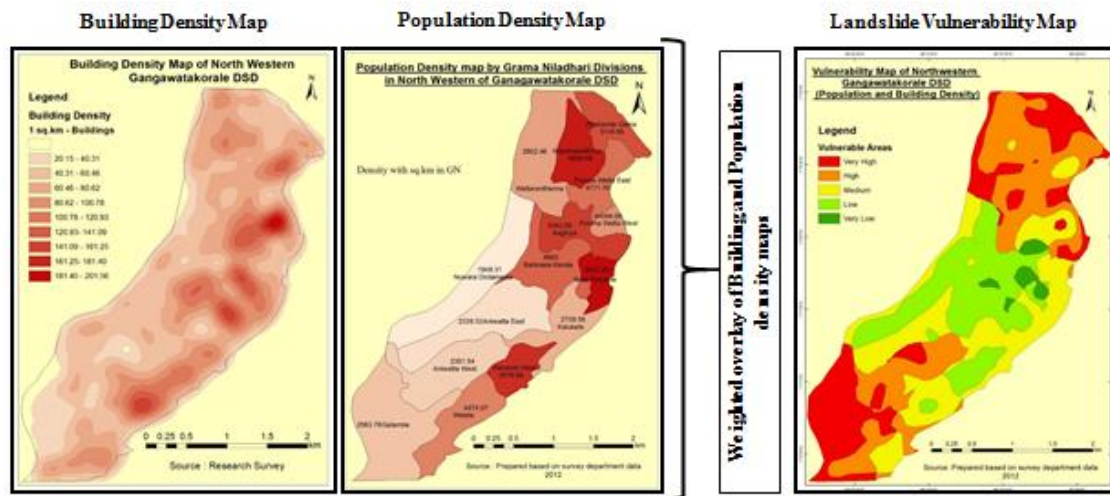


Fig. 11 Preparation of landslide vulnerability map of the study area

According to this map, landslide vulnerability in the area has classified into very low, low, medium, high and very high. According to the building distribution and the variation of the population distribution, very high to high landslide vulnerability exist in the Northeast and Southwest parts of the study area.

12. Analysis of future landslide risk areas in the North West of Gangawatakorale Divisional Secretariat Division

Risk can be defined as the combination of the hazard and vulnerability of an event. The landslide hazard map indicates the physical factors that influence landslide creation, while the vulnerability map indicates how a landslide can affect human lives, settlements, utility facilities and other infrastructure. Landslide risk map for the study area has been introduced by overlaying landslide hazard zonation map and landslide vulnerability map as shown in Figure 12.

According to this map the landslide risk areas in the Northwestern part of Gangawatakorale DSD can be classified in to very high, high, and medium, low and very low. The large extent of the study area belongs to medium level of landslide risk and it has 2.825 qs.km or 36% of the total extent of the study area.

Very high and high; landslide risk areas can be identified as 11% and 31% respectively whereas very low and low landslide risk in the Northwestern part of Gangawatakorale DSD is 2% and 20% respectively (Figure 13).

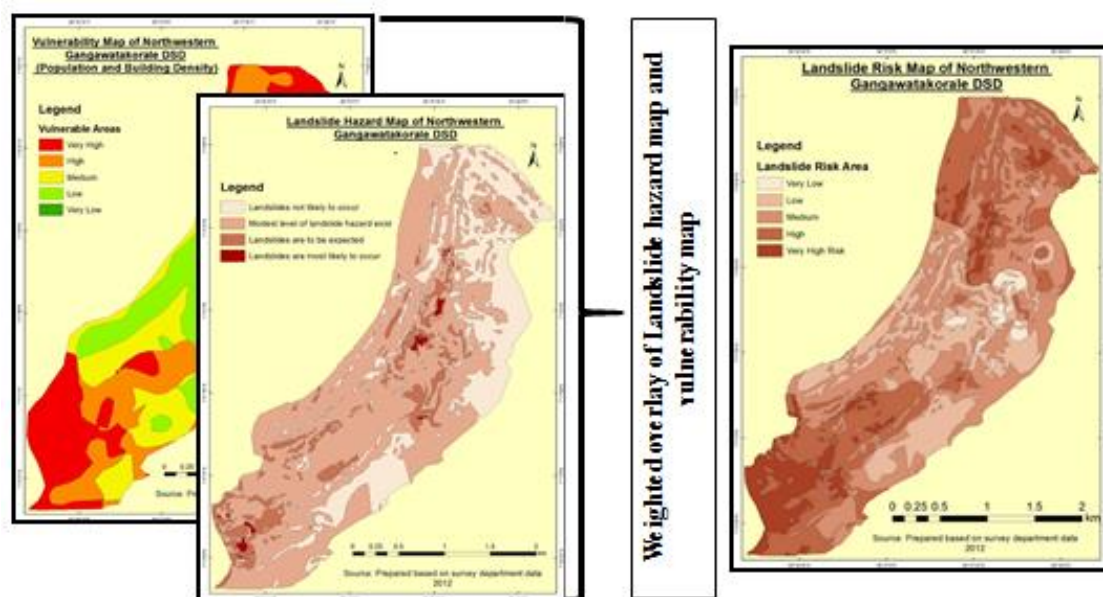


Fig. 12 Weighted overlay of landslide hazard and landslide vulnerability maps

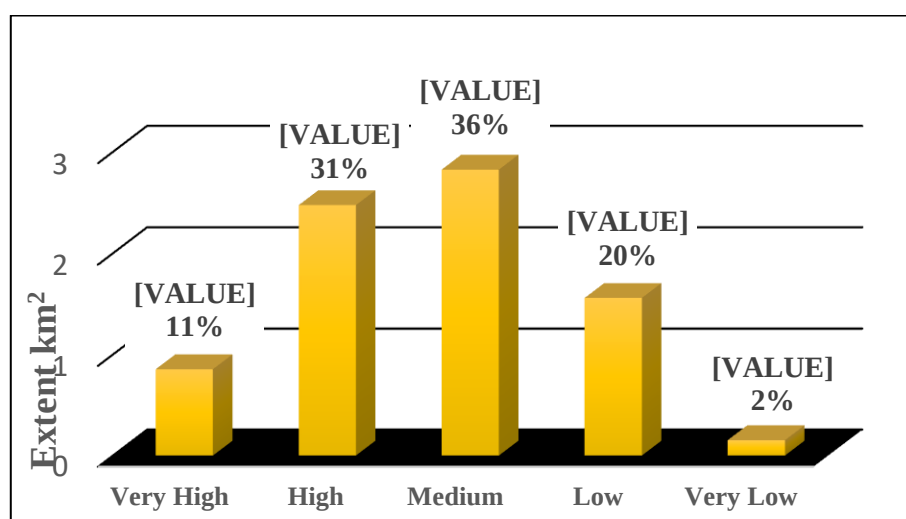


Fig. 13 Landslide risk in the Northwestern Gangawatakorale DSD

Conclusion

It was noted that establishment of human settlements and other infrastructures has been increasing in and around Kandy city within last two to three decades. As there are many lands with steep slopes can be found in this area, some of these buildings are set up in these lands. Therefore, some of these houses and other infrastructures at a risk, in slope instability and landslides. This study has attempted to identify lands with landslide risk and instability in the Northwestern parts of Gangawatakorale DSD which is one of the highly urbanized area and is surrounded by steep slopes. To overcome this task landslide risk map for this area has been introduced using Geoinformatics techniques and statistical applications. After complete the literature survey it was found that National Building Research Organization (NBRO) has introduced a criteria to recognize and classify landslide hazard. This classification system which includes six parameters or factors influence to create landslides i.e. bedrock geology and geological structure, surface deposits (colluviums and residual soil), slope range and category, hydrology and

drainage, land use and management and land form has been utilized in this research to create landslide risk map for the study area. Based on secondary data and primary field data, digital thematic layers which represent different conditions of these six parameters in the study area are created. Thereafter, considering NBRO criteria and Multi Criteria Decision Analysis method, all thematic layers are converted to weighted thematic layers. Then using weighted overlay technique in GIS, landslide hazard map has been created using six weighted thematic layers. These weighted maps were overlaid to produce the landslide hazard map. Landslide vulnerability has to be considered when analyzing landslide risk. Therefore, landslide vulnerability map has been prepared using building density and population density maps of the area. Finally, using weighted overlay techniques, the landslide hazard map and landslide vulnerability map of the area were overlaid to create the landslide risk map of the Northwestern parts of Gangawatakorale DSD.

Based on this map, landslide risk of the area has been classified into five categories i.e. very high risk, high risk, medium risk, low risk and very low risk. Southwestern parts of the study area which are closer to Mahaveli river such as Prim Rose, Gatambe and North parts of the study area and some locations of Wattaramthanna, Udamadapola, and Asgiriya mountain come under very high landslide risk which is about 0.855 km² or 11% out of the total area. High landslide risk area can be found in some parts of Wattaramthanna, Mapanawathura, Pitakanda Gama, Prim Ross and Aniyawaththa and is about 2.476 km² (31%). Locations having medium level of landslide risk are scattered in the study area which is about 2.85 km² or 36% out of whole study area. Bahirawakanda, parts of Aniyawaththa, Galkanda located in the central parts of the study area and adjoining areas to Kandy city belong to very low and low landslide risk and are 2% and 20% out of total study area respectively. The created landslide risk map can be utilized to recognize lands with high landslide risk and future constructions and establishment of settlements can be restricted in those areas. The final goal of this research is to minimize the loss of human lives due to landslides and reduce damages which will be created due to future landslide events in the area. Thus, people living in risky areas to be educated and relevant authorities should encourage them to evacuate from those places to prevent loss of human lives. However, as these lands and properties are valuable, long term solutions should be introduced and to be implemented to reduce landslide risk in future. If proper solutions will be introduced, people living in these areas can live without landslide risk.

References

- Cooray, P. G., (1994). Geological Factors Affecting Landslides in Sri Lanka. In: National Symposium on Landslides in Sri Lanka. Colombo: National Building Research Organization, Ministry of Housing, Construction and Urban Development, pp. 15-21.
- Dahanayake, K., (1994). Towards Understanding and living with Landslides. In: National Symposium of Landslides in Sri Lanka. Colombo: NBRO, pp. 221-228.
- Bandara, R.M.S., (2003). Landslides in Sri Lanka. Vidurava, Volume 22, pp. 9-13.
- Abeyasinghe, A. M., Bandara, R. M. S., Iwao, Y. & Saito, Y., (2005). Hazard and risk assessment in landslide prone hill country of Sri Lanka. Geotechnical Journal, Sri Lankan Geotechnical Society, Vol. 03, pp. 2-42.

- Arulraj, M. et al., (2002). Landslide Disaster Management and Planning - A GIS based Approach, Chennai: Institute of Remote Sensing, Anna University, Cehnnai, India.
- Bhandari , R. K., Herath, N. & Thayalan, N., (1994). Landslide Hazard Mapping in Sri Lanka- Holistic Approach. In: National Symposium of Landslides in SRi Lanka. Colombo: NBRO, pp. 271- 284.
- Evany Nithya, S. & Prasanna, P. R., (2010). An Integrated Approach with GIS and Remote Sensing Technique for Landslide Hazard Zonation. International Journal Of Geomatics And Geosciences, 1 (Department of Civil Engineering, Anna University Tiruchirappalli, Tiruchirappalli), pp. 66-75.
- Lallianthanga, R. & Laltanpuia, Z., (2013). Landslide Hazard Zonation of Lunglei Town, Mizoram, India Using High Resolution Satellite Data, India: Mizoram Remote Sensing Application Centre, Science & Technology, Planning Department, Aizawl, Mizoram,.
- Legg, C., (1994). Possible Aplications of Satellite Remote Sensing in Studies of Landslides in Sri Lanka. In: National Symposium on Landslides in Sri Lanka. Colombo: National Building Research Organization, Ministry of Housing, Construction and Urban Developmnet, p. 47.
- Naim, W. M., Noraini , S. & Othmana , A. N., (2011). GIS Based Multi-Criteria Decision Making for Landslide. Malaysia, Asia Pacific International Conference on Environment-Behaviour Studies, Salamis Bay.
- Wickramasinghe, K. M., (1997). Landslide Zonation Mapping Using GIS, New Delhi: 8, Balaji Estate, Sudarshan Munjal Marg, Kalkaji.
- Pushpakumara, T. et al., (2003). Analyzing And Predicting Of Land Slide Prone Areas Using Remote Sensing And Gis Techniques, Colombo: University of Moratuwa.
- Sangrawee, P., Potiracha, Y. & Silpathong, C., (2007). Landslide Hazard Zonation Using Multiple Criteria Analysis With Gis And Remote Sensing Technique, Geo-informatics and Space Technology Development Agency, Bangkok
- Rahaman, S. A., Aruchamy, S. & Jegankumar, R., (2014). Geospatial Approach On Landslide Hazard Zonation Mapping Using Multicriteria Decision Analysis: A Study On Coonoor And Ooty, Part Of Kallar Watershed, The Nilgiris, Tamilnadu. The International Archives of the Photogrammetry, Remote Sensing and Spatial Information Sciences, XL-8 ISPRS Technical Commission VIII Symposium, Hyderabad, India, pp. 1417 -1422.
- Tennakoon, B. L., (1994). Residual Soil and Colluvium Deposits of Sri Lanka, their Investigation, Testing and Engineering Behaviour. In: National Symposium on Landslides in Sri Lanka. Colombo: NBRO, pp. 65-72.
- Hettige, P. M., (1994) Towards a Landslide Hazard Zonation System. In: National Symposium of Landsldies in Sri Lanka. Colombo: NBRO, pp. 255-264.

Storytelling for Empowerment and Inclusion: Learning from Freedom Writers (2007) for Human Rights Education (HRE)

Kalpani Dambagolla

Abstract

This paper explores the role of storytelling as a pedagogical tool in Human Rights Education (HRE) to empower students in diverse classrooms. Drawing on the film *Freedom Writers* (2007), a narrative based on real events, it examines how storytelling and personal testimonies can transform the classroom by fostering student empowerment and promoting social inclusiveness in unequal social contexts. The central argument is that storytelling facilitates the integration of knowledge and lived experience enabling students to empower themselves while addressing systemic inequalities. The paper analyzes key aspects of storytelling in the film, including the teacher's strategic selection of narratives, students' development as storytellers, and their connections to others' stories. These are examined through theoretical lenses that critique traditional educational models of knowledge transmission and advocate for approaches emphasizing collaboration and critical inquiry. Empowerment is understood as emerging from the integration of knowledge and lived experiences, enabling individuals to contextualize and transform their realities. The framework also highlights the central role of emotions in fostering empathy, awareness, and deeper engagement in human rights learning. Together, these perspectives illustrate the transformative potential of storytelling in HRE. The study also acknowledges potential risks associated with storytelling, such as bias, exaggeration, and distortion, and discusses how these challenges might influence its application in HRE. By addressing both its promise and its risks, this paper highlights the importance of storytelling as an inclusive, empowering, and context-sensitive approach to human rights education.

Keywords: Storytelling, Human Rights Education, Empowerment, Diverse Classrooms, *Freedom Writers* (2007)

Introduction

This paper investigates the transformative potential of storytelling as a pedagogical tool in diverse classrooms, particularly within the framework of Human Rights Education (HRE). It explores how storytelling, especially through personal testimonies, can empower marginalized students, fostering self-expression, inclusivity, and a deeper understanding of human rights in unequal social contexts.

Focusing on the film *Freedom Writers* (2007) as a case study, this analysis highlights the multifaceted role of storytelling in bridging personal experiences with broader human rights principles. The study argues that storytelling not only helps students integrate knowledge with lived experiences but also serves as a means of self-empowerment, making it a vital element of inclusive education. To support this claim, the discussion draws on key theoretical frameworks, including Freire's concepts of the banking and problem-posing models of education, Meintjes' (1997) emphasis on the integration of knowledge and experience for empowerment, and Zembylas' (2017) insights into the emotional dimensions of human rights pedagogy. Additionally, the paper critically

examines potential challenges and risks associated with storytelling, emphasizing the need for a holistic educational approach that balances emotional engagement with ethical and cognitive considerations.

By analyzing these dimensions, the paper positions, storytelling as a powerful method for advancing the goals of HRE, particularly in addressing social inequalities and fostering a culture of inclusion and human rights awareness.

1. Global Ambition vs Local Reality and Human Rights Education

The vision of global human rights, as articulated in Eleanor Roosevelt's seminal 1958 speech, *Where Do Human Rights Begin?*, highlights the intrinsic link between universal ideals and local realities. Roosevelt emphasized that human rights begin in "small places, close to home" and warned that without "concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world." This argument remains profoundly relevant, underscoring the necessity of grassroots initiatives to operationalize the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) within specific cultural, social, and political contexts. Her vision serves as a call to align global frameworks with local actions, emphasizing that rights and freedoms must resonate with the lived experiences of individuals and communities to have a meaningful impact.

Building on Roosevelt's perspective, the United Nations Human Rights Council's Human Rights and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2019) establishes the principle of "leaving no one behind" as its cornerstone. This goal seeks to promote inclusiveness and equality by addressing systemic inequalities and empowering marginalized communities. Acknowledging such global ambitions at the outset of any discussion is vital because they provide a shared framework that connects the aspirations of international human rights mechanisms with the challenges faced on the ground. This acknowledgment also affirms the necessity of translating global ideals into localized practices to ensure tangible outcomes.

However, to realize this vision, grassroots initiatives must take precedence. While global frameworks offer essential direction and inspiration, real progress depends on how these frameworks are implemented at the community level. Initiatives such as empowering students, fostering inclusive classrooms, and amplifying the voices of marginalized groups are pivotal. As Roosevelt suggested, progress begins with localized efforts, and the realization of the immediate needs and realities of individuals, bridging the gap between aspirational global agendas and the practical realities of diverse societies.

Human Rights Education (HRE) emerges as a critical instrument for aligning global ambitions with local realities. The United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (UDHRET) (2011) identifies HRE as a tool for cultivating universal respect for human rights by fostering awareness, training, and education that empowers individuals to build a culture of rights. According to Article 2.1 of UDHRET, human rights education is described as follows:

comprises all educational, training, information, awareness-raising and learning activities aimed at promoting universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms [...], to empower them to contribute to the building and promotion of a universal culture of human rights.

This framework positions HRE not merely as an abstract educational practice but as a participatory and transformative process that links learners to global ambitions while empowering them to act on local challenges. Osler and Starkey (2010) argue that HRE is integral to realizing human rights, as it fosters an understanding of shared responsibilities and enables learners to connect their lives with broader struggles for justice. By doing so, HRE encourages individuals to critically engage with the “actions of the powerful” and reflect on “the struggles of others” (Osler & Starkey, 2010, p. 138).

Despite these aspirations, significant disparities persist in translating global ambitions into localized action. Structural inequalities, socio-economic challenges, and cultural differences continue to create barriers to inclusiveness (Bajaj, 2011, p. 484). These barriers highlight the importance of participatory methods in HRE, such as storytelling, which can bridge the gap between the abstract and the concrete. Storytelling, as a pedagogical tool, fosters empowerment by enabling individuals to articulate their experiences and connect with others’ narratives. This approach not only amplifies marginalized voices but also promotes shared responsibility, facilitating the integration of global principles into the lived realities of diverse communities.

By linking global ambitions with localized actions, HRE becomes a powerful mechanism for ensuring inclusiveness and equity. A focus on grassroots initiatives underscores the idea that every action matters, whether it involves empowering an individual student, fostering inclusive educational spaces, or advocating for systemic change. These efforts, rooted in local realities, ensure that the principle of “leaving no one behind” is not merely aspirational but actionable, creating pathways toward a just and equitable society.

2. Storytelling and Narratives in Human Rights Education (HRE)

Among the diverse methodologies and materials used in HRE, storytelling emerges as a powerful pedagogical tool. Osler (2016) asserts that “narratives have the power to link legal and ethical frameworks with learners’ own struggles, and it is for this reason that they need to be placed centrally within HRE” (pp. 52-53). Narratives, according to Osler (2016), enable learners to address their multifaceted and often suppressed identities, examine historical and contemporary injustices, foster empathy and solidarity, and understand human rights as guiding principles for coexistence across diverse contexts (p. 53). In this way, storytelling occupies a pivotal role in connecting learners’ lived experiences with the broader values of human rights.

The following section examines the types of storytelling utilized in HRE materials, illustrating how storytelling is employed to explore human rights violations, encourage critical reflection, and promote personal and collective transformation.

Storytelling, both fictional and based on real events, is a recurring element in formal HRE resources such as the Compass: Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People (Council of Europe) and the Danish Institute for Human Rights’ Human Rights Education Toolbox. These manuals incorporate stories designed to help learners identify human rights violations and explore potential solutions using their understanding of human rights principles. For example, in the Compass Manual (pp. 140-143), the section on bullying presents three real-life accounts of victims. The objectives are to build knowledge about the causes and consequences of bullying, develop skills to address the issue, and foster empathy for those affected. Similarly, the Human Rights Education Toolbox uses

narrative-based activities such as *The Sheep and the Goat People*, a story designed to provoke reflection on human rights themes. Through these exercises, participants are encouraged to engage critically with human rights concepts, applying them to diverse scenarios. These materials exemplify how storytelling fosters inquiry and reflection, enabling learners to connect abstract human rights principles to tangible lived experiences.

In addition to formal teaching materials, storytelling has been integral to projects like *Narrative Art and Visual Storytelling in Holocaust and Human Rights Education* (an international project initiated in Canada) and Amnesty International's educational initiatives. For instance, Amnesty International highlights how a Human Rights Friendly School in Portugal uses personal testimonies to depict refugees' experiences, creating a deeper, more nuanced understanding of human rights violations. These projects often employ personal testimonies as educational tools, presenting stories of individuals who have faced human rights violations. Participants are encouraged to listen to these narratives, whether they address historical atrocities such as the Holocaust or contemporary crises like the refugee experience. Such storytelling facilitates an emotional connection and fosters critical reflection, creating a gateway between historical contexts and modern human rights challenges.

The documentary *A Path to Dignity* (2011) provides another example of storytelling's pedagogical potential. The film presents three narrative strands: a girl from the Dalit community in India, a Turkish woman who experienced domestic violence, and police officers in Victoria working on civil rights issues. Their stories serve as both pedagogical tools and research materials, illustrating how personal narratives can educate communities about human rights while promoting social change.

Freedom Writers (2007), the focus of this paper, also demonstrates the transformative power of storytelling by showcasing the use of personal narratives as a critical educational tool. In the film, students from marginalized and conflict-ridden backgrounds are encouraged to write and share their own stories. This process not only fosters self-expression and self-empowerment but also helps to build empathy, solidarity, and a sense of agency among the students. By narrating their lived experiences, students can reframe their struggles, recognize their resilience, and develop a deeper understanding of the human rights challenges that affect them and their communities. In all these examples, storytelling serves as both a critical tool of inquiry and a pedagogical resource in HRE. Whether through formal educational materials, participatory projects, or narrative-driven films, storytelling enables learners to connect abstract human rights concepts to their own experiences and those of others. By amplifying voices from diverse backgrounds, storytelling fosters a deeper engagement with human rights, empowering individuals and communities to advocate for equity, justice, and inclusion. This demonstrates the enduring significance of storytelling in advancing the goals of HRE and in bridging the gap between global ideals and local realities.

3. The film *Freedom Writers* (2007)

Directed by Richard LaGravenese, *Freedom Writers* (2007) is based on the true story of Erin Gruwell, a young high school teacher at Woodrow Wilson High School in Long Beach, California. The narrative unfolds within the sociopolitical tensions of the early 1990s, notably following the Los Angeles riots triggered by the acquittal of four white

police officers involved in the brutal beating of Rodney King, an African American motorist (Wallenfeldt, 2021). In 1994, Gruwell began teaching in a school that had recently adopted a voluntary integration program. The integration effort, as depicted in the film, created friction within the school's staff and community, amplifying the existing struggles of the students, many of whom were immersed in gang culture, experienced racial tensions, and lived amid violence.

The film dramatizes Gruwell's efforts to connect with her students by introducing unconventional teaching methods, such as journal writing and storytelling, to provide them with a platform to express their lived realities. According to IMDb, the storyline captures her struggle against institutional resistance and her commitment to empowering her students through education (IMDb, n.d.).

However, the movie has faced criticism for perpetuating the trope of the "white savior" teacher, in which a single individual is seen as responsible for transforming the lives of students from marginalized communities (Fan, 2020). Critics, including Long Beach Unified School District Superintendent C. Steinhauser, have pointed out that the portrayal of Long Beach and its schools as rife with violence and dysfunction misrepresents the actual conditions. Additionally, the film's depiction of racial minorities as generically poor and marginalized communities has been critiqued as overly simplistic (Fan, 2020). These critiques also highlight the risks involved in storytelling, namely that (i) falsehoods may be submitted, (ii) distortion or exaggeration may occur, and (iii) the standpoint of the narrator and researcher is not neutral (Osler and Zhu, 2011).

Despite these criticisms, Gruwell's project, which used storytelling and personal journals to empower her students, had a transformative and long-lasting impact on their lives. The narrative highlights critical themes relevant to HRE, particularly in addressing systemic inequalities and promoting inclusion through education. The selection of Freedom Writers for this discussion on HRE is grounded in three main aspects:

Students as marginalized groups: The movie's focus on a group of students from disempowered and excluded communities resonates with the global ambition of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2019), particularly the commitment to "leaving no one behind." The story exemplifies the need for educational initiatives that empower marginalized individuals, fostering inclusion and equality. The narrative aligns with the HRE goal of creating equitable opportunities for all, starting from localized interventions that address the unique challenges of marginalized groups.

The teacher as a catalyst for change: Erin Gruwell's character represents the role of educators in bridging global ambitions and local realities. Her approach underscores the importance of moving beyond traditional classroom setups to create inclusive spaces for learning. By challenging institutional norms and taking risks, Gruwell demonstrates the transformative potential of education to empower students and facilitate their social inclusion. This reflects the essence of HRE, which aims to equip learners with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to advocate for their rights and those of others.

Storytelling as a tool for empowerment: The film highlights storytelling as a central pedagogical approach. By encouraging her students to share their personal experiences through journaling, Gruwell gives voice to the voiceless, fostering a sense of agency and self-worth among her students. Storytelling in the movie serves as both an educational method and an empowerment tool, enabling students to reflect on their struggles and

envision change. In this paper, storytelling is therefore understood simply as telling one's own story and listening to the stories of others. This approach aligns with the principles of HRE, which emphasize participatory learning and the integration of personal narratives.

The film offers valuable insights into how personal stories and experiences can serve as powerful tools in HRE, particularly within excluded and unequal societies. It illustrates the potential of education to empower marginalized individuals by prioritizing inclusive and participatory approaches that resonate with learners' lived realities.

In line with the above discussion, the next section of the paper explores the theoretical framework, focusing on the dynamics between the teacher-student relationship, the role of HRE in fostering empowerment, and the use of storytelling as a central component in human rights education.

Theoretical Framework

In examining the dynamics of teacher-student relationships and empowerment within education, Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000) provides a foundational lens. Freire identifies two distinct educational models: the banking model and the problem-posing model, which offer contrasting approaches to teaching and learning. The banking model, as Freire critiques, positions students as passive recipients of knowledge. Teachers are the sole narrators, transmitting content that students are expected to memorize and repeat mechanically (pp. 71-72). This hierarchical structure reduces students to "containers" that are filled with information, disconnecting the learning process from their lived experiences and discouraging creativity, critical thinking, and transformation. Freire asserts that such a system inhibits true learning and empowerment, treating students as "listening objects" rather than active participants in the educational journey (p. 71).

In contrast, the problem-posing model shifts the teacher-student relationship to a horizontal dynamic characterized by dialogue and collaboration. Freire describes this model as one in which "the teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn, while being taught, also teach" (p. 80). This mutual exchange transforms both students and teachers into co-investigators, fostering critical awareness and encouraging learners to challenge and take action against oppressive realities (pp. 80-81). By grounding the curriculum in topics relevant to students' experiences, this model enables education to become an empowering process, promoting inquiry, reflection, and transformation.

The principles of Freire's problem-posing model align with G. Meintjes' (1997) concept of "Human Rights Education as Empowerment." Meintjes critiques the banking model for failing to foster continuous inquiry and reflection, essential components of empowerment pedagogy (p. 66). Empowerment, Meintjes argues, occurs when education integrates both students' knowledge and lived experiences. In the context of Human Rights Education (HRE), this means enabling learners to acquire the critical awareness necessary to question and transform oppressive social, political, and economic systems (p. 66).

A crucial aspect of HRE, as Meintjes emphasizes, is its contextual nature. Effective HRE must focus on the specific experiences, needs, and challenges of its participants (p. 76). This contextualization ensures that education resonates with learners' realities, making empowerment both meaningful and achievable. Thus, educators must consider how to address these factors in designing HRE programs. How can a teacher effectively integrate the unique needs and experiences of individual students within diverse and localized contexts?

One approach to addressing this challenge is through personalized educational methods that focus on individual development. Storytelling emerges as a powerful tool in this context, offering a means to connect with the experiences, needs, and challenges of learners. Storytelling not only engages emotions but also cultivates empathy and solidarity, particularly in the context of human rights violations, which are often intertwined with suffering and injustice.

M. Zembylas (2017), in *Emotions, Critical Pedagogy, and Human Rights Education*, highlights the emotional dimension of HRE, drawing on Rorty's concept of "sentimental education." According to Rorty (1998), "reading stories about people who have been the object of oppression and cruelty can lead us to realize that they also suffer like we do." (p. 55). Storytelling thus becomes a prime tool for sensitizing individuals to the suffering of others and fostering a culture of empathy (Zembylas, 2017, p. 56). Moreover, 'troubled knowledge,' which Zembylas (2013) defines as "the knowledge of a traumatized past such as the profound feelings of loss, shame, resentment, or defeat that one carries from his or her participation in a traumatized community" (p. 177), serves as a theoretical lens through which to view storytelling.

While storytelling about others' experiences is impactful, taking it further to include self-narratives in HRE can deepen the empowerment process. Encouraging students to share their own stories within a safe and supportive environment allows them to connect their personal struggles with broader human rights issues. This process fosters self-awareness, builds agency, and enables students to become active participants in advocating for change.

Thus, Freire's (2000) problem-posing model, Meintjes' (1997) framework for empowerment, and Zembylas' (2017) critical emotional pedagogy underscore the necessity of participatory and contextualized approaches in HRE. Storytelling, whether sharing others' experiences or personal narratives, emerges as a vital method for achieving this. It bridges the gap between abstract human rights principles and lived realities, fostering emotional engagement and critical awareness. By integrating storytelling into HRE, educators can create a space where learners not only empathize with the suffering of others but also recognize their own potential as agents of transformation.

Methodology

This paper employs critical content analysis as its primary methodology, leveraging its ability to conduct a detailed examination and evaluation of materials. This approach allows for the systematic interpretation of the film *Freedom Writers* by breaking it down into key components for in-depth analysis. As a structured method, it facilitates a nuanced

understanding of the movie's themes, narrative elements, and pedagogical implications within the context of HRE.

Berelson (1952) emphasizes that the essence of content analysis lies in understanding its objective, systematic, and quantitative dimensions, as well as the manifest content it examines (p. 18). While this paper does not employ a purely quantitative approach, it aligns with Berelson's foundational principles by maintaining a systematic focus on the film's explicit content and its implications for empowerment pedagogy.

Analysis and Discussion

The following section analyzes the storytelling approach in the film *Freedom Writers* and its implications for Human Rights Education (HRE). The film opens with a powerful narrative that captures the harsh realities faced by the students. Eva's recounting of her childhood memory - "and I saw war for the first time" (*Freedom Writers*, 2007, 2:21) - depicts the pervasive violence and conflict shaped by gang culture in Long Beach. This scene not only sets the tone for the movie but also provides an entry point into understanding the sociopolitical environment in which the students live. By rooting the story in the lived realities of its characters, the film creates an emotionally charged space where empathy becomes a vital tool for confronting systemic injustices. These themes transcend the specific setting of the movie and resonate with any social context where systemic violence and oppression impact students' lives. Building on this perspective, the following sections explore the teacher's actions, the students' transformations, and the pivotal role of storytelling in fostering empowerment and human rights awareness.

1. Teacher's Choice of Stories Closer to Reality

In *Freedom Writers*, Erin Gruwell is assigned to teach a class described by her colleagues as "unteachable," consisting of students from marginalized and oppressed backgrounds. The classroom dynamics mirror the deep divisions outside its walls, with students aligning strictly with their gang affiliations. This division perpetuates an atmosphere of tension, where even minor actions can incite violence. For instance, the students remain seated exclusively within their small groups, seeking comfort and solidarity within their familiar circles (*Freedom Writers*, 2007, 21:27). This entrenched separation highlights the social and emotional barriers Gruwell faces in fostering unity and engagement within her classroom.

Initially, she approaches her role with traditional expectations, assuming she can rely on conventional methods in which she teaches and students passively absorb the material - a model akin to Freire's concept of banking education. Her lesson plan for the freshman English class begins with Homer's *Odyssey* (*Freedom Writers*, 2007, 27:24), a work of classical literature that is disconnected from the students' lived experiences. Predictably, the students, burdened by systemic oppression and personal struggles, show little to no interest. The lack of relevance between the curriculum and the students' realities renders this approach ineffective, demonstrating the limitations of the banking model.

A turning point occurs when a student draws a caricature of a Black African classmate, exaggerating his features in a racist depiction (*Freedom Writers*, 2007, 29:07-32:26). As the victim reacts emotionally, Gruwell uses the incident to recount a similar historical act of dehumanization during the Holocaust, where Jewish individuals were portrayed with

exaggerated, long noses in Nazi propaganda. This connection piques the students' interest, marking a shift in their engagement. Recognizing their curiosity, Gruwell introduces *The Diary of Anne Frank*, a story that resonates with themes of oppression and survival, more closely aligned with their experiences.

Gruwell bridges the divisions in her classroom and connects with the students' realities through the 'Line Game' (Freedom Writers, 2007, 41:22). In this activity, students step onto a line if a statement about lived experiences applies to them. This exercise allows the students to confront shared struggles, such as loss, discrimination, and violence, fostering empathy and breaking down social barriers. It also shows students that their classmates - whom they may have previously avoided - are enduring similar challenges. For Gruwell, the game provides critical insight into her students' stories, enabling her to tailor her teaching approach more effectively.

This process exemplifies Freire's problem-posing model, where the teacher and students collaboratively investigate reality, shifting the classroom dynamic from passive learning to active engagement. As the students participate, their critical awareness grows, helping them connect their personal struggles to broader systemic injustices. Additionally, the exercise aligns with Zembylas' (2017) argument that personal experiences, needs, and challenges in human rights contexts are often intertwined with violations, invoking emotions like sympathy and a heightened awareness of suffering (p. 55). Through this emotionally charged activity, Gruwell fosters a deeper understanding of shared humanity within the class.

Gruwell's approach underscores the importance of selecting stories that resonate with students' realities to sustain their engagement and promote meaningful dialogue. In HRE, teachers must go beyond merely depositing knowledge about human rights violations (as in Freire's banking education). Instead, they should create opportunities for students to connect these stories to their lived experiences, fostering critical reflection and discussion. By doing so, educators and students become co-investigators, exploring systemic injustices collaboratively and empowering students to engage actively with human rights concepts. This alignment with Freire's problem-posing model is vital in ensuring HRE's transformative potential.

2. Students as Storytellers

A pivotal project in *Freedom Writers* begins when Erin Gruwell assigns her students the task of writing their personal stories in journals. She underscores the significance of this exercise, emphasizing that "It's important for you to tell your story, even to yourself" (Freedom Writers, 2007, 45:35). This assignment transforms the classroom dynamic, providing each student with an equal opportunity to become a storyteller and creating a space in which every voice is valued and respected. The personal narratives that emerge unveil the stark realities of their lives, shedding light on their struggles with abuse, gang involvement, homelessness, youth detention, drug addiction, and other precarious situations.

For many of these students, their prior encounters with knowledge were marked by imposition rather than inclusion. They received directives and judgments from families, gangs, or law enforcement without being given space to express their own perspectives or

experiences. This dynamic left them voiceless in shaping their identities and disconnected from the possibility of personal empowerment.

Eva's story serves as a poignant example of this conflict. As a witness to a murder committed by a member of her own community, Eva is torn between her loyalty to her 'own kind' and her moral compass. Her family and community pressure her to protect their collective interests by concealing the truth in court. However, she finds inspiration in the story of Miep Gies - the woman who risked her life to hide Anne Frank during the Holocaust. Gies' words about doing "the right thing" resonate deeply with Eva (Freedom Writers, 2007, 1:27:54). Supported by this moral guidance, Eva ultimately decides to reveal the truth, an act of courage that costs her acceptance of her family and community. This decision exemplifies the immense emotional and external challenges that students faces when seeking to break free from oppressive circumstances and pursue transformative change.

The act of writing their stories becomes a powerful vehicle for empowerment, allowing students to process their experiences and connect them to broader human rights concepts. Through journaling, they move beyond passive reflection, engaging actively with their own narratives and redefining their roles within oppressive systems. This process aligns with Meintjes' (1997) assertion that HRE must be contextual and rooted in the specific experiences, needs, and problems of its participants. By articulating their lived realities, students begin to understand the human rights violations they endure daily.

Though this process requires time and the building of trust, it fosters profound self-awareness and growth. In the HRE context, as students write, they externalize their struggles, allowing them to critically examine their challenges and view them in relation to systemic injustices. This critical engagement facilitates a shift from victimhood to agency. By linking their personal narratives to human rights knowledge, students are empowered not only to understand their circumstances but also to envision pathways toward change, reclaiming their agency and contributing to their communities in transformative ways.

3. Connecting to Other Stories

The transformative power of storytelling in Freedom Writers is vividly illustrated as students move beyond their own narratives to engage with the stories of others. Inspired by their teacher, Erin Gruwell, the students embark on a journey to connect with historical and contemporary storytellers, beginning with their study of Anne Frank: *The Diary of a Young Girl*. The diary serves as a catalyst, prompting students to reflect on the suffering of others and draw parallels to their own lived experiences. This reflection is deepened when Gruwell takes the class to a Holocaust Museum, immersing them in the history of systemic injustice and human suffering.

The most impactful moment arises when Gruwell arranges for the students to meet Miep Gies, the woman who hid Anne Frank and her family during the Holocaust. Listening to Gies' story firsthand, the students are profoundly moved by her courage. When one student refers to her as 'the hero of my life,' Gies humbly responds that she is not a hero; she simply did what was right (Freedom Writers, 2007, 1:27:53).

She extends this sentiment to the students, reminding them that their everyday acts of resilience and moral choices make them heroes as well. This encounter underscores Zembylas' (2017) argument that storytelling is a prime tool for sensitization, fostering empathy and cultural awareness by connecting individuals to the suffering of others.

Through storytelling, the students begin to see themselves as part of a broader human narrative, realizing that their struggles are not isolated but linked to systemic injustices that others have faced and resisted. This process exemplifies what Zembylas (2017) describes as 'sentimental education,' wherein stories of oppression and cruelty evoke shared emotions like sympathy and recognition of suffering, creating a pathway for transformative learning. By engaging with the stories of others, the students develop an emotional connection to human rights issues, broadening their understanding and nurturing their capacity to advocate for justice.

This transformative engagement aligns with Osler and Starkey's (2010) view that HRE should go beyond teaching respect for rights to empower individuals to claim their rights and stand against injustice. According to Osler and Starkey, HRE fails if it is limited to fostering politeness or niceness; instead, it must inspire action and critical awareness. The ultimate goal of HRE, they argue, is the eradication of human rights violations, and the means to achieve this lies in equipping individuals to take action for human rights.

Such empowerment is a long-term process, requiring sustained reflection and engagement, as Tibbitts (2017) highlights. HRE provides the space to influence social change by cultivating empathy and agency, as seen in the transformation of Gruwell's students. The act of connecting to other stories not only humanizes distant historical events but also enables the students to see their potential to contribute to a larger movement for justice.

By fostering a sense of shared humanity, storytelling in Freedom Writers becomes a powerful pedagogical tool. It moves students from passive receivers of knowledge to active participants in the struggle for human rights, helping them understand their experiences in relation to broader societal systems. Through a human rights perspective, this approach transforms not only their perceptions of themselves but also their roles as advocates and defenders of human rights, illustrating the profound impact of storytelling as a cornerstone of HRE.

4. Risks of Storytelling

While storytelling serves as a transformative tool in Freedom Writers, it is not without inherent risks and limitations. According to Osler and Zhu (2011), storytelling can encounter challenges such as (i) the potential for falsehoods, (ii) distortion or exaggeration, and (iii) the lack of neutrality in the perspectives of both the narrator and the researcher (p. 228). These risks can impact how narratives are constructed, interpreted, and utilized, particularly within the framework of HRE.

In Freedom Writers, these risks are apparent as the students craft personal narratives about their past. Memories, by nature, are fallible, and some aspects of their stories may be forgotten or altered over time. While the credibility of these narratives cannot be fully verified, the film itself occasionally portrays instances where the students' accounts appear dramatized. For instance, Fan (2020) critiques the movie for depicting the school

as a “beaten-down, inner-city nightmare” where students bring guns to school, engage in violent fights, and exist in an environment of chaos. This portrayal, while effective in emphasizing the students’ marginalization and the failures of the integration program, may exaggerate the challenges to underscore the necessity of a ‘savior’ figure like Erin Gruwell.

Moreover, the movie predominantly centers on the personal stories of African American, Latino, and Asian students while omitting the narratives of white middle-class students. This selective storytelling creates a lack of narrative neutrality, as it skews the portrayal of systemic issues to align with a specific perspective. While this approach highlights the struggles of marginalized groups, it also risks oversimplifying complex realities and leaving out diverse voices that could enrich the narrative.

Given these risks, it is crucial for educators using storytelling in HRE to acknowledge these potential pitfalls. Students should be made aware that narratives, while powerful, are subjective and can be influenced by memory gaps, biases, or the intent to evoke specific emotions. By introducing a critical perspective on storytelling, educators can encourage students to approach narratives thoughtfully, recognizing their limitations while still valuing their emotional and transformative potential.

This critical engagement connects directly with Zembylas’ (2017) concept of ‘sentimental education,’ which emphasizes the emotional impact of storytelling in fostering empathy and understanding of human rights violations. While this emotional connection is a cornerstone of HRE, it must be paired with an awareness of the complexities and risks of storytelling to ensure that students develop a balanced and critical perspective.

By addressing these risks, educators can guide students to appreciate storytelling as a nuanced tool for learning and advocacy. This balanced approach ensures that storytelling remains a means of empowerment and critical inquiry rather than an uncritical acceptance of narratives as absolute truth.

Conclusion

The analysis of *Freedom Writers* underscores the transformative potential of storytelling in education, particularly in fostering student empowerment and critical awareness. The teacher’s deliberate choice to introduce real-life stories that resonate with the students’ lived experiences significantly enhanced their participation in classroom discussions and inspired personal growth. This process of connecting knowledge with personal narratives enabled students to critically examine and reframe their realities, fostering empowerment through the integration of experience and education.

Drawing insights from the movie, the following implications can be highlighted for Human Rights Education (HRE):

(i) **Choice of Relevant Stories:** Educators should select stories closely aligned with the students’ realities to create meaningful connections to human rights principles and violations.

(ii) Valuing Students' Voices: It is essential to recognize and value students' narratives equally and individually, as this recognition serves as a foundation for their empowerment and self-expression.

(iii) Connecting to Universal Stories: By engaging with real-life accounts of human rights violations, such as those in *The Diary of Anne Frank*, students can develop empathy for the suffering of others, recognizing shared struggles and fostering a commitment to justice.

(iv) Addressing Risks of Storytelling: Educators should guide students in critically analyzing stories, acknowledging potential risks such as falsehoods, exaggerations, and biases. This critical awareness helps students navigate the emotional dimensions of storytelling while maintaining a balanced perspective.

These insights emphasize the value of a personal and inclusive approach to education, rooted in local contexts yet oriented toward global goals. By empowering students, fostering equality, and encouraging inclusiveness, such approaches contribute to achieving the overarching ambition of HRE: ensuring that no one is left behind in the pursuit of justice and human dignity.

References

- Bajaj, M. (2011). Human Rights Education: Ideology, Location, and Approaches. *Human Rights Quarterly*. 33, 481-508. DOI: 10.1353/hrq.2011.0019
- Berelson B. (1952), *Content Analysis in Communication Research*, New York: The Free Press.
- Council of Europe (2020), *Compass: Manual for Human Rights Education with young people*. <https://rm.coe.int/compass-eng-rev-2020-web/1680a08e40>
- Fan, R. (2020). The True History behind 'Freedom Writers'. Medium. <https://medium.com/age-of-awareness/the-true-history-behind-freedom-writers-d5720eef30de>
- Freire, P. & Ramos, M. (2000). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (30th Anniversary ed.). New York: Continuum
- IMDb (n.d.) *Freedom Writers*. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0463998/>
- Human Rights and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2019). United Nations Human Rights Council. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=24072&LangID=E>
- LaGravenese, G. (Director). (2007) *Freedom Writers* [Film]. MTV Films, Jersey Films, 2S Films Production.

Meintjes, G. (1997). Human Rights Education as Empowerment: Reflections on Pedagogy, in Andreopoulos, G.J., & Claude, R.P. (Eds.). Human Rights Education for the Twenty-first Century, Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2012). Human rights indicators: A guide to measurement and implementation. United Nations. Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/Human_rights_indicators_en.pdf

Osler, A. (2016). Human rights and schooling: An ethical framework for teaching social justice. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Osler, A., & Starkey, H. (2010). Teachers and human rights education. London: Trentham Books.

Osler, A., & Zhu, J. (2011). Narratives in teaching and research for justice and human rights.

Education, Citizenship and Social Justice, 6(3), 223-235.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1746197911417414>

The Danish Institute for Human Rights (2012), The Human Rights Education Toolbox.
http://hrbportal.org/wp-content/files/hre_eng.pdf

Tibbitts, F. (2017). Human rights education: Theory, research, and praxis. In M. Bajaj (Ed.), Human rights education: Theory, research, and praxis (pp. 1–20). University of Pennsylvania Press.

United Nations. (2011). United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/resources/educators/human-rights-education-training/11-united-nations-declaration-human-rights-education-and-training-2011>

United Nations. (1948). Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

Wallenfeldt, J. (2021, November 5). Los Angeles Riots of 1992. Encyclopedia Britannica.
<https://www.britannica.com/event/Los-Angeles-Riots-of-1992>

Zembylas, M. (2013) Critical pedagogy and emotion: working through ‘troubled knowledge’ in posttraumatic contexts, *Critical Studies in Education*, 54:2, 176-189, DOI: 10.1080/17508487.2012.743468

Zembylas, M. (2017). 2. Emotions, Critical Pedagogy, and Human Rights Education. In M. Bajaj (Ed.), Human Rights Education: Theory, Research, Praxis (pp. 47-68). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Critical Discourse Analysis and Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model: Theory and Method

Navarathnam Sivakumar

Department of Political Science, University of Peradeniya

Abstract

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a multidisciplinary approach rooted in critical linguistics that functions as both a theoretical framework and a methodological tool for examining how language contributes to the production and reproduction of power relations and social inequalities. Drawing on a literature-based qualitative approach, this conceptual article reviews the historical development of CDA, outlines its ontological and epistemological foundations and clarifies key concepts that guide CDA research. It then focuses on Norman Fairclough's dialectical-relational approach, particularly his three-dimensional model, which integrates (1) textual analysis, (2) discursive practice, and (3) social practice. The article discusses how this model supports systematic analysis of ideology, hegemony, and power, while also addressing methodological critiques. Overall, the paper argues that Fairclough's model remains influential because it links close analysis of language to broader explanations of power structures, ideologies and social change.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, discourse, textual analysis, discursive practice, social practice

Introduction

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a prominent approach in discourse studies that operates as both a theoretical framework and a methodological tool. Rooted in the interdisciplinary tradition of critical linguistics, CDA seeks to examine how language is used to construct and maintain power relations and social inequalities. Statham (2022: 10) describes CDA as a field that recognizes the inter-connectedness of discourse, power, and ideology, and that aims to identify and challenge the mechanisms through which dominant networks uphold and reinforce social hierarchies and inequalities. Accordingly, CDA can be used to examine language use across a wide range of institutional settings, including media, politics, law, education, and advertising.

Among the approaches within CDA, Norman Fairclough's work is one of the most widely cited, particularly for its emphasis on the dialectical relationship between discourse, power, and social change. Fairclough's approach is also influenced by Roy Bhaskar's (1986) concept of explanatory critique, which links the analysis of social problems to their broader structural and ideological conditions. This orientation enables CDA not only to describe patterns within texts but also to explain how such patterns are connected to wider social practices and power relations.

This article explores the theoretical and methodological foundations of CDA with particular attention to Fairclough's model, which remains one of the most influential frameworks in the field. The study adopts a literature-based qualitative approach, drawing

on books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and research papers selected for their relevance to the historical development of CDA, its ontological and epistemological assumptions, key concepts, and applications across disciplines. Foundational works by Fairclough are emphasized, alongside secondary scholarship that discusses, critiques, and extends his three-dimensional model. As a conceptual article, the paper does not present empirical data or primary fieldwork; instead, it offers a structured synthesis of CDA's theoretical commitments and methodological procedures, with a focused discussion of the analytical value and limitations of Fairclough's three-dimensional framework.

Historical Overview of Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has its origins in critical linguistics, which emerged in the late 1970s, particularly through the foundational work of Roger Fowler, Robert Hodge, Günther Kress, and Tony Trew (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Although CDA belongs to a broader tradition of language critique, it is distinctive because it explicitly integrates linguistics with critical social theory within a unified theoretical and analytical framework (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999).

Early critical linguistics provided valuable insights into the ideological dimensions of language; however, it paid limited attention to the processes of text production and interpretation. It also offered only partial accounts of how spoken texts were ideologically organized (Fairclough, 1992). In response to these limitations, CDA sought to develop a more systematic theory and methodology capable of capturing the dynamic relationship between language, power, and society. In particular, CDA aimed to identify and describe the practices and conventions embedded in and behind texts that reveal political and ideological investments (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

CDA developed in alignment with the assumptions of critical realism. In their collaborative work *Discourse in Late Modernity* (1999), Fairclough and Chouliaraki articulate a social theory in relation to CDA grounded in a critical realist ontology (Newman, 2020). This positioning emphasizes that while social reality exists independently of discourse, our access to and understanding of that reality are mediated through language and meaning-making practices.

CDA began to consolidate as a distinct research field and academic discipline in the early 1990s, gaining significant momentum following a symposium held in Amsterdam in January 1991. At this event, leading scholars—including Fairclough, Teun van Dijk, Ruth Wodak, Günther Kress, and Theo van Leeuwen—engaged in sustained dialogue about the theoretical foundations and methodological directions of CDA (Wodak & Meyer, 2008; Fairclough, 2012). This meeting is widely regarded as a formative moment in establishing CDA as a recognized and coherent field of inquiry.

Since then, CDA has continued to evolve through diverse theoretical influences and methodological innovations, expanding beyond linguistics into sociology, political science, media studies, education, and cultural studies.

Despite this diversity, a shared commitment to critically examining the relationship between discourse, power, and social structures remains central to the field.

Epistemological and Ontological Foundations of CDA

The ontological and epistemological foundations of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) are rooted in critical realist ontology and an interdisciplinary epistemology. Epistemologically, CDA is characterized by methodological pluralism and theoretical interdisciplinarity, drawing on insights from linguistics, sociology, political theory, and critical social science. Rather than being defined by a single method, CDA is distinguished by its focus on analyzing discourse to examine relations of domination, oppression, hegemony, and power asymmetries in society (Amoussou & Allagbe, 2018; Dieronitou, 2014; Regmi, 2017). Its scope within social science research is therefore broad, as it engages with the work of theorists such as Foucault and Bourdieu, who have theorized the interconnections between language, culture, and politics (Fairclough, 1992, 2003; Grewal, 2008).

Fairclough's version of CDA is explicitly grounded in the assumptions of critical realism (reference?). He proposes a stepwise analytical procedure for CDA (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 1992, 2001, 2003, 2015), modelled on Roy Bhaskar's (1986, 1998) concept of explanatory critique. Within critical realism, explanatory critique seeks to describe social phenomena and to explain their underlying structural and causal conditions. Central to this perspective is the claim that reality exists independently of discourse, yet our knowledge of that reality is always mediated through language and meaning-making practices. Drawing on critical realist and critical theory traditions, Fairclough (1989: 37) argues that while discourse is shaped by social structures, it also has the capacity to reproduce or transform those structures. This underscores the dialectical relationship between discourse and social structure, in which language both reflects and constitutes social reality.

Research informed by critical realism differs from many other qualitative traditions because of its distinct ontological and epistemological assumptions, while still sharing certain common standards of research quality. Critical realism argues that reality is stratified, consisting of multiple layers—empirical, actual, and real—of which language constitutes only one dimension. Nevertheless, language plays a significant role in shaping and constituting social reality alongside other material and social forces (Fairclough, 1989: 37; Fairclough, 1992; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999: 4). Critical realism further distinguishes between observable events and underlying generative mechanisms, emphasizing the interaction between social structures and human agency. This position contrasts with interpretivist and constructivist approaches that tend to prioritize subjective meanings and lived experiences without systematically theorizing underlying structural conditions.

A defining feature of CDA is its methodological flexibility; there is no single standardized procedure for conducting analysis. Consequently, assessing research quality in CDA has been a subject of ongoing debate, as conventional quantitative evaluation criteria are not always suitable for critical, interpretive, and context-sensitive analysis. Rather than seeking universal standards of validity, CDA emphasizes reflexivity, transparency of analytical decisions, and theoretical grounding.

Fairclough's analytical framework is designed to incorporate reflexivity as a core principle of critical inquiry. In CDA, data selection is a crucial methodological step:

researchers must carefully choose texts that are socially and politically significant in relation to their research questions. The credibility of findings therefore depends on the relevance, richness, and contextual grounding of the selected data. Moreover, CDA explicitly acknowledges that researchers' positionality, values and subjectivity inevitably shape interpretation. Rather than eliminating this subjectivity, CDA seeks to make it transparent and critically examined.

Critics have questioned this interpretive dimension of CDA. Widdowson (1995) famously argued that CDA privileges belief over analysis, suggesting that it risks being ideologically predisposed in its selection and interpretation of texts. He contended that CDA can be "a biased interpretation" insofar as it may select data that support pre-established theoretical commitments. Similar concerns have been echoed by Meyer (2001) and Statham (2022), who note that CDA's critical orientation can sometimes lead to privileging certain readings over others.

In response to such critiques, scholars have emphasized the importance of methodological rigor and reflexivity. Vaara and Tienari (2012) note that, while, CDA requires analysts to take a normative stance, this does not justify arbitrary or purely opinion-based interpretation. Researchers are expected to justify their analytical claims through systematic engagement with data and theory. One significant methodological development addressing concerns about bias is the integration of corpus linguistics with CDA. As Statham (2022) suggests, corpus-assisted approaches enable researchers to analyze large-scale datasets, identify patterns of discourse across extensive text collections, and compare different corpora. This can enhance transparency, replicability, and analytical rigor while retaining CDA's critical focus.

Finally, CDA emphasizes that individual texts or discursive events cannot be fully understood in isolation. Researchers must situate specific texts within broader networks of discourse, intertextual relations, and social practices. By adopting a reflexive stance, making explicit their theoretical assumptions, methodological choices, and interpretive frameworks, researchers can critically engage with their data while maintaining analytical rigor and credibility.

Approaches to CDA

As mentioned above, there is no single way of conducting Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Rather, CDA has developed as a diverse and expanding field in which several distinct but related approaches have gained prominence through sustained theoretical development and empirical application. Consequently, CDA does not constitute a homogeneous framework; instead, it encompasses multiple traditions that differ in sometimes significant ways and varies in style and focus (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Machin & Mayr, 2012; Fairclough, 2012).

Drawing on Wodak and Meyer (2008), the main approaches to CDA commonly identified in the literature include: the Dialectical-Relational Approach (associated with Fairclough), the Sociocognitive Approach (associated with van Dijk), the Discourse-Historical Approach (associated with Wodak), the Social Actors Approach (associated with van Leeuwen), Dispositive Analysis, and Corpus-Assisted CDA. While these approaches share a common critical orientation, they differ in how they conceptualize the

relationship between language, power, and society, as well as in their preferred analytical strategies.

Despite this diversity, Jørgensen and Phillips (2002), drawing on Fairclough and Wodak's work, identify five core features that are broadly shared across different CDA approaches:

- a) Social and cultural processes and structures are partly constituted through linguistic discourses;
- b) Discourse is both constitutive of, and constituted by, social reality;
- c) Language use should be analyzed empirically within its social context;
- d) Discourse performs ideological functions by sustaining or challenging relations of power; and
- e) CDA is explicitly critical and politically committed to social change in the interest of marginalized or oppressed groups.

These shared principles underpin the various strands of CDA, even as they are operationalized differently across specific theoretical and methodological traditions.

Key Terms in CDA

A number of key concepts are central to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Clarifying these terms is essential for understanding both the theoretical foundations and methodological applications of CDA. This section focuses on four core concepts: discourse, text, relations of power and intertextuality.

Discourse in CDA

Discourse is a foundational concept in CDA, as it plays a central role in the construction of social identities, social relations, and systems of knowledge and meaning (Machin & Mayr, 2012). For example, the notion that “women are natural caregivers” reflects a gendered discourse that shapes societal expectations and reinforces traditional gender roles.

Discourse also encompasses broader formations such as Marxist, feminist, political, and human rights discourses, illustrating how language operates in everyday life while being both socially constituted and socially constitutive (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997: 258).

Within discourse analysis, two broad understandings of discourse are commonly distinguished: a linguistic perspective and a social-theoretical perspective (Fairclough, 1993). From a linguistic standpoint, discourse is typically understood as extended examples of written or spoken language. From a social-theoretical perspective, drawing particularly on Michel Foucault, discourse is seen as a system of knowledge that structures social practices and shapes what can be said, thought, and done within specific historical contexts (Berg, 2009: 216–217). Hall (1992: 291) summarizes this Foucauldian view by noting that discourse concerns the production of knowledge through language and that, because all social practices involve meaning, all practices have a discursive dimension. Similarly, Hall (2013) and Fairclough (1992) observe that in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), Foucault used the concept of discourse to refer to historically specific systems of language, codes, and representations that organize particular modes of belief and behavior, thereby decentering the individual as the primary originator of discourse.

Chouliaraki and Fairclough (2004: 37) further conceptualize discourse as operating in two ways within social practices: as action (e.g., talking and writing) and as representation (ways of depicting the world). When such representations sustain relations of domination, they can be considered ideological. They also define discourse more broadly as the semiotic dimension of social practices, encompassing language, non-verbal communication, and visual imagery. In a similar vein, Fairclough (2015: 37) extends the concept of discourse beyond language to include semiosis, the wider process of meaning-making. He emphasizes that discourse is integral to social change, noting that changes in discourse can reflect, anticipate, and actively contribute to broader social transformations through narratives, arguments, and struggles.

In sum, discourse is a multifaceted concept that encompasses both language use in concrete contexts and broader systems of meaning that shape social practices. While discourse fundamentally involves language in use, CDA also employs the term to refer to wider ideas or thematic formations represented as distinct “discourses” (Van Dijk, 1993; Fairclough, 2000; Wodak, 2001; Machin & Mayr, 2012).

Text in CDA

CDA involves the analysis of both text and context. Traditionally, text has been understood as written language; however, within discourse analysis, the concept has been broadened to include both written and spoken forms of communication (Fairclough, 1995: 4). Halliday (1978) defines text as “the instances of linguistic interaction in which people actually engage, whatever is said or written, in an operational context.” Building on this, Fairclough (1992, 2003) adopts Halliday's definition but treats text as an integral element of social events that can bring about changes in knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and values.

From a CDA perspective, texts are not merely linguistic artifacts but communicative units embedded within social and cultural practices. They both shape and are shaped by these practices (Paltridge, 2006). Consequently, textual analysis in CDA always involves considering how texts are produced, interpreted and circulated within specific social contexts.

Relations of Power in CDA

The concept of power is central to CDA, as it is closely linked to the social (re)construction of reality through discourse (Wodak & Meyer, 2008; Machin & Mayr, 2012; Rau et al., 2018: 4). CDA seeks to uncover how relations of power are articulated, reproduced, and contested in texts, both explicitly and implicitly (Van Dijk, 1993). A key theoretical influence in this regard is Gramsci's concept of hegemony, which explains how dominant groups secure consent by shaping the moral, political, and cultural values of subordinate groups (Machin & Mayr, 2012: 24).

Fairclough (2015: 98) emphasizes that power is not only exercised through discourse but is also embedded in the social relations that shape discourse. Such power struggles are evident in everyday interactions—between genders, generations, or ethnic groups—and are not confined to formal institutions. Rather, they reflect broader societal conflicts between dominant and subordinate groups across multiple social domains.

Intertextuality in CDA

Intertextuality is a central concept in Fairclough's CDA, referring to the idea that texts are interconnected and derive meaning through their relationships with other texts (Van Zoonen, 2017). Bazerman (2003: 84) defines intertextuality as the relationship a text has with the texts that surround and precede it. This concept helps explain how texts draw on existing discourses and genres, thereby enabling both continuity and change in discourse (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Fairclough, 2003).

The term intertextuality was introduced by Julia Kristeva in 1966 and is often associated with poststructuralist and postmodern thought (Alfaro, 1996; Aiafnan, 2017). Kristeva (1980: 36) describes intertextuality as the process through which multiple utterances from different texts intersect and mutually shape one another. She conceptualizes it as the insertion of history and society into texts and, conversely, the positioning of texts within history. This suggests that texts are simultaneously shaped by past discourses and productive of future ones, thereby contributing to social and historical transformation (Fairclough, 1993: 102).

Fairclough (1992) distinguishes between two dimensions of intertextuality:

- Manifest intertextuality, which refers to the explicit presence of identifiable other texts within a given text (e.g., quotations, references, or direct allusions).
- Interdiscursivity (constitutive intertextuality), which refers to how different discourses, genres, and styles are combined to constitute the "order of discourse" within new texts.

Fairclough (2015: 37) further highlights the relationship between intertextuality and hegemony, arguing that analyzing how texts draw on and reconfigure other texts helps reveal how linguistic change is linked to broader struggles over power and social meaning.

Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis

Fairclough's approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is widely regarded as a Dialectical-Relational Approach, as it integrates three analytical traditions: detailed textual analysis within linguistics, macro-sociological analysis of social practices, and the micro-sociological interpretive tradition within sociology (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). His version of CDA is explicitly grounded in the assumptions of critical realism and draws on Roy Bhaskar's (1986, 1998) concept of explanatory critique (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 1992, 2001, 2003, 2015).

According to Fairclough (1995, 2003), discourse analysis extends beyond the purely linguistic analysis of texts and also involves inter-discursive analysis. Meaning, textual analysis in CDA comprises two complementary dimensions: linguistic analysis and intertextual analysis (Fairclough, 1992). While textual analysis remains a central component of CDA, Fairclough (2003) emphasizes that it should not be limited solely to formal linguistic features. Furthermore, there is no single, standardized set of analytical categories for intertextual analysis. Rather, CDA draws flexibly on a range of analytical tools depending on the research context and objectives (Fairclough, 2003).

For Fairclough, language is an irreducible element of social life and is dialectically interconnected with other social practices. Being “critical” in CDA therefore involves seeking explanations rather than merely identifying discursive features or categorizing types of discourse. In this sense, CDA not only critiques discourse but also examines how it relates to broader social structures, relations, and processes (Fairclough, 2015).

Fairclough (1992) outlines five theoretical propositions that frame his approach to CDA:

1. Discourse both shapes and is shaped by society;
2. Discourse contributes to the constitution of knowledge, social relations, and social identities;
3. Relations of power shape discourse and discourse is infused with ideology;
4. The shaping of discourse is a site of power struggle; and
5. CDA aims to demonstrate how society and discourse mutually constitute one another.

Building on Fairclough and Wodak (1997), Van Dijk (2015: 353) summarizes key principles of CDA as follows: CDA addresses social problems; power relations are discursive; discourse constitutes society and culture; discourse performs ideological work; discourse is historically situated; the relationship between text and society is mediated; discourse analysis is both interpretative and explanatory; and discourse is a form of social action.

Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of CDA

Fairclough's three-dimensional model conceptualizes discourse as consisting of text (spoken or written), discursive practice (processes of text production and interpretation), and social practice (the broader socio-cultural context). Fairclough (1992, 1995, 2013, 2015) proposes this three-tier framework as an integrated analytical model for conducting CDA. Although these three dimensions are analytically distinct, they are interrelated and must be examined together in any comprehensive discourse analysis. Figure 1 illustrates Fairclough's three-dimensional model.

Text Analysis (Micro-level Analysis)

The first dimension of Fairclough's model is text, which involves the analysis of formal, sentence level linguistic properties. This level corresponds to description and focuses on features such as vocabulary, grammar, pronouns, metaphors, cohesion, and overall text structure (Fairclough, 2003; Statham, 2022).

For Fairclough (2003: 8), texts are elements of social events that can bring about change. Most immediately, texts can influence knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and values. The systematic analysis of textual features enables researchers to describe how discourse constructs social reality and social identities (Fairclough, 1992). In CDA, texts may be written, spoken, or multimodal, which is an important part of current CDA study. It looks beyond words to include images, sound, video, and design, and examines how these elements work together with language to shape meaning, power and ideology

Discursive Practice Analysis (Meso-level Analysis)

The second dimension is discursive practice, which corresponds to interpretation. At this level, texts are analyzed in terms of how they are produced, distributed, and consumed (Statham, 2022). Discursive practice mediates between text and social practice, functioning as a bridge between micro-level textual features and macro-level social structures (Fairclough, 1992; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002).

Jørgensen and Phillips (2002: 69) explain that analysis of discursive practice examines how text producers draw on existing discourses and genres, and how audiences interpret texts using available interpretive resources. At the meso-level, inter-discursivity, conventions and structures that contribute to the production of the text, and inter-textuality are central analytical concepts. (Fairclough, 1993; Aiafnan, 2017). In this level of analysis, it is important to focus on the various ways interaction is established in the text, particularly through intertextuality and interdiscursivity (Statham, 2022). It is concerned with how a discourse type is constituted through a combination of elements from the "order of discourse," or the presence of these elements within a given text (Fairclough, 1993). Interdiscursive analysis of discourses within a text involves identifying its main themes and the perspectives / the particular point of view from which they are represented. Similarly, interdiscursive analysis of genres examines both genre mixtures and individual genres within the text.

Analysis of Social Practice (Macro-level Analysis)

The third dimension is social practice, which corresponds to explanation. At this macro-level, analysis focuses on the broader socio-cultural and institutional conditions that shape discourse and are, in turn, shaped by it. This includes examining how texts support, legitimize, challenge, or transform existing power relations and social practices (Fairclough, 1992).

For Fairclough (2015), language itself constitutes a form of social practice that articulates different social elements—such as economic, political, and cultural processes—within specific domains of social life. These elements are dialectically interconnected (Fairclough, 2003: 23). Consequently, CDA must examine the relationship between semiosis (meaning-making, including language) and other elements of social practice.

Fairclough (2003) further differentiates social practice into three contextual levels: situational, institutional, and societal. Within this framework, discourse as social practice operates through three main dimensions:

- Genres (ways of acting),
- Discourses (ways of representing), and
- Styles (ways of being or constructing identity).

These dimensions highlight how discourse is simultaneously a means of action, representation, and identity construction within social life.

Conclusion

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is widely recognized as both a theory and a method, it provides a systematic approach to social research but also integrates key insights from critical social theory (Fairclough, 1992, 2001, 2003; Meyer, 2001; Barker & Galasinski, 2001). There is no single, universally accepted version of CDA; rather, it comprises a family of related approaches that are problem-oriented, interdisciplinary, and analytically

flexible. Rooted in critical linguistics, CDA seeks to unveil the ideological forces that shape discourse and contribute to the reproduction of social hierarchies and power asymmetries (Fairclough, 1992, 2001, 2003; Meyer, 2001).

As emphasized throughout this article, discourse plays a central role in constructing social identities, relationships, and systems of knowledge, while simultaneously being shaped by broader social, political, and institutional forces (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). Within CDA, the concept of text extends beyond written or spoken language to include broader semiotic resources that are embedded in social events and meaning-making processes (Fairclough, 1992, 2003). Relations of power remain a core concern of CDA, as texts frequently encode and legitimize dominance and hegemony in both explicit and implicit ways (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Similarly, intertextuality highlights how texts are interconnected, drawing on and reconfiguring prior discourses while contributing to ongoing discursive and social change (Fairclough, 1992). Together, these concepts underscore CDA's central aim: to critically examine how language both reflects and actively shapes social structures and power relations.

Fairclough (2003: 2) argues that language is an irreducible element of social life, dialectically intertwined with other social practices. Consequently, any meaningful social analysis must take language seriously. His model of CDA is firmly grounded in critical realism and remains one of the most influential frameworks within the field. According to Fairclough (1993), the primary objective of CDA is to systematically investigate the explicit and implicit relationships between discursive practices and social structures, as well as between social processes and social relations.

In summary, the key principles underpinning Fairclough's CDA model can be synthesized as follows:

- CDA addresses socially significant problems;
- Power relations are inherently discursive;
- Discourse contributes to the constitution of society and culture;
- Discourse performs ideological work by sustaining or challenging relations of power and domination;
- Discourse is historical and intertextually connected to other discourses;
- The "orders of discourse" mediate the relationship between text and society;
- Discourse analysis is both interpretative and explanatory, emphasizing systematic analytical procedures; and
- Discourse constitutes a form of social action through which reality is shaped and contested.

Overall, Fairclough's CDA offers a comprehensive analytical model that operates across micro-, meso-, and macro-levels of social analysis, corresponding to the multi-layered nature of social reality. As CDA continues to evolve, its interdisciplinary character and methodological flexibility remain central to its capacity to engage with diverse social issues. Consequently, Fairclough's three-dimensional model continues to provide a powerful framework for examining the complex interplay between language, power, and society.

References

- Archer, M., Bhaskar, R., Collier, A., Lawson, T., & Norrie, A. (Eds.). (1998). *Critical realism: Essential readings*. Routledge.
- Barker, C., & Galasinski, D. (2001). *Cultural studies and discourse analysis*. SAGE.
- Chouliaraki, L., & Fairclough, N. (1999). *Discourse in late modernity: Rethinking critical discourse analysis*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE.
- Danermark, B., Ekström, M., & Karlsson, J. C. (2019). *Explaining society: Critical realism in the social sciences* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Donoghue, M. (2018). Beyond hegemony: Elaborating on the use of Gramscian concepts in critical discourse analysis for political studies. *Political Studies*, 66(2), 392–408. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321717722362>
- Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and social change*. Polity Press.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analyzing discourse: Textual analysis for social research*. Routledge.
- Fairclough, N. (2006). *Language and globalization*. Routledge.
- Fairclough, N. (2015). *Language and power*. Routledge.
- Fairclough, N., & Fairclough, I. (2012). *Political discourse analysis: A method for advanced students*. Routledge.
- Gölbaşı, A. P. D. Ş. (2017). Critical approach in social research: Fairclough's critical discourse analysis. *The Online Journal of Communication and Media*, 3(4), 1–8.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1978). *Language as social semiotic*. Routledge.
- Janks, H. (1997). Critical discourse analysis as a research tool. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 18(3), 329–342. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0159630970180302>
- Jørgensen, M. W., & Phillips, L. J. (2002). *Discourse analysis as theory and method*. SAGE.
- Machin, D., & Mayr, A. (2012). *How to do critical discourse analysis*. SAGE.
- Meyer, M. (2001). Between theory, method, and politics: Positioning of the approaches to CDA. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse analysis* (pp. 14–31). SAGE.
- Meyer, M., & Wodak, R. (Eds.). (2001). *Methods of critical discourse analysis*. SAGE.

- Regmi, K. D. (2017). Critical discourse analysis: Exploring its philosophical underpinnings. *Méthod(e)s: African Review of Social Sciences Methodology*, 2(1–2), 93–107. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23754745.2017.1354555>
- Rau, A., Jan, E. E., & Coetzee, K. J. (2018). Collecting data for analyzing discourses. In U. Flick (Ed.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data collection* (pp. 300–313). SAGE.
- Rogers, R., Malancharuvil-Berkes, E., Mosley, D., Hui, D., & Joseph, G. O. (2005). Discourse analysis in education: A review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 75, 365–416.
- Scollon, R. (2008). *Analyzing public discourse: Discourse analysis in the making of public policy*. Routledge.
- Sriwimon, L., & Zilli, P. J. (2017). Applying critical discourse analysis as a conceptual framework for investigating gender stereotypes in political media discourse. *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences*, 136–142.
- Stoddart, M. C. (2007). Ideology, hegemony, discourse: A critical review of theories of knowledge and power. *Social Thought and Research*, 28, 191–225.
- Ulinuha, R., Udasmoro, W., & Wijaya, Y. (2013). Critical discourse analysis: Theory and method in social and literary framework. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 2, 262–274.
- Van Dijk, T. (2015). Critical discourse analysis. In D. Tannen, H. E. Hamilton, & D. Schiffrin (Eds.), *The handbook of discourse analysis* (2nd ed., pp. 466–485). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Van Zoonen, L. (2017). Intertextuality. In P. H. Rössler (Ed.), *The international encyclopedia of media effects*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Vaara, E., & Tienari, J. (2012). Critical discourse analysis. In A. J. Mills, G. Durepos, & E. Wiebe (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of case study research*. SAGE.
- Wetherell, M., Taylor, S., & Yates, S. J. (2004). *Discourse theory and practice: A reader*. SAGE.
- Wodak, R. (2015). Critical discourse analysis: Discourse-historical approach. In T. Sandel (Ed.), *The international encyclopedia of language and social interaction*. Wiley.
- Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (Eds.). (2015). *Methods of critical discourse studies* (3rd ed.). SAGE.
- Yin, R. K. (2017). *Case study research and applications* (6th ed.). SAGE.

MODERN SRI LANKA STUDIES

A Journal of the Social Sciences

Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya,
Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

We are calling for research and review papers and book reviews from the areas of Social Sciences to be published in Modern Sri Lanka Studies.

Research papers and book reviews submitted to Modern Sri Lanka Studies will be reviewed by two experts in the field and authors will be notified the outcome of the review. If accepted for the publication in the journal, authors are expected to revise the paper(s) as per the reviewers' comments, if any, as soon as possible and resubmit the paper in accordance with Author Guidelines which will be sent to authors with review reports.

Please submit 03 hardcopies or the soft-copy of your paper(s) to a Co-Editor of the Modern Sri Lanka Studies. For further information, please contact Co-editors of the journal.

Dr. M. Sriyani Gunarathne Co-editor
Department of History
Tel: +94 812382852
Email: msgunarathne@yahoo.com
sriyanig@arts.pdn.ac.lk

Dr. Manoj Alawathukotuwa
Department of Fine Arts
Tel: +94 777627931
Email: Alawathukotuwa.manoj@arts.pdn.ac.lk

Managing Editor:
Mr. Ashvin Wickramasooriya

Editorial Committee:
Professor Fazeeha Azmi
Dr. W.D.S.K. Premasiri
Dr. W.M.S.K.M. Thoradeniya

MODERN SRI LANKA STUDIES

A Journal of the Social Sciences

Contents

Analysis of Landslide risk using Geoinformatics applications in North West of Gangawatakorale Divisional Secretariat Division in Kandy District, Sri Lanka Ashvin Wickramasooriya	1
Storytelling for Empowerment and Inclusion: Learning from Freedom Writers (2007) for Human Rights Education (HRE) Kalpani Dambagolla	17
Critical Discourse Analysis and Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model: Theory and Method Navarathnam Sivakumar	33

Vol. XIV, No.02, 2023

Faculty of Arts
University of Peradeniya