Chapter 12
Exploring the Concept of Youth Bulge From a Linguistic Perspective: A Critical Discourse Approach

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ABSTRACT

The chapter tackles youth bulge according to a number of scholars. The analysis aims at bringing forth understanding of the concept from a linguistic perspective. In linguistics, any text can be analyzed using linguistic tools to unearth context, syntax, and semantics, pragmatic and socio-linguistic elements that inform it. Analysis of the likes of Callick, Hendrixson, Fantorpe, Collier, and others on youth bulge is done. Critical discourse analysis is used for analysis. CDA observes that texts are manifestations of politics. Texts are sites for struggle to maintain, influence, and persuade the general to respect the social order of the day. Thus, texts are replication of the society that reproduce them. Texts serve to maintain the powerful in their esteemed positions. Thus, texts are ideological and hegemonic in nature. Text reveals in language and visuals as signs, dress and artifacts. Thus, the chapter avails a number of standpoints of what youth bulge entails and institutes CDA to unravel politically and ideological permeated aspects of the concept.

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INTRODUCTION

Much talk is evident on and around Youth bulge as a concept. Remarkably is the fact that the West and the African voices on this issue are conflicting. The West in line with demographer’s discernment confer the concept as a curse. While African voices of the concept are inclined towards lamenting the exclusion of the youth in Governance and active participation in politics. Thus, from the incompatible analysis of the Youth bulge Concept, the chapter administers a linguistic scrutiny of this Concept. Moreover, little has been done in questing the language used in the critiquing of the Youth Bulge Concept. Or rather much of the literature laments the rapid increase in the youth without considering the socio-cultural traits of the African people. Therefore, a linguistic perspective quizzes the linguistic focus of the theory. The wording ‘Youth bulge’ literally speaks to the swelling of the youth population a phenomenon in most African countries. The swelling according to the youth bulge theory proponents is generally not desirable and a time bomb of some sort. This being the case, a linguistic perspective to the concept informs this Chapter in the sense that the wording and critiquing of a phenomenon is not neutral. The wording is loaded with ideological, hegemonic, manipulative and unequal power relations (Fairclough 2016). The linguistic analysis opinions concepts such as the “Waithood” Nader Kabbani (2019) closely linked to the Youth Bulge theory do not only speak to the situation on ground but act to provoke and set the agenda of the proponents of the theory. Thus, the theory much as it seeks to show the world over the glaring and imminent timebomb scenarios to befell Africa, the linguist come in with questioning the rationality, politics and ideological perspectives to the wording of the Youth Bulge Theory. The linguistic perspective here seeks to unravel politically permeated discourses imbedded in the crafting of the Youth Bulge Theory. The Chapter seeks to explore if it is Africa or the West that seeks to assert the Youth increase as problematic. Thus, in this disposition the chapter seeks as well to explain the discourse of Youth Bulge as a manifestation of unequal power relations, ideological and hegemonic tendencies of the West in propagating the popular reality of the day from their definition. It would be best at this juncture to give a brief background to the Critical Discourse Analysis a linguistic analytical tool instituted in the Youth Bulge Concepts in the Chapter.

Background of the CDA Approach

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a conceptual framework and a way of looking at text emerged in the early 1990s, following a small symposium in Amsterdam, in January 1991. Through the support of the University of Amsterdam, Teun van Dijk, Norman Fairclough, Gunther Kress, Theo van Leeuwen and Ruth Wodak
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