Languages and Linguistics Series

# Critical Discourse Analysis

## An Interdisciplinary Perspective

Thao Lê
Quynh Lê
Megan Short
Editors

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**Languages and Linguistics Series**

# CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE

# LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS SERIES

**Critical Discourse Analysis: An Interdisciplinary Perspective**

*Thao Le, Quynh Le and Megan Short (Editors)*

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# CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE

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# PREFACE

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a relatively new field in the academic world. Thus it has its advantages and disadvantages. The first advantage is that it can draw a great deal of insights, conceptually and methodologically, from a range of well-established disciplines such as linguistics, history, sociology, philosophy, and psychology to enhance its role in dealing with discourse analysis in a critical and vigourous manner. Another significant gain of CDA as a new field is its multidisciplinary nature. CDA does not sit squarely in any specific discipline as the issues it deals with are multidimensionally complex and therefore require an interdisciplinary approach and perspective.

However, as an emerging academic field, CDA has also attracted criticism in terms of its methodology, use of terminology, ethical and political stance. Constructive criticism has enhanced the development of CDA as an important academic field and gives CDA new windows to enhance its perspectives and evaluate its roles in research.

The title of this book '*Critical Discourse Analysis: An Interdisciplinary Perspective'* is purposely chosen to emphasize the interdisciplinary nature of CDA. The book is divided into three parts: Part I is about some introductory aspects of CDA. It gives readers some basic ideas about CDA as an emerging field. Part II is on CDA across different subjects and disciplines such as language education, information technology, and health sciences. Part III deals with CDA across cultures. It includes the use of CDA in examining social and linguistic issues in different lands and cultures such as Spain, Nigeria, Indonesia, New Zealand. One of the criticisms against CDA is that it is rather European-orientated as its theoretical foundation is deeply rooted in Western intellectuality. It is hoped that the chapters in part 3 make a contribution to the widening role of CDA across not only different disciplines but also different cultures.

The editors of this book are grateful to Nova Science Publishers for its interest in promoting CDA as an important field of academic inquiry. We would like to express our profound appreciation of the chapter authors in this book. They have worked extremely hard to enhance the quality of this book.

# PART I
# INTRODUCTORY ASPECTS OF CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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*Chapter 1*

# CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: AN OVERVIEW

*Thao Lê and Quynh Lê*

## ABSTRACT

Discourse Analysis (DA) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) have attracted great attention in various academic disciplinary due to their interdisciplinary nature and focus on the relationship between texts and its social context. DA and CDA are very inter-related conceptually and methodologically as both deal with common issues and topics and use the same linguistic concepts in describing and explaining discourses. This chapter presents an overview of CDA. It attempts to answer the questions: What is Critical Discourse Analysis? How is CDA viewed by different scholars? It also discusses fundamental concepts in CDA such as discourse, power, social practice.

**Keywords:** discourse, power, social practice, intertextuality, linguistics, context, social justice

## INTRODUCTION

The title of this book 'Critical Discourse Analysis: An Interdisciplinary Perspective' first appears 'redundant' in the sense that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) itself is interdisciplinary. However this title is deliberately chosen for a number of reasons. Firstly, it reminds that CDA is interdisciplinary. It does not belong to a single discipline. Secondly, it wants to reinforce the view that CDA not only uses a variety of methods developed in various disciplines but also it is not confined to a specific range of topics normally 'belonging' to a particular discipline. Thirdly, this book includes chapters contributed by authors of different linguistic, cultural and disciplinary backgrounds. Finally, it responds to van Dijk's (2002) call for "multidisciplinary CDA: a plea for diversity". Thus, CDA in this book should be seen broadly viewed as critically orientated discourse analysis across disciplines and cultures.

An introduction to CDA can be made in two ways. A simple way to approach CDA is to examine certain concepts which are important to the understanding of the meaning of CDA. This approach is lexically orientated as it examines each key term in its own right and gradually relates them to the whole concept of CDA. For example, we may start to define what 'discourse' means and to ask why it is important to be 'critical'. In this way, we need to focus on the basic terms which are most essential for understanding what CDA is. Interestingly some of these basic terms are often discussed in dichotomy such as power and empowerment, social justice and injustice, use and abuse, construction and deconstruction etc. Some of these basic terms are also used as members of a lexical complex structure such as power, authority, control, dominance, hegemony etc. Thus it is impossible to meaningfully discuss each term without mentioning the other members.

Another approach to introduce CDA is to examine the broad theoretical context in which CDA has emerged. Though individual terminology is still very important to the understanding of CDA, it is insightful to examine the theoretical background and historical development which have shaped CDA. In the academic world, an approach or a field does not come from nowhere. Its development has emerged from some influential orientations. This chapter focuses on key concepts in CDA and its mainstream and the following chapter will provide different insights into the foundation of CDA.

## DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The main mission of CDA is to examine social injustice which is manifested in various social practices and to take a stance against social abuse, racism, social prejudice and discrimination against dominated or marginalised people with less power. According to Fairclough (2003), CDA is fundamentally critical social research aimed at better understanding how societies work and produce both beneficial and detrimental effects, and particularly how to end or mitigate detrimental effects. For him the following questions need to be raised:

- How do existing societies provide people with the possibilities and resources for rich and fulfilling lives?
- On the other hand, how do they deny people these possibilities and resources?
- What is it about existing societies that produce poverty, deprivation, misery, and insecurity in people's lives?
- What possibilities are there for social change which would reduce these problems and enhance the quality of the lives of human beings? (Fairclough, 2003, p.202).

Before delving further into the emergence of CDA as a new field of academic inquiry, it is necessary to ask the question: "what is the difference between Discourse Analysis (DA) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)". The simple answer is that that the former is "analysis of discourse" whereas the latter takes a critical stance. Discourse analysis has been widely used in linguistics and other disciplines. However, it is not uniformly accepted among discourse analysts. In the opening of his book on text, context and pretext, Widdowson (2004) made the following remark about the uncertainty of the term "discourse analysis".

> Although discourse analysis has been a busy field of activity for many years, there is a good deal of uncertainty about what it actually is. The generally accepted view is that it has something to do with looking at language 'above' or 'beyond' the sentence; this is hardly an exact formulation (p.1).

Linguistic analysis is the analysis of language. Similarly discourse analysis is the analysis of discourse. While linguists have a clear conception of what language is, it is not the same with "discourse", which is vaguely described as something larger than a sentence. Harris (1952), a prominent linguist in the fifties, wrote an article entitled "Discourse Analysis", which extends the scope of traditional linguistics from sentence to discourse. However, Harris treats discourse very much in the same way linguists treat clauses and sentences in terms of grammaticality.

The term *discourse* is used widely and sometimes vaguely in CDA and other disciplines. In her book entitled "Discourse", Blommaert (2005) explains that there is a long tradition of treating discourse in linguistic terms, either as a complex of linguistic forms larger than the single sentence which is often interpreted as "text", or discourse as language-in-use which is linguistic structures actually used by people in real life. For instance, Stubbs (1983) discourse analysis deals with language use involving units larger than sentence/utterance, with the interrelationships between language and society as language cannot be divorced from its social context and with the interactive or dialogic properties of everyday communication. Stubb's definition refers to "language in use" and this has opened up further extension of the concept "discourse" to include text and talk.

Van Dijk's early work in text linguistics and discourse analysis already shows an interest in texts and discourses as basic units and social practices. Like other critical linguistic theorists, he traces the origins of linguistic interest in units of language larger than sentences and in text- and context – dependency of meaning (Wodak, 2002, p.7). Later, Van Dijk (2008) points out that "discourse is not only analysed as an autonomous verbal object but also as situated interaction, as a social practice, or as a type of communication in a social, cultural, historical or political situation" (p.3). Thus, discourse is not only viewed as a linguistic unit but also as an event or a social phenomenon.

Gee (2005, pp.21-26) makes a distinction between "Discourse" and "discourse". The term "Discourse" with a capital 'D' is used as "ways of combining and integrating language, actions, interactions, ways of thinking, believing, valuing, and using various symbols, tools, and objects to enact a particular sort of socially recognisable identity", whereas the word "discourse" with a little 'd' means language-in-use or stretches of language (like conversations or stories). While Gee views of "discourse" in term of a capital 'D' and a small 'd'; Fairclough (1995, p.135) defines "discourse" on the basis of abstract and count nouns. According to Fairclough, "discourse" as an abstract noun (always in singular) denotes language use conceived as social practice, whereas "discourse" (in singular or plural) as a count noun denoting way of signifying experience from a particular perspective. Johnstone (2008) notes that the use of "discourses" in the plural form has been influenced by Foucault in the sense that discourses involve patterns of belief and habitual action as well as patterns of language.

In a Foucaultian view of discourse in terms of social practices, discourse has its regulatory nature in the sense that it defines and produces the objects of our knowledge. Thus, we find that discourse constructs the topic and governs its meaning. As McAuley (2003, p.54)

points out, a discourse sets about defining its own truth. It defines what can be said about a particular subject, what can be seen as the logic of an argument, and what are understood as the acceptable premises in such argument. This reading of discourse has important consequences for understanding power.

Foucault has a special place in CDA, however, because not only do his conceptions of power and governmentality link in a fairly straightforward way to the commitment to "unmasking", but his rather extended notion of discourse (to include texts, the organisation of knowledge, worldviews, etc.) also allowed researchers to go beyond oral performances and written documents (Kendall & Wickham, 2006, p.5).

The general tendency of discourse analysis is to describe and hopefully explain the nature or structure of a discourse as a unit. Linguistic features and communicative interaction and behaviours are often treated as primary objects of analysis. It is generally about text or language in use. For example, in undertaking a discourse analysis of a primary class, we may raise the following questions for data collection and analysis:

- What is the purpose of the session (e.g., teaching spelling, storytelling)
- What is the context (e.g., traditional classroom or open-class)?
- Who are participants or actors in the discourse?
- What are the dominant patterns of interaction?
- How do they use language specific to this context?

The main object of discourse analysis is text. However, Johnstone (2008) points out that it is important to go beyond texts to search for features or factors which affect or determine texts. According to her, discourse analysis works outward from text to an understanding of their contexts, trying to uncover why multiple texts they study are the way they are and not other way.

Taylor (2001) describes four approaches to discourse analysis:

- The first approach focuses on language in use to discover how it varies and to relate this variation to different social situations and environments, or different users;
- The second approach focuses on the activity of language use, rather than the language itself;
- The third approach looks for patterns in the language associated with a particular topic or activity (e.g., language associated with social work or nursing); and
- The fourth approach looks for patterns within much larger contexts, such as those referred to as "society" or "culture".

The four approaches mentioned above give useful insights to the role of DA analysts. However, it is impossible for DA researchers to be separate from their research as the main goal of discourse analysis is not always simply description of the status quo but social critique, and sometimes, intervention. This indicates a movement from discourse analysis to CDA as pointed out by Johnstone in the following statement.

> Analysis involves various ways of systematically taking things apart or looking at them from multiple perspectives or in multiple ways. Discourse analysis is thus a methodology that is useful in answering many kinds of questions of questions, both questions that linguists traditionally ask, and questions asked by people in other humanistic and social-scientific

> disciplines. All uses of discourse analysis are not always descriptions, but the end goal of discourse analysis is not always simply description of the status quo but social critique, and sometimes, intervention (Johnstone, 2008, p.30).

The last sentence in Johnstone's quotation opens a new window moving discourse analysis into CDA: it is about social critique and intervention. Van Dijk (2004) views this movement as follows:

> CDA is a movement of – theoretically very different - scholars who focus on social issues and not primarily on academic paradigms. We typically study the many forms of (the abuse of) power in relations of gender, ethnicity and class, such as sexism and racism. We want to know how discourse enacts, expresses, condones or contributes to the reproduction of inequality. At the same time, we listen to the experiences and the opinions of dominated groups, and study the most effective ways of resistance and dissent (p.26).

The term 'critical' marks the difference of CDA from other academic fields or sub-fields such as discourse analysis, applied linguistics, and pragmatics. It should not be seen simply as an adjectival derivative of the noun 'criticism'. Of course criticism occurs in various CDA discussions. 'Critical' is also seen in other disciplines such as critical literacy, critical pedagogy, critical psychology and anthropology. According to Rogers (2004), "critical is often associated with studying power relations. CDA analysts' intention is to uncover power relationships and demonstrate inequities embedded in society" (p.3). *Critical* also signals "an attempt to describe, interpret, and explain the relationship between the form and function of language" (p.3).

Van Dijk (2008) prefers the label "Critical Discourse Studies" (CDS) instead of the generally adopted label "Critical Discourse Analysis" for the reason that "CDS is not a method of discourse analysis. There is no such method. CDA uses any method that is relevant to the aims of its research projects and such methods are largely those used in discourse studies generally" (p.2). Gunnarson (1997) uses the term "Applied Discourse Analysis" (ADA) to signal a focus on the application of discourse analysis in various fields. According to Gunnarson, ADA is a subfield of applied linguistics (AL). It emphasises the significance of effective communication among professionals in different sections of society, which can be related to the ongoing differentiation and specialisation of the academic and non-academic worlds (p.285). Basically, ADA deals with the spoken and the written sides of communication in the real world. Applied linguistics "has travelled from structuralism to social constructivism, and the longer the journey has lasted the more AL has come to be integrated with ADA" (p.286). Gunnarson illustrates how ADA can be used to examine communication in a number of settings such as educational, legal, medical-social, academic, and science settings.

The term 'critical' in CDA is not well received by some. According to Martin (2007), social problems are best dealt with by taking a more positive approach. Thus, Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA) has been introduced to mark a (re-)focus of energy in the direction of positive discourse analysis involving, among other things, analysis of discourse which attempts to make the world a better place (Martin 2007; Martin & Rose 2003). Macgilchrist (2007) applied PDA in her study to illustrate how radical reframing can be used to contest dominant discourses. In this way, PDA is viewed as focusing on positive changes as the main

research agenda. PDA should not be seen as a counterpart of CDA in the sense that CDA is "negative" whereas PDA is "positive". PDA should be seen as a shift of focus from CDA. However, one wonders whether the term 'positive' is needed as one would expect that all academic inquiries aim at contributing to knowledge and it does not matter which orientation is used. Thus, "positive" is inherent in every academic approach and should be linguistically unmarked in topic titles and labels. Otherwise we would see similar labels such as positive linguistics versus critical linguistics, and positive literacy versus critical literacy.

Having discussed the link between DA and CDA, now it is appropriate to examine what CDA is about. According to Fairclough and Wodak (1997, pp. 271-280), CDA is based on the following tenets:

- CDA addresses social problems
- Power relations are discursive
- Discourse Constitutes Society and Culture
- Discourse does ideological work
- Discourse is historical
- The link between text and society is mediated
- Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory
- Discourse is a form of social action.

Fairclough (1992) presents a three-dimensional conception of discourse in discourse analysis: text, discursive practice and social practice. In his view, this conception of discourse is an attempt to bring together three analytical traditions. These are "the tradition of close textual and linguistic analysis within linguistics, the macrosociological tradition of analysing social practice in relation to social structures, and the interpetivist or microsociological tradition of seeing social practice as something which people actively produce and make sense of on the basis of shared commonsense procedures" (p.73).

According to Blommartert (2005), Fairclough introduces a methodological blueprint for CDA in practice. It provides the following three-dimensional framework for conceiving of and analysing, discourse.

- *Discourse as text*: It is about the linguistic features and organisation of concrete instances of discourse. It involves choices and patterns in vocabulary, grammar (e.g., transitivity, modality), cohesion and text structure (e.g., episode marking, turn-taking system).
- *Discourse as discursive practice*: Discourse is seen as something which is produced, circulated, consumed in society.
- *Discourse as social practice*: It is about the ideological effects and hegemonic processes in which discourse is seen to operate (p.29).

Thus, in Fairclough's model, CDA researchers need to take the following tasks: description, interpretation, and explanation.

- *Description*: CDA focuses on the textual-linguistic features of the materials. The researcher adopts the participants' categories in his/her description but he needs to make his/her interpretive framework explicit.
- *Interpretation*: It is about the way in which participants arrive at some kind of understanding of discourse on the basis of their cognitive, social and ideological resources.
- *Explanation*: It is about the researcher drawing on social theory in order to reveal the ideological underpinnings of lay interpretive procedures. Social theory creates the distance necessary to move from 'non-critical' to 'critical' discourse analysis (Blommartert 2005, p.30).

This holistic understanding of CDA can also be explained in terms of van Dijk's (2004, 2008) dichotomy of micro-level and macro-level of analysis. In his view, language use, discourse, verbal interaction and communication belong to the micro-level of the social order. Power, dominance and inequality between social groups are typically terms that belong to a macro-level of analysis.

CDA has made great contributions to a range of academic fields due to its multidisciplinary approach. However, CDA can be seen as a relatively new academic field and it has also attracted criticism on a number of aspects. According to Blommaert (2005), there are two kinds of criticisms against CDA. The first kind of criticism is specific comments on methodology and analytical approach; and the second kind is "general criticisms relating to the potential offered by CDA for becoming a critical study of language" (p.29).

Widdowson (2004) questioned the effectiveness of CDA on a number of aspects. He agrees that the critical perspective of CDA is immensely important as it engages scholarly enquiry with matters of immediate and pressing concern in the non-scholarly world such as power abuse, dominance, and inequality. He raised both general and specific criticisms of CDA and its advocates. There are some common grounds on which literary criticism, critical linguistics, and stylistics work. Thus CDA is not fundamentally different. According to Widdowson, what CDA does is to modify "the procedures of literary hermeneutics along more explicit linguistic lines and applying them to non-literary texts" (2005, p.131). Another criticism against CDA is that "although the crucial importance of context is acknowledged in principle, there is little indication that it is taken seriously in practice in the CDA work of Fairclough and others" (p.138). This is the factor which marks the difference between Fairclough and Wodak. With a strong background in sociolinguistics, Wodak's CDA model is "fundamentally concerned with contextualising and historicising" of texts, which is essential in her discourse-historical approach. However, according to Widdowson, the analysis sample used in Wodak's discourse-historical approach still shows that "the recording of the situation to which this text relates is very sketchy" (p.141). In his opinion, "what we have here, in short, is not the specification of setting and context as a necessary precondition on interpretation, but ready-made interpretations which, in effect, serves as a kind of pretextual priming, designed to dispose us to read this text in a particular way" (p.142). To Widdowson, it is not an analysis but an interpretation.

As Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) plays an important role in CDA, Widdowson is critical of the way Fairclough's handling of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) in CDA. His concern is that "it does not apply this grammar with any degree of

systematic rigour" (p.144) as what happens is that "analysts of this persuasion get high mileage out of a few selected features of the grammar and leave the rest aside" (p.144). Another concern is CDA collapses semantics and pragmatics. Pragmatics is fundamentally about language in use, language function and action. Widdowson also questions the way in which Fairclough handles the three meta-functions developed by Halliday.

Blommaert (2005) raises the following concern about CDA in general:

- *The linguistic bias in CDA*: Blommaert points out that CDA, particularly Fairclough, focus great attention on linguistic analysis, with his adoption of Systemic Functional Linguistics in CDA.
- *Its closure to particular kinds of societies*: Major CDA works are European-orientated.
- *Its closure to a particular time-frame*: There is hardly any analysis of historical developments in CDA.

It is true that major CDA works were European-orientated in its early stage of development. However, the picture has changed as more and more CDA discussion and research starts to deal with issues across disciplines and cultures.

Rogers (2004, p.14) summarises the following criticism against CDA.

- Political and social ideologies are projected into the data rather than being revealed through the data. This means that analysts begin their analysis knowing what they are going to "find" before they begin, and their analysis simply confirms what they suspected.
- There is an unequal balance between social theory and linguistic method. Depending on the background and training of the analysis, the analysis may more strongly attend to descriptions of language or the context in which the language use unfolds.
- Many discourse analyses are extracted from social contexts. This is the case in many discourse analyses conducted on political speeches, government documents, and new paper reports.
- Methodology is not systematic or rigorous.
- Little attention has been paid to the non-linguistic aspects of discourse such as activity and emotion.

One would be sympathetic to the concern that "political and social ideologies are projected into the data rather than being revealed through the data". However, this can be perceived both as a strength and weakness of CDA. It is a strength in the sense that CDA analysts take their stance in conducting research. They need to declare their own 'social' identities and ideologies and prepare to challenge themselves against ideological interference. It can also be seen as a weakness if the hidden agenda of the analysis is covered and criticism is selectively treated to protect mainly the researchers and their institution. This is in itself against CDA principles.

> CDA, like other critical social sciences, therefore needs to be reflexive and self-critical about its own institutional position and all that goes with it: how it conducts research, how it

> envisages the objectives and outcome of research, what relationships researchers have to the people whose social lives they are analysing, even what sort of language books and papers are written in (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p.9).

On the concern that 'methodology is not systematic or rigorous', this is the risk that an interdisciplinary approach has to take as it is not a single approach which has a solid developmental path, for example the development of Generative Grammar or SFL in linguistics. Fowler (1996, p.8) is concerned about methodological weaknesses inherent in CDA qualitative approach to language study, stating that, although a range of text types have been studied, they tend to be fragmentary and exemplificatory. As CDA is a multidisciplinary approach, CDA proponents are "united" in their voice against social injustice and social abuse. They may not be "uniformed" in adhering to a mainstream of research approach. Those with a linguistic background may focus their analyses on linguistic features whereas those with a sociological background may pay more attention to issues at the "macro-level".

While there are criticisms on some aspects of CDA, this does take away the recognition that CDA has made significant contributions to the understanding of social structures and power, particularly about social injustice. Thus, for understanding what CDA is about, it is important to identify several key concepts which underlie CDA.

## KEY CONCEPTS IN CDA

We may say that understanding some fundamental concepts in a subject such as biology and mathematics is an important step in understanding that subject. In reviewing the literature dealing with CDA, we often encounter familiar terms repeatedly mentioned in relation to CDA. There are many widely used terms in CDA such as text, intertextuality, discourse, social practice, hegemony. They will appear repeatedly in many chapters of this book. In this introductory chapter, three broad social concepts are selected as they are seen as forming the basis of CDA and its mission: social power, ideology and social practice. The following chapters will deal specifically with linguistic and methodological concepts.

### Social Power

People are social beings in the sense that we are something to someone in different social contexts. When we address people by their first names or titles, it shows the social relationship between them and us. A person can be simultaneously in many social roles such as father, sister, teacher, neighbour or friend. Power is inherent in each social role. According to van Dijk (2008), "power in this sense is not inherently bad. Society would not function if there was no order, no control, no checks and balances, without the many legitimate relationships of power" (p.17). CDA is more interested in social power than individual power in an interpersonal relationship. Social power is associated with a group, community, and institution. Social power is often manifested in social control in terms of resources such as social status, expertise, knowledge and authority. Social power can be institutionalised in a social structure such as the power in government organisations, religions, armed forces,

communities. This is a form of explicit manifestation of social power. There are written and unwritten laws and regulations which govern social interactions among social units. Explicit manifestation of institutionalised social power is important mostly to those who are directly involved in the discourse in which social power is there to regulate social activities. However CDA is much more interested in the implicit manifestation of power which is not clearly marked or coded but can strongly control discourse and discourse (re)production. In *Structure of Discourse and Structure of Power*, van Dijk wrote:

> Power is directly exercised and expressed through differential access to various genres, contents, and styles of discourse. This control may be analysed more systematically in terms of the form of (re) production of discourse, namely, those of material production, articulation, distribution, and influence (p.22 ).

Why is CDA so interested in the concept of power in its analysis? When we talk about power, we need to consider power in terms of power sharing: Who has the most power or more access to power than others? Who suffer due to lack of power? How are they treated? In answering such questions, we actually deal with the concept of "inequity" in power sharing and as a result of dominant power.

> Power is not only a way to control the acts of other people, but also their minds, and such mind control, which is again at the basis of action control, is largely discursive. In other words, discourse plays a fundamental role in the cycle of the reproduction of social power (van Dijk 2004, p.25).

## Ideology

Ideology is intrinsic in CDA. Metaphorically it is like the co-existence of trees and forest. It is impossible to talk meaningfully of one without explicitly or implicitly mentioning of the other. CDA is empty or meaningless if ideology is absent in it. Ideology is about our worldview, metaphorically our lenses through which we see people, social issues, activities and events. Generally it is used to designate our beliefs, values and constructs our personal principles which guide our daily lives. Ideology is inherently encoded in texts, often manifested in lexical choice, cliché, presuppositions and implicatures. The following examples illustrate the underlying ideologies in texts.

- Mary is a woman, but she can drive well.
- As your director, I want you to protect the reputation of our company at all costs.
- Social justice should be included in any discussion on religion.

The above texts do not only express sentence meanings. Underlying them are values and attitudes of specific social actors in a social discourse. According to Luke, the outstanding task for CDA is to provide detailed analysis of cultural voices and texts in local educational sites, while attempting to theoretically and empirically connect these with an understanding of power and ideology in broader social formations and configurations.

According to van Dijk (1995) ideologies are basic systems of fundamental social cognitions and organising the attitudes and other social representations shared by members of groups. Thus, ideologies indirectly control the mental representations (models) that form the interpretation basis and contextual embeddedness of discourse and its structures. He explains the link between ideology, discourse and social practice as follows:

> The crucial concept of ideology I proposed is defined in terms of the fundamental cognitive beliefs that are at the basis of the social representations shared by the members of a group. Thus, people may have ideological racist or sexist beliefs (e.g., about inequality) that are at the basis of racist and sexist prejudices shared by the members in their group, and that condition their discourse and other social practices. We thus at the same time are able to link ideologies with discourse, and hence with the ways they are (discursively) reproduced, as well as the ways members of a group represent and reproduce their social position and conditions in their social cognitions and discourses (van Dijk 2004, p.27).

## Social Practices

The term "social practice" appears repeatedly in various writings on CDA. According to Fairclough (2003), the term "social practices" refers to stable and durable forms of social activity, which are articulated together to constitute social fields, institutions, and organizations. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, social practice is a component of the three-dimensional framework introduced by Fairclough (1992). Discourse as social practice is about the ideological effects and hegemonic processes in which discourse is seen to operate. Van Dijk (1997) in discussing discourse as interaction in society points out several instances of social practices as follows:

> 'social practice' usually implies a broader social dimension of discourse than these various acts accomplished by language users interpersonal interaction. For instance, an interaction between doctor and patient, between teacher and student, as well as a parliamentary debate or a courtroom sessions, are not only complex forms of institutional dialogue. They constitute, or are inherent parts of, the more complex discursive and social practices of teaching, providing health care, legislation and 'doing' justice (p.5).

As CDA is interested in the concept "hegemony", social practices are embedded in hegemony. As a result, social practices are often readily accepted as "obvious" or "natural" in social context. This could lead to social discrimination and abuse. Tuomela (2002) defines social practices in terms of the interlocking mental states of the agents. Thus, social practices manifested in the form of customs and traditions, are building blocks of society on which social institutions are constructed. Van Leeuwen (2008) views social practices as socially regulated ways of doing things. For him, social practices are "regulated to different degrees and in different ways, or through traditions, or through the influences of experts and charismatic role models or through the constraints of technological resources used" (p.7).

## CONCLUSION

Discourse analysis has become a solid branch of linguistics and has attracted linguists, particularly sociolinguists, to the attention of language in social and cultural context. Recently, Discourse analysis has brought researchers from various disciplines such as linguistics, sociology, health, psychology and education together to deal with issues which require interdisciplinary viewpoints. The emergence of CDA marked an expansion of DA into CDA, changing the role of an analyst from descriptive analysis to about social critique and intervention social critique and intervention. In an attempt to describe, interpret, and explain the relationship between the form and function of language, CDA aims at unearthing the intricate relationship between power, dominance and social inequality in different social groups.

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*Chapter 2*

# LINGUISTICS AND CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

*Thao Lê and Megan Short*

## ABSTRACT

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is interdisciplinary as it deals with issues across disciplines and its methodology is not confined to a single subject. However, linguistics undoubtedly plays a key role in the development of CDA. The contribution of linguistics to CDA is essential as many concepts and insights are derived from different branches of linguistics such as sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and psycholinguistics. CDA is often seen by linguists as a component of linguistics. Thus, it is important to examine how linguistics contributes to CDA, conceptually and methodologically.

**Keywords:** sociolinguistics, pragmatics, psycholinguistics, syntax, semantics, morphology, phonology, discourse

## INTRODUCTION

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and linguistics are two different disciplines but they are to some extent inseparable. Social scientists and philosophers have long been interested in social issues such as ideology, social justice, power and control, hegemony and social practice, which have also attracted the attention of modern linguists, particularly those who work in critical linguistics, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics and pragmatics.

It is not uncommon to see that (Critical) Discourse Analysis uses linguistic forms and functions to analyse text and discourse. It is virtually impossible to discuss text and discourse without reference to linguistic concepts such as grammatical structure, semantic categories, metaphors, speech act, verbal stereotypes etc. This is the reason why Discourse Analysis has been included in modern linguistics.

> We see CDA as bringing a variety of theories into dialogue, especially social theories on the one hand and linguistic theories on the other, so that its theory is a shifting synthesis of other theories, though what it itself theorizes in particular, is the mediation between the social and the linguistic – the 'order of discourse', the social structuring of semiotic hybridity (interdiscursitivity) (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p.16).

For a book on CDA, it is important to include a chapter on linguistic aspects to provide readers with some theoretical and practical backgrounds to enable them to make some connection to the use of linguistics in CDA. Thus this chapter gives an introductory presentation of major aspects of linguistics which are useful for understanding how (Critical) Discourse Analysis works. The presentation covers the following areas of linguistics which are directly or indirectly used in CDA: general linguistics, sociolinguistics, and pragmatics. As Systemic Functional Linguistics has received special attention in CDA, a full chapter is devoted to the link between Systemic Functional Linguistics and CDA.

## GENERAL LINGUISTICS

Linguistics tends to have a long tradition of treating the sentence as the fundamental unit of language. Grammar theories such as tagmemics, generative transformation grammar, and case grammar focus on morphology and syntax in which sentence structure is of primary importance. As language structure is strongly associated with sentence structure, human beings are metaphorically viewed as syntactic beings. Tests of language ability also reflect this trend. Learners are tested on their acquisition of syntactic complexity which determines the order of syntactic development from simple sentences to complex ones. For example, an active sentence is less complex than a passive sentence. Question structure is more complex than declarative sentence structure.

The focus on syntax has limited linguists to explore the function of language in communication. People do not communicate in individual sentences. Though a paragraph may include some sentences, a combination of sentences does not necessarily constitute a paragraph or a text. Linguistics has expanded its scope beyond sentence structure to include 'discourse' in its analysis. The following diagram shows different linguistic units which are hierarchically positioned in a traditional linguistic analysis.

*S*ound
*M*orpheme
*W*ord
*P*hrase
*S*entence
*D*iscourse

While linguists generally agree on the definition of linguistic units such as morpheme and sentence and it is relatively easy to identify such units in a structure, it is not so with the unit "discourse", which is often identified as paragraph, a piece of writing, or a text, or vaguely as something larger than a sentence.

Traditional linguistics focuses on four main aspects of language: phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. Phonology deals with sounds, prosody and their functions. For example, phoneme is an abstract unit which represents different allophones. Thus phoneme is the basic unit for developing graphemes in written language. Morphology deals with word, its internal structure and functions such as prefix, suffix, inflection (they sing and he sings) and derivation (e.g., nation and national, fair and fairness). Syntax is about sentence structure. Clause is the basic unit of a sentence and it takes different roles such as main clause, subordinate clause and independent clause. For example:

- A main clause and a subordinate clause in a sentence:
  *The dog barks when it hears a noise.*
- Two independent clauses in a sentence:
  *John likes cakes and Tim likes soup.*

Semantics deals with meaning at different levels: phonology, morphology and syntax. At the phonological level, if we change a phoneme with another in a word, the meaning is changed. This is clearly seen in a minimal pair such as sit/fit, bit/bat, man/mat. At the morphological level, meaning is manifested in different dimensions such as homonym (e.g., bare and bear), synonym (e.g., huge and large), antonym (small and big), hyponym (rose and flower), and lexical metaphor etc.

At the syntactic level, semantics becomes complex, abstract and multidimensional as it can involve different levels, from sound to sentence. The boundary between syntax and semantics at this level is not simply marked as these two linguistic components are deeply interconnected, structurally and functionally. The semantic features and aspects commonly examined are literal and abstract meaning, presupposition, metaphor, implicature etc.

At the onset of embarking on CDA, it is important for CDA analysts to have some knowledge of basic concepts such as prosody, nominal phrase, pronoun, and clause. Otherwise, their discourse analysis of texts is similar to the traditional literary analysis with running comments expressing personal viewpoints. In Vietnamese, there are two pronouns for ‘we’. One is inclusive (chung ta) and the other one is exclusive (chung toi). Thus the choice of ‘chung ta’ or ‘chung toi’ signals how speakers view and value their addressees. In English, one can identify group exclusion or solidarity in a text on the basis of ‘they-and-us dichotomy’. Thus undoubtedly linguistics has an important role to play in CDA. Fairclough is one of the strong advocates for incorporating linguistics in CDA. He states:

> Discourses are ways of representing the world which ca be identified and differentiated at different levels of abstraction….Texts differ in the discourses they draw upon to represent particular aspects of the world, and they articulate different discourses together (hybridize or mix discourses) in various ways. Discourses can be differentiated in terms of semantic relations (synonymy, hyponymy, antonymy) between words – how they classify parts of the world – as well collocations, assumptions, and various grammatical features (Fairlough, 2003, p.133).

As Halliday (1994) points out, a discourse analysis that is not based on grammar is not an analysis at all, but it is simply a running commentary on the text. Fairlough has a great interest in the use of Systemic Functional Linguistics in CDA. Systemic Functional

Linguistics examines texts in terms of three functions: ideational, interpersonal and textual. According to Fairclough (2003), Halliday's Functional Grammar provides a basis on which 'texts simultaneously represent aspects of the world (the physical world, the social world, the mental world); enact social relations between participants in social events and the attitudes, desires and values of participants; and coherently and cohesively connect parts of the texts together, and connect texts with their situational contexts' (p.26). Fairclough also employs Halliday's concept "grammatical metaphor" in analyzing texts in CDA. Grammatical metaphor occurs as a non-congruent representation in a structure as seen in the second sentence below.

- The ghost frightened Jane.
- The sudden appearance of John at the door frightened Jane.

Fairclough states the usefulness of grammatical metaphor in CDA:

> Tracing the precise nature and distribution of grammatical metaphors can be seen as one productive way into researching effectivity of texts within a particular social order, and in processes of social change. For example, Graham suggests that process metaphor, the metaphorical construal of processes in the material world, is a particularly significant aspect of a highly influential genre in new capitalism, policy formation (Fairclough, 2004, p. 144).

Apart from grammatical metaphor, the concept "lexical metaphor" which is commonly used in text analysis, particularly the work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) is also very useful in CDA. Lexical metaphors represent the users' perceptions and attitudes about things in their worldview. For example, the metaphors of teachers as parents, school as family, the world as global village etc. tell a great deal about our attitudes and views about our perceived world. Expressions such as "war on terror", "economic globalisation", "partnership in peace" are powerful metaphors in political discourse.

Traditional studies in linguistics tend to focus on sentence structure, particularly on written texts. Modern linguistics has expanded its scope with an emphasis on authentic texts and social situations. The two areas of modern linguistics which have attracted attention of researchers in linguistics and other disciplines are genre studies and conversational analysis. Conversation analysis and genre analysis provide great insights into communicative interaction, particularly on the link between language structure and social meaning. They can contribute theoretical concepts and analytical techniques to CDA.

## SOCIOLINGUISTICS

Sociolinguistics is a branch of linguistics. As the focus on language in social contexts, sociolinguistics is useful to CDA and undoubtedly plays an important role in CDA. The relationship between language, society and culture has been raised and examined for centuries in literature, philosophy, anthropology and sociology. It is impossible to divorce language from its social and cultural contexts as language is deeply embedded in society and culture. Language acquisition is an important aspect of enculturation. Thus learning a language is to learn its culture. While the relationship between language, society and culture has been

studied in various disciplines, it is sociolinguistics which has enhanced the focus on this relationship and turned it into an established discipline.

Unlike experts from other disciplines, sociolinguists deal with concepts and issues about language, society and culture with the use of linguistic knowledge in its analysis. Sociolinguistics in its early stage of development tends to focus on language variation such as regional dialect, social dialect (sociolect), accent, and social attitudes towards language variation, Labov studied the language use of African American youths in their own social context and found that their use of language deeply reflected the dynamics of language in use, not a form of 'impoverished English'. This dynamics of language in use can be easily hidden from the eyes and ears of observers who are not familiar with the social context of the language users. The introduction of Hymes' concept of communicative competence has sparked numerous researches on how speakers of different social backgrounds and social awareness use language in real life. The concept 'register' is the landmark of this new emphasis on the link between language and society. With the acceptance of 'register' in language studies, the traditional view on linguistic correctness has been challenged as it tends to be rigid, prescriptive and possibly prejudiced. The topics and issues which have been widely studied in sociolinguistics include language and gender, addressing, language and prejudice, linguistic politeness, language maintenance, bilingualism, code switching, language planning etc.

One of the most widely researched themes in sociolinguistics is code-switching (including code-mixing) in bilingualism. Bilingual speakers may use two languages simultaneously in conversation with others. For examples, Vietnamese migrants in English speaking countries such as USA, Canada, and Australia mix English and Vietnamese in their speech. The term "code-switching" instead of "language-switching" is used as "switching" can occur within a language. Code-switching does not always occur unintentionally as it can be deliberately used as an effective strategy to include some people or exclude others in a discourse. This is an interesting aspect for CDA as it could provide insights into the way in which communication and power are controlled through code-mixing and code-switching.

There is some similarity between the concept "code-mixing" in sociolinguistics and the concepts of intertextuality and interdiscusivity in (Critical) Discourse Analysis. Fairclough (1992) devoted a whole chapter for intertextuality. According to Fairclough (1992), the term "intertextuality" was coined by Kristeva in her introduction of the work of Bakhtin on intertextuality.

> For Bakhtin, all utterances, both spoken and written, from the briefest of turns in a conversation to a scientific paper or a novel, are demarcated by a change of speaker (or writer), and are orientated retrospectively to the utterances of previous speakers and prospectively to the anticipated utterances of the next speakers (p.102).

As Johnstone (2008) points out, texts can bear intertextual traces of other texts in many ways, ranging from the most direct repetition to the most indirect allusion. "A text can quote another text, or present it through paraphrase. A text can be worded in such a way as to presuppose a prior text" (p.164). Fairlcough (1992) also notes "another feature of intertextuality is that in addition to incorporating or otherwise responding to other texts, the intertexuality of a text can be seen as incorporating the potentially complex relationships it has with the conventions which are structured together to constitue an order of discourse"

(p.103). In an example of using the concept of interdiscursivity (constitutive intertextuality) in analyzing a bank text, Fairclough notes that the text manifests a pattern of alteration at the level of the sentence between the discourse types of financial regulation and advertising. "The particular mix in this sample is of financial regulations and advertising: the text sets out the conditions of use of the bank service, and at the same time tries to 'sell' it" (p.115).

It is obvious that the issues dealt with in sociolinguistics are of interest to CDA as the study of language is no longer confined to the sentence domain but extends to a wider range of texts such as greetings, interview, conversation, discussion, formal address, gossip, lecture, sermon, bay talk etc. What sociolinguists tend to focus on is the social aspects of language in use from a descriptive perspective and stop short at taking a advocatory role.

> The differences between CDA and other sociolinguistic approaches may be most clearly established with regard to the general principles of CDA….In general CDA asks different research questions. CDA scholars play an advocatory role for groups who suffer from social discrimination…CDA follows a different and critical approach to problems, since it endeavours to make explicit power relationships which are frequently hidden, and thereby to derive results which are of practical relevance (Myer 2001, p.15).

## PRAGMATICS

To illustrate what pragmatics is, it is useful to examine the following text: a conversation between a worker and a manager in a factory office.

*Worker*: I'm sorry. I did not turn up for three days.
*Manager*: Tell me why?
*Worker*: I was not well.
*Manager*: What's wrong with you?
*Worker*: I had a nasty headache!
*Manger*: Did you go to the doctor
*Worker*: Sorry, I didn't. I wouldn't do it next time.
*Manager*: You'd better watch out.

Language is fundamentally for communication. The workers and managers are language users. They use language to do what they want in this situation.

From the worker's action, he used the following speech acts:

- *Apology*: I 'm sorry.
- *Explanation*: I had a nasty headache.
- *Promise*: I wouldn't do it next time

From the manager's action, he used the following speech acts:

- *Demand*: Tell me why?
- *Investigation*: Did you go to the doctor?
- *Threat*: You'd better watch out

Pragmatics is about what we do with language; about what we want language does for us, and about real life in which each person is an actor in a verbal activity. Speech acts and conversation analysis are central to pragmatics. When we say something to people, we do not merely communicate message content. We may want to produce some effect on them. It should be noted that speech acts initially deal with utterances. However, it is the "act", which is the focus, not the linguistic forms of a text. Thus 'speech act' is a generic term for any form of language use.

Speech act theories started in philosophy with an interest on what we do with language. Searle (1979) developed a taxonomy of illocutionary acts:

- *Representative or assertive*. The speaker adheres to the truth of the propositional content. e.g.,
  - The plane has arrived.
  - Winter is cold
- *Directive.* The speaker wants to listener to act:
  - Stop here!
  - Don't speak loudly.
- *Commissive*. The speaker makes a commitment
  - I'll give you the paper tomorrow.
  - I promise to help you as much as I can.
- *Expressive*. The speaker expresses an idea, feeling or condition:
  - I am happy to see you.
  - It is good to catch up with you.
- *Declarative*. The speaker performs an action by exactly stating it:
  - I declare the conference starts now.
  - I name this school 'The school of the century'.

There are other speech acts which are used in communication strategies, which are central to pragmatics. As we use language to get things done, we hope to employ some effective strategies. We may use threatening acts or blackmail acts as a part of our strategies of persuasion. Others may use praising, rewarding, flattering for the same effect.

Blum-Kulka (1997) lists the following contributions of speech act theory to the study of discourse.

- Utterances serve not to express propositions but also to perform linguistic actions in context.
- Languages provide their speakers with a variety of linguistic means, ranging in levels of illocutionary and propositional transparency (that is 'directness'), for the performance of every single act.
- The same utterance, depending on context, may serve to perform different pragmatic functions.
- Speech acts can be differentiated by specifying the types of contextual preconditions needed for their successful performance (p.47).

Chilton and Schaffner (1997) accept that the notion of speech acts is central to political discourse analysis. It helps to understand the relationship between power, attitudes, and actors in political discourse. For example, when we listen to debates in the Australian parliament, we can identify the political role of each speaker, their intention (e.g., to embarrass the opponents), types of strategies used (e.g., to avoid the topic, to praise a colleague). It is also interesting to observe the paralinguistic features (e.g., tone, intonation, loudness) and body language in relation to the performance of speech acts.

People may use different speech acts and pragmatics devices such as presupposition, allusion, implicature, and stereotype to manipulate discourses. For example, allusion and presupposition are carefully used to indirectly make negative assertions and accusations against others without being held responsible for their act. For example:

*Boss*: Why did you stop working while I was away yesterday?
*Worker*: I worked non-stop yesterday.

The question "Why did you stop working while I was away yesterday?" presupposes that the worker stopped working while the boss was away.

Presupposition indicates a proposition, idea, view not directly stated but encoded in the utterance. For instance, the question "how young is your friend" carries the presupposition that your friend is young; whereas the question "how big is your house" does not carry the presupposition that the house is big. Similarly, the sentence "She is a woman but she can drive very well" implies the presupposition that women are not good drivers and this is an exception (expressed in the word "but").

> It should be noted that presuppositions, whether they are based upon prior texts of the text producer or upon others' texts, may be manipulative as well as sincere. That is, the text producer may present a proposition as given for another or established by himself dishonestly, insincerely, and with manipulative intent. Presuppositions are effective ways to manipulate people, because they are often difficult to challenge (Fairclough, 1992, p.121).

In Australia, people who are anti-Asian migrants tend to use expressions such as "the threat to our culture and the destruction of our harmonious life", which presuppose that Asian migrants are the threat and life in Australia is harmonious till the arrival of Asians. Presupposition in language can reveal interesting insights about our perception of others and attitudes towards them. Allusion is an indirect reference. It is another device to make an assertion or accusation by negative associates and connotations. This brief discussion indicates that pragmatics has a role to play in CDA.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter introduces some basic concepts and issues in general linguistics, sociolinguistics and pragmatics. It should be noted that linguistics includes other branches or sub-fields. However, sociolinguistics and pragmatics are included in this chapter as there are common grounds between sociolinguistics, pragmatics and CDA. The chapter examines some connections between linguistics and CDA. Obviously there are more. The emergence of

Critical Linguistics (CL) signals a call for taking linguistics to a new direction in which language is not just a system or resource, but fundamentally social practice. This is not just a change of direction. It is a new challenge for social scientists, including linguists, to take this new role as a mission to address and confront social issues against prejudice, dominance and social injustice.

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*Chapter 3*

# SYSTEMATIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS AND CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

*Thao Lê and Xuefeng Wang*

## ABSTRACT

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) have a common interest in the link between language and society. CDA uses Systemic Functional Linguistics as a tool to analyse texts and discourses. While other linguistic models are useful to CDA, Systemic Functional Linguistics is of special interest to CDA, mainly due to its focus on language use, its informative and social functions. Other linguistic models are also useful to CDA but they may lack strong attraction to CDA analysts due to their emphasis on syntactic structure and less on functional aspects of language. This chapter gives a brief outline of Systemic Functional Linguistics and focuses on four grammatical features which have practical implications for CDA: theme, lexical density, nominalisation, and grammatical metaphor.

**Keywords**: language in use, discourse, systemic functional linguistics, functional grammar, theme, lexical density, norminalisation, grammatical metaphor

## INTRODUCTION

Various linguistic concepts from different theoretical perspectives and linguistic fields have been used in CDA. However, Systemic Functional Linguistics has received special attention by CDA analysts, particularly Fairclough, a prominent CDA researcher who strongly adores the use of SFL in CDA. To provide some understanding of the role of SFL as a linguistic analysis tool in CDA, this chapter presents a brief discussion of Hallidayan functional grammar and the four related grammatical features which offer insights and practical use to CDA: theme, lexical density, nominalisation, and grammatical metaphor.

## THE USE OF SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS IN CDA

Two terms which are closely connected and often used interchangeably in discussion of Halidayan linguistic theory are: Systemic Functional Linguistics SFL (or just systemic linguistics) and Functional Grammar (FG). The former is used broadly to refer to a theory of language in use advocated by systemic linguists, mainly Halliday, and the latter is often used to refer specifically to Hallidayan grammatical model as there are other models of functional grammar which are not mentioned in CDA.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) focuses on language function and semantics which are the basis of human language and communicative activities. It is interested in what language does for language users. It pays attention to social context and examines how language both acts upon, and is constrained and influenced by this social context.

As the term 'functional grammar' suggests, function is the key aspect which makes what language is. Functionality is intrinsic to language. With language, we can make sense of our experience and acting out social relationships In Hallidayan functional grammar, it is suggested that instead of using the general term 'function' in analysing language, the term 'metafunction' is used to indicate that function is an integral component within the overall theory'(Halliday, 2004, p.31).

Why is Systemic Functional Linguistics (or Functional Grammar) of special interest to CDA? To answer this question, we need to see the levels of context of language use dealt with in SFL. Basically there are three levels of context of language use: register, genre and ideology.

*Register* is about context of situation of language use, for instance a register of a university seminar or a car advertisement. Register can be identified in terms of three dimensions: *field of discourse* (realised in experiential meanings), *tenor of discourse* (realised in interpersonal meanings) and *mode of discourse* (realised in textual meanings). *Genre* is about linguistic interaction of participants which are culturally structured in terms of stages. There are different genres or text types such as narrative, recount, discussion, and exposition. Genre is staged because it has to follow a culturally determined pattern of progression. For example, a buy-and-sell communicative interaction in a shop takes places in sequential stages. It is culturally or socially determined as the generic structure of buy-and-sell in a Vietnamese shop may differ from those in France or Brazil. *Ideology* is at a high level of context. 'Whatever genre we are involved in, and whatever the register of the situation, our use of language will also be influenced by our ideological positions: the values we hold (consciously or unconsciously), the biases and perspectives we adopt' (Eggins, 1994, p.10).

While CDA uses a variety of theoretical concepts and frameworks of conversational analysis, pragmatics, Hallidayan functional grammar has received special attention in CDA as it provides an important basis for understanding CDA.

> Whether analysts with a critical approach prefer to focus on microlinguistic features, macrolinguistic features, textual, discursive or contextual features, whether their angle is primarily philosophical, sociological or historical – in most studies there is reference to Hallidayan systemic functional grammar. This indicates that an understanding of the basic claims of Halliday's grammar and his approach to linguistic analysis is essential for a proper understanding of CDA (Wodak 2001, p. 8).

While structural linguistics focuses narrowly on sentence meaning, Hallidayan Functional Grammar deals with three broad categories of meaning which are useful to CDA: ideational, interpersonal and textual. *Ideational meaning* is the presentation of experience (in a clause: process, action, event, processes of consciousness, and relations). *Interpersonal meaning* is meaning in terms of action: speakers or writer does something to the listener or reader by means of language, e.g., statement, question, command. *Textual meaning* is relevance to the context: both of the preceding and following text and the context of situation. The textual function of the clause is that of constructing a message (e.g., theme-rheme structure )

Fairclough is one of the well-known advocates for the use of Functional Grammar in CDA. He demonstrates how social actors are perceived in terms of the following choices, referred to as 'variables' (Fairclough 2003, pp.145-146).

- Inclusion/exclusion: It includes suppression (i.e., not in the text) and background (mentioned in the text, but having to be inferred in one or more places.
- Pronoun/noun: Is the social actor realised as a pronoun (e.g., we, they, her) or noun (e.g., workers, refugee, boat people)
- Grammatical role: Is the social actor realised as a Participant in a clause, within a Circumstance or as a possessive construction.
- Activated/passivated: Is the social actor the Actor in the processes, or the Affected or beneficiary?
- Personal/impersonal: Are social actors represented impersonally (e.g., referring to the police as 'the filth') or personally.
- Named/classified: Are social actors represented by name (e.g., Mrs. Smith) or category (e.g., doctors).
- Specific/generic: Are social actors represented specifically (e.g., the doctors in Launceston Hospital), or generically (e.g., the doctor).

The following discussion presents four grammatical concepts which have practical implications for use in CDA: theme, lexical density, nominalisation and grammatical metaphor.

## FOUR GRAMMATICAL CONCEPTS FOR CDA

The following grammatical concepts of Functional Grammar which are selected for inclusion in this chapter are: theme, lexical density, nominalisation, and grammatical metaphor. These concepts are widely used in a number of applied linguistic areas as they offer some insights into the nature of texts. The discussion of these concepts here is derived from the work of Halliday in a number of versions of his widely-used book entitled *Functional Grammar*.

## Theme

When looking at language from the viewpoint of textual function, we can see how thematic organisation makes the development of the text cohesive and how speakers or writers construct their conversation or writing into smooth structures. In textual function, a clause is analysed into Theme and Rheme. Theme functions as the starting point for the message (Halliday, 1993) the element which the clause is going to be 'about' has a crucial effect in orienting listeners and readers. Theme is the starting point of the clause, realised by whatever element comes first, while rheme is the rest of the message, which provides additional information to the starting point and which is available for subsequent development in the text. It contains the point of the clause, the information which the listener or reader should remember. Halliday (1993, p. 38) characterises Theme as "what the message is concerned with: the point of departure for what the speaker is going to say". The different choice of Theme contributes to a different meaning. English uses first clausal position as a signal.

Theme is the starting point of the message so the whole of the first item must be included in the experiential meanings. It can be identified in different mood of a clause because the element that is typically chosen as Theme in an English clause depends on the choice of mood. In some clauses, the topical Theme may contain interpersonal and textual elements. If three possible Themes are found: Textual Theme (discourse markers and conjunctions) + Interpersonal Theme (vocatives) + Experiential/Topical Theme (Subject + Verb + Object + Adverbial elements), the clause is said to have multiple Themes.

- Textual Theme connects its experiential meanings to the meanings of neighbouring clauses, functioning to relate the meanings of the particular clause to the other parts of the text. It is any combination of (i) continuative, (ii) structural and (iii) conjunctive Themes (Halliday, 1993).
- Interpersonal Theme indicates the kind of interaction between the speakers and the positions that they are taking, often functioning to code the speaker's or writer's personal judgement on a meaning. It is any combination of (i) vocative, (ii) modal, (iii) mood-making Themes (Halliday, 1993).
- Topical Theme, functioning as the point of orientation for the experiential meanings of a clause.

Why is the concept of theme useful to CDA? It is useful in a number of ways. Firstly, a text is not just a piece of information. It reveals how writers want to present the information to readers. The writers' choice of themes indicates their decision on what should be their focus (i.e., topical theme) in order to catch the attention of the reader. For instance, if the focus of a text is on the condemnation of unwanted refugees, we can expect the theme centres around related lexical items such as refugee, boat people, illegal migrants, foreigners, invasion, and crime.

> The organisation of information in the clause is motivated by some ideational or interpersonal purpose. Thus, theme and rheme may be associated with topic and comment, in which cas the first person adopts a position in relation to the third-person world, interprets reality in reference to self (Widdowson, 2004, p.28).

The divisive use of 'they and us', for instance, can create a division between refugees against community, men against women, employees against employers. The choice of theme also reveals the attitudes and thoughts of the writer, particularly through the use of interpersonal theme.

## Lexical Density

Written English tends to be lexically dense. Halliday and Martin (1993, p.76) define lexical density as a measure of the density of information in any passage of text, according to how tightly the lexical items (content words) have been packed into the grammatical structure.

The lexical density of a text can be measured by counting the number of content words in a text/clause as a proportion of all words in the text/clause. Content words include nouns, verbs, adverbs and adjectives (Eggins, 1994, pp. 60-61). Note that not all adverbs or adjectives are grammatical words. One needs to take intor consideration of different subcategories such as demonstrative adjectives (e.g., *this* book, *those* people), adverbs of time and place (e.g., *now* and *here*). There are many content words in our language, such as John, room, answer, happy, new, large, grey, search, grow, hold, have, really, completely, very, also, enough and so on. Grammatical or function words include prepositions, conjunctions, auxiliary verbs, and pronouns. In contrast, grammatical/functional words have little lexical meaning, but they express grammatical relations with other words within a clause, or specify the attitude or mood of the speaker. They are often short words which include: *in, here, will, I, the, after, when, though, since, because, to, and, them, for, thus, where, how, you, who, his, but, while, whose*, etc.

The lexical density of a text can be calculated and the formula is as follows:

- T = total number of the words in a text
- L = lexical/content words in a text
- Lexical density = L/T x 100%

Lexical density is the condense of lexical words in a text. For example, if a text has 51075 words and 44518 content words (T = 51075; L = 44518), then the lexical density = 44518/51075 x 100% = 87.16%. If the lexical density of a text is high, it becomes difficult to read. It first appears that lexical density has little to do with CDA. However, lexical density can reveal about the nature of text and its function. It can indicate social factors such as power and relationship among language users.

## Nominalisation

Nominalisation is the use of a nominal form to express a process meaning (Thompson, 1996, p.167). Nominalisation is the process in which a verbal clause or verb phrase is converted into a nominal, or noun like, phrase. It refers also to the conversion of a verb or an adjective into a noun, with or without morphological transformation, so that the word can now act as the head of a noun phrase. In English, some verbs can be used directly as nouns

(e.g. reply, love, work) while others require morphological transformation requiring a suffix, for example, *justify* and *justification*; *rely* and *reliability*; *beautify* and *beautification*; *clean* and *cleaness*; *scholar* and *scholarship* and so on. When a verb is nominalised, it becomes abstract concept rather than an action. For example:

a. John decided to leave home. This really upset his parents.
b. John's decision to leave home really upset his parents.

As can be seen from the above two clauses, clause (a) contains two clauses. With the nominalisation (decision) in clause (b), the two clauses join together to become a single clause which packs in several complex abstract ideas. The characteristics of nominalisation are summarised below.

Nominalisation makes actions or processes (verbs) become concepts (nouns).

- We *work* for charity. We raised money for poor people.
- The charity *work* raised money for poor people.

With nominalisation, a single clause packs in several complex abstract ideas.

- The workers lose basic human rights and this provides the union the reason to act.
- *The workers' loss of basics human rights* provides the union the reason to act.

Nominalisation reduces the number of clauses and more information can be compressed into a nominal (noun) group.

a. If they invest in school facilities, this requires enthusiasm and dedication.
b. Their *investment in school facilities* requires enthusiasm and dedication.

The original clauses have two clauses while the nominalised clause has only one.

As stated, when verbs are nominalised they become concepts rather than actions. Thus, we are able to increase the amount and density of information to make further comment or observation about the concept in the clause. For example:

a. The department decided to expand its investment.
b. *The decision* to expand the asset base… (The verb is nominalised).
c. The decision to expand the its investment was *a significant shift in the department's policy* (more information commenting upon the newly formed concept can now be added).

According to the above examples, the verb in the first clause is nominalised in the second clause. As such, we can add more information commenting upon the newly formed concept.

Nominalisation is one of the useful features employed in CDA. If a clause is structured through the use of nominalisation, it can create an impression that it is a fact or an entity that the writer wants the reader to see. Fairclough (2003, p. 13) gives an example from a text of Tony Blair's use of the word 'change' in ' The modern world is swept by *change*' instead of 'multinational corporations in collaboration with governments *are changing* the world in a

variety of ways". Thus it reveals a common consequence of nominalization in which the agents of the processes, people who initiate processes or act upon other people or objects, are absent from texts. "Choices involving the assignment of semantic roles and nominalisation can present people as being out of control of the destinies in the most fundamental ways" (Johnstone, 2008, p. 56).

## Grammatical Metaphor

Languages have their most natural ways of encoding the meanings which they express and this is referred to as the congruent ways. The non-congruent ways of encoding language are viewed as grammatical metaphor. Thus, grammatical metaphor is a substitution of one grammatical class, or one grammatical structure, by another. Halliday (1993, 1994) uses the term grammatical metaphor to refer to the meaning transference from congruent to metaphorical in grammar. According to him, congruent forms reflect the typical ways that we construe experience. In congruent forms, verbs represent actions or processes, nouns represent participants and adverbs or prepositional phrases represent circumstances and conjunctions express the relations between one process and another. However, with the development of language, the original relation is often changed. We often turn verbs into nouns, adjectives into nouns and clauses into noun phrases and these changes are grammatical metaphors. There are different types of grammatical metaphors.

*Ideational metaphor* is an incongruent representation of the experiential meaning. It is mainly represented by the transitivity system. In the English transitivity system, there are six main types of processes: material, mental, relational, behavioural, verbal and existential processes and these can be found in the grammatical categories. A process consists of three components: (1) the process itself; (2) the participants in the process; and (3) the circumstances associated with the process. The transformations can be between the processes and a shifting of participants and circumstances. Metaphors of transitivity are italicised in the following examples:

a. Sue saw something terrible.
b. Sue *came upon* a terrible sight.
c. A terrible *sight* met Sue's eyes.

Items b and c are interpreted as metaphorical variants of item a. In b, the mental process *saw* has been represented as a material process *came upon* and the perception has been turned into a Participant *sight*. In c, the process has been split up into an Actor *sight*, a material Process *meet* and a Goal *eyes*; and *Sue* represents simply the possessor of the eyes.

*Interpersonal metaphor* basically deals with modality and mood. A metaphor of modality can be substituted by a proposition. In other words, when modality is expressed metaphorically, projection is involved. The projecting clause involved normally has a word or proposition which signifies belief, likelihood, certainty, or other features which one connects with modality. Interpersonal metaphor of modality facilitates expression of meaning metaphorically. For example, the expression '*I think'* implies '*probably'*; or, '*I*

*believe'*implies '*almost certainly'*. For example, in order to express the likelihood of Li Shi having gone to Beijing already, there are a few possible expressions:

a. Li Shi must have gone to Beijing.
b. Li Shi will certainly have gone to Beijing by now.
c. I think Li Shi has already gone to Beijing.
d. It is very likely that Li Shi has already gone to Beijing.
e. Everyone believes that Li Shi has already gone to Beijing.
f. It is clear that Li Shi has already gone to Beijing.

In clauses (2)a and (2)b, the same meaning of likelihood are realised by a model verb *must* (a) or a model adverb *certainly* (b), which occur within the clause structure itself. Halliday calls these expressions of modality. While in (c), (d), (e) and (f), the different degree of certainty is decided by the word with modal meaning outside of the original clause, such as the verbs *think* (c) and *believe* (e), or the particular types of adjectives *likely* (d) and *clear* (f). Halliday (1994, p. 354) calls such expressions interpersonal metaphors of modality, where the modal meaning is realised outside the clause (as in contrast with the standard encoding by means of modal verbs or adverbs, which lie within the clause structure). In this case, again, the metaphors are based on a borrowing. For example, the verb *think* can be borrowed to express a modal meaning, as in example (c).

Another type of interpersonal metaphor is the metaphor of mood which expresses the speech function of giving or demanding information or goods and services. According to Halliday (1994, p. 363), mood expresses the speech functions of statement, question, offer and command. Each of these functions has its standard, default type of encoding: statements are encoded by the declarative, questions by the interrogative, and commands by the imperative clauses.

Grammatical metaphor is a complex concept of Hallidayan Functional Grammar and has been used in CDA. Fairclough (2003) devotes a great deal attention to the use of this linguistic concept in a chapter on "Representation of social event". On the usefulness of the concept "grammatical metaphor in CDA". Fairclough agrees that "tracing the precise nature and distribution of grammatical metaphors can be seen as one productive way into researching effectivity of texts within a particular social order, and in processes of social change" (p.144).

## CONCLUSION

Critical Discourse Analysis makes use of linguistic concepts to describe and explain discoursal practices. Particularly for CDA researchers with a background in linguistics, linguistic concepts are often used in discourse analysis and CDA. For Halliday, discourse analysis without a linguistic base is just like running comments often seen in literary criticism. While there are many grammatical theories which attempt to describe language, Hallidayan Functional Grammar can be seen as a powerful tool for describing and analysing discourses due to its emphasis on functional aspects of language and the relationship between language and its social context.

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*Chapter 4*

# WHAT IS A TEXT? QUESTIONS OF BOUNDARIES AND LIMITS

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## ABSTRACT

Discourse analysis has had an approximately 60-year history. Since its slow start in linguistics around the middle of last century, the field has grown and proliferated rapidly, with many disciplines producing their own versions. Today, overview accounts of the field typically begin with a list of these founding disciplines. Yet it is still possible to say that discourse analysis remains an emergent or indeed pre-paradigmatic methodological field. This means that descriptions and accounts of the field remain by and large within the theoretical parameters of their constituent traditions and there is a lack of engagement with the question of the constitution of the field itself.

Each discipline or theoretical tradition in the field of discourse analysis takes up a particular set of relationships around discourse and analysis, text and context, text and commentary. These in turn construe or constitute the field in specific ways and produce specific units of analysis. What is not often attended to, however, are the terms of these determinations. For example, how is a text defined? On what basis is it selected? What are the possible relationships between a corpus of data, and the production of specific units of analysis. When is a text?

This chapter asks questions of the conditions under which specific units of analysis such as 'text' or 'discourse' are determined within specific traditions of discourse analysis, the epistemological assumptions underpinning these, and the effects. It argues that these units are artefacts of the analytic disciplines themselves and that the terms and conditions of their production need to be reflexively accounted for. The purpose of this work is to begin to develop a meta-language, beyond specific traditions, about discourse analysis as a distinctive methodological field within social research.

**Keywords:** text, discourse, meta-language, social context, ethnographic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic, and anthropological theories, semiotics

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses an often-debated question: the nature of text and the boundaries and limits of what can count as a text. In order to offer a contribution on this question that advances our thinking in the field of critical discourse studies, I will first sketch some of the key theoretical questions that accompany the primary question of the nature of this category 'text'. These range from an extension of the limits and boundaries in relation to what counts as a text to a problematisation of the usefulness of the category, given the expansion of its boundaries. I will then explore what for me are still unresolved and complex questions concerning the relationship between the concept of text and a range of other concepts that together can be termed 'not-text' in some form or other. In particular, I am concerned to problematise conceptualisations of text-context and text-commentary relations.

To do this, I draw on Bourdieu's sociological theorisation of 'limits' in the epistemological work of constituting a scientific fact. This theorisation of the fact offers a useful way to proceed when applied to the study of text, allowing us to see how texts are in important ways not pre-given; nor do they have an unproblematic existence or character prior to the work of research or analysis, but rather are constituted through this work. I have suggested elsewhere that, in the contemporary moment, it is possible to argue that anything can be a text as there are no definitive exclusion criteria (Lee 2006). This point goes beyond the matter of definition – the fixing of the category in relation to that which is deemed to be not-text or that against which text is to be defined. It reaches to the primary epistemological questions raised by Bourdieu. How does a text come to be deemed to be a text? How are particular texts selected, as texts, for analysis? Against what conceptual categories are they so defined and selected?

The aim of this chapter, then, is not to define 'text', nor to produce one or even many 'operational definition(s)' of the concept of text, but rather to question the nature of the categorisation process itself. In other words, how do location, circumstance and occasion work to constitute a piece of the world as a text, and with what effects? To address these questions, I will first briefly outline a set of contemporary questions regarding the terms in which the defining of text are couched and framed. I will then briefly outline Bourdieu's theorisation of limits and finally consider some questions of agency – of readers and readings, of researchers and analysts, in the work of defining, selecting and interpreting texts.

## INTERROGATING THE IDEA OF 'TEXT'

Over the course of the last century there have been many theoretical movements that have been preoccupied with the question of the nature and constitution of the text. In general, the result of this history has been an expansion and extension of the idea of the text from narrower literary notions to include a broader frame and scope of reference. This brief discussion cannot do justice to the scope and complexity of these theoretical discussions. Instead, I will select a set of key ideas concerning boundaries and limits in relation to the idea of the text. Interestingly, I have had to reach back a decade or more to find the most useful theoretical accounts that can take account of the complexities of this question. It is almost as if certain traditions, such as critical discourse analysis, coming to prominence over the past

decade or so, have magnified certain notions of the critical and left behind some of the theoretical complexities and ambiguities brought into being by such disciplinary fields as literary theory, postmodern ethnography and poststructuralism. So the account in this chapter seeks to redress that imbalance somewhat.

Terry Threadgold (1997) makes a useful summary of the major theoretical movements contributing to the extension of the idea of the text, beginning with early twentieth-century literary theory such as Russian Formalism and Prague School poetics. She then passes through ethnographic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic, and anthropological theories, semiotics, and poststructuralist and deconstructive theories, together with reader-response theory, social semiotic theory and feminist and post-colonial theories. These have all gradually contributed to the broadening of the scope of reference, or the meaning of the term, 'text', to include "the visual, the filmic, the spatial, the corporeal" (p2). The Introduction to her book *Feminist Poetics* (1997) and her chapter on "poststructuralism and discourse analysis" *in Culture and Text* (2000) offer useful overviews of this theoretical trajectory.

Threadgold offers a useful list of the kinds of questions text analysts have been concerned with over the course of the past hundred years or so:

> What is a text? How is it internally structured? How do texts mean? What is a writer? What is a reader? What is the relationship between verbal and non-verbal, ordinary and aesthetic texts, and so on? What do these things have to do with the social world, with culture, with history, and with subjectivity and the body? (Threadgold 1997, p.2).

There has, Threadgold argues, been a general, albeit uneven, progression in the twentieth century, from theories that have concentrated on the first two of these questions to theories that have gradually tried to grapple with all of them (Threadgold 1997, p.2). The progression is from a concern with the insides of text to its relation to its 'outsides' and to a troubling of those relations The latter terms in this progression gradually pay more attention to what is termed 'context'. It is here that the question of the constitution of the limits and boundaries of the text become of critical importance.

A geneaological perspective on the emergence of the 'text' within cultural theory sees it as a recent phenomenon, largely one of the last thirty years or so. John Mowitt (1992), drawing on literary theorists Ducros and Todorov, points out the theoretical deficiencies of the idea of the text. These deficiencies concern problems with limits and boundaries in relation to the idea of the text and what is outside, or other, to the text. According to Mowitt, there has been a manifold failure within both literary theory linguistic and rhetorical theory to adequately theorise the text, to account for its specificity as a unit within a system – such as language. The text, as a particular kind of abstraction, is 'wedged' into the space between the system and the utterance:

> As such, the text is to be understood as a derivative or secondary system characterised by the properties of autonomy and closure. It is secondary in the sense that the text depends for its formal features on a pre-existing system, namely, the language constituting its repository of signs. And it is closed and autonomous in the sense that the text embodies a particular configuration of the primary system that, while conditioned by that system, nevertheless marks it with a pragmatic instance irreducible to the system. *The text is, like an actual utterance, an event in the history of the system* (p.5 emphasis added).

Mowitt's explanation is helpful in locating the particular properties of texts that render them problematic in terms of their specificity as units. It is not possible to account once and for all for what is and is not a text, in its relation to the systems that precede it. At the same time his explanation accounts for the intelligibility and recognisability of texts *as texts* – in terms of autonomy and closure. The text has a pragmatic force that marks it as action and as 'an event in the history of the system'. The notions of autonomy and closure are helpful as much for the problems and questions they raise as for any definitive answers they might provide. These problems and questions concern both the system-text relation as well as the agency attributed to the acts of closure and the judgments of autonomy. Where does the text begin and end? And who determines?

Fairclough, one of the most influential figures in the field of critical discourse analysis, defines the concept of the text broadly and generally as "the semiotic dimension of social events" (Fairclough 2005, p.76). He extends traditional (literary and linguistic) ideas about text to include such examples as written documents and government websites, as well as interviews and meetings in government or business organisations (Fairclough, 2004). As well, texts in this sense are increasingly 'multimodal' (e.g. Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001). However, in this elaboration, Fairclough finds a problem with the term 'text' itself, which he suggests is "not really felicitous used in this way, because one cannot shake off its primary association with written texts" (Fairclough 2005, p. 77). He concedes the difficulty, on the other hand, of finding a preferable general term.

What concerns Fairclough in this account is "the productive activity of social agents in making texts". He suggests that such activity is best thought of in process terms as "texturing":

> Social agents draw upon social structures (including languages) and practices (including orders of discourse) in producing texts, but actively work these 'resources', create (potentially novel) texts out of them, rather than simply instantiating them (Fairclough 2005, p.78).

Fairclough generally prefers the term 'semiosis' rather than 'discourse' to refer in a general way to language and other semiotic modes such as visual image, and deploys the term 'text', despite his concerns cited above, for semiotic elements of social events, be they written, spoken, or combining different semiotic modes as in the case of television texts.

Analysis of texts in Fairclough's framework includes 'interdiscursive' analysis of how genres, discourses and styles are articulated together, as well as linguistic and semiotic analysis. The notion of interdiscursivity brings us to the question of the 'outside' or the 'other' of the idea of the text. This 'other' is often or most commonly referred to as 'context'. For Fairclough, the idea of 'interdiscursivity' allows for the incorporation of elements of 'context' into the analysis of texts, to "show the relationship between concrete occasional events and more durable social practices, to show innovation and change in texts". Further, the notion of interdiscursivity plays a mediating role in allowing the connection between detailed linguistic and semiotic features of texts and processes of social change on a broader scale (Fairclough 2004, p.228).

Where, then, does the text begin and end? According to whom? This last question takes us to the question of production as well as reception: of writers/makers as well as readers and readings of texts. Threadgold (1997, p.2) tells us that, after the gradual expansion of the category of the text to include the visual, the filmic, the spatial and the corporeal, the source

of textual meaning has been relocated from inside the text to the "negotiations between readers, writers and texts". This in turn has necessitated a "theorisation of the subjects who read and write".

This theorisation is, I suggest, at the core of the question 'what is a text?' To posit a reader/writer/text relation requires us to focus on the constitutive work of readers, or analysts, in constituting texts and their meanings. We have seen that the idea of 'text' is a construct that is located within a particular order of discourse or disciplinary frame. This involves determining sets of relations with what is in some way 'not-text' – whether that be understood as 'context' or the 'non-discursive' material flow of everyday life, and so on. The movement between text, discourse and the world, and the relations between texts and their writers and readers – are theoretically problematic and complex; they are matters of epistemology, or what is to be counted as knowledge. To begin to explore a way forward, I here take up Bourdieu's epistemological challenge for sociology and hence for the human sciences more broadly.

## BOURDIEU: THINKING ABOUT LIMITS

For Bourdieu, the key point to the undertaking of any research enterprise involves centrally, "thinking about the way the object is apprehended". In his paper published in *Theory, Culture and Society* in 1992, Bourdieu posits an epistemological program that he draws from the French sociological tradition, most clearly influenced by Bachelard. This program offers an alternative and a challenge to the more dominant German tradition of the binary opposition of explanation/understanding (Erklarung/Verstehen) that marks the shift from positivist to post-positivist and interpretive epistemologies. Bourdieu's purpose is to break down this opposition, with its entrenched presupposition of the 'universal' nature of scientific fact vs. the 'particularity' of the human sciences. For him, what is required is a three-fold movement, centrally revolving around the constructed-ness of all facts. In this frame, facts are "conquered, constructed and confirmed" (from Bourdieu and Chamboredon 1991). These three moments are complexly inter-related, both conceptually and in time in actual research practice. However, for explanatory purposes, Bourdieu separates them into a three-stage, linear process.

The first stage in the process is that of conquering the fact. This idea is central to this work and can usefully be summed up here in terms of an "epistemological break" (p.38). This idea suggests a battle or a struggle rather than a simple reaching for a set of givens, or pre-constituted facts. Bourdieu is very critical of pre-constructed concepts and argues for the necessity of the struggle to constitute concepts as scientific constructs rather than assuming them to be pre-given. He illustrates this central epistemological challenge through problematising the practices of definition in the research process:

> Very often the positivist epistemological tradition attempts to escape from the problem I pose by means of the notorious operational definition. Imagine constructing a research programme into European intellectuals. How are you going to choose your sample? Everyone knows how to construct a sample, It's no big deal, and can be learnt in any course on methodology: drawing white balls or black balls, anyone can do the job. But how do you construct the box

> that the balls are in? Nobody asks that. Do I just say "I call intellectual all those who say they are 'intellectuals'"? How do we construct the limits? (Bourdieu 1992, p.42)

The point Bourdieu makes strongly here is that subjects, the concepts, the words themselves that are used to speak about the social, are socially pre-constructed and socially constituted. He argues that social problems are often too quickly converted, through this easy process of definition, into sociological facts, often erasing or effacing the history of disputation and contestation that mark the site of the problem. The examples he gives are juvenile delinquency, drugs and AIDS. Through this process of definition, limits are set on what counts as the concept to be investigated through method.

Bourdieu's point is thus that it is necessary to practise "radical doubt" (p.43) in the constitution of a scientific fact. Why does this scrupulous epistemological attention matter? According to Bourdieu:

> Sociologists, especially positivists, who are so hard to please in matters of empirical proof, are negligent, uncaring and incredibly lax when it comes to questions of epistemology. When it comes to coding data, for example, they employ the most naïve systems of classification… Afterwards, there are some very clever exercises on the computer. But what is put into the computer is the pre-thought, ready to think with just a few alterations (p.43).

The second moment, the '*construction'* of the object of research, is, according to Bourdieu, decisive. Rather than speaking of "choosing a subject" to research, the fundamental operation in this account is the actual construction of the topic as an object. Again, the critical point is to be able to think about and question the pre-given nature of reality that presents itself to the researcher. This is the "moment of maximum vigilance":

> When you are within the pre-constituted, reality offers itself to you. The given gives itself, in the form of the notorious data. This is one of the reasons the given is so dangerous (p.44).

This problematising of 'data', in its literal sense of the 'given', is necessary to avoid the 'enormous scientific errors' perpetrated through an uncritical acceptance of the pre-constituted concept. Everything must be subjected to questioning concerning the conditions of its constituted-ness.

The third phase, termed *confirmation*, in this account, is the empirical phase. The constructed objects and the system of hypotheses that allows their formation must be tested against reality and 'subjected to verification'. Bourdieu stresses that:

> To construct an object is to construct a model, but not a formal model destined merely to turn in the void, rather a model intended to be matched against reality (p.45).

Bourdieu's point here is that what is needed are means of constructing facts in such a way that models can be developed. This is a kind of third way between a theoretical formalism and a positivist hyper-empiricism "drowned in data". This third way places construction – thinking about the way the object is apprehended – at the very start of the process.

There is much that is thought-provoking here for considerations of the question 'what is a text?' How can we theorise the epistemological break from the pre-thought, taken-for-granted idea of the given-ness of texts? How do we account for the construction of the text as

the object of analysis, rather than simply assuming the text pre-exists the moment of research or of analysis? How is "confirmation" to be understood? One way to construe this term is in relation to the application of text-analytic methods in determining a text's meanings and effects. A more far-reaching implication is that it is through the three-stage process described by Bourdieu that a particular model of the world is "intended to be matched against reality".

Further questions arise: how are the problems that are to be subjected to linguistic or other text-analytic methods constituted? How is the piece of the world in question 'apprehended' and then constructed as the 'object' of the research? How is the implicit model of the world thus constructed to be tested against reality? What criteria of adequacy to that reality are to count? Bourdieu's insights into the setting of limits offer important and productive epistemological challenges for textual analysis. According to this analysis, the text, like the scientific fact, has to be struggled over, constructed and confirmed. The word-world relation must be constituted in this process, rather than being deemed to be given, to simply yield itself up as 'data'.

These questions are, in turn, always and ineluctably social, cultural and political. The taking of an epistemological position always involves "social forces" – always involves "the position in the scientific field of those who take them and the type of capital which it commands" (p.48). Methodological strategies proposed by researchers are, Bourdieu says, often "little more than rationalisations of their own limits". Indeed, much of the debates in the social sciences, according to this account, are "debates which are organised around people caught within their pre-established limits" (p.48). The final points of concern, then, are these limits which he argues must be subjected to "radical doubt". His challenge is to the "categories of thought which makes a whole collection of things unthinkable" (p.48).

## TEXT, CONTEXT AND COMMENTARY

To begin to address some of these questions, it is necessary to turn to considerations of how a text is defined in relation to its 'other' – that which is deemed to be not-text. This is variously referred to as the world within which the text circulates and takes its meaning (Mulkay, 1985), "a set of adjacent categories (the system, the utterance), time (the text is a moment in the history of the system)" (Mowitt 1992) and so on. Often, what is around the text is referred to in general, albeit problematic ways, as 'context'. Within linguistic and critical discourse-analytic work, 'context' is construed in a probabilistic relation to 'text', drawing on sociological and anthropological notions of 'situation' and 'culture' (see e.g ., Halliday & Hasan, 1985). Often, however, context is drawn as a kind of more or less stable 'container' within which a text sits as an instance of a system of meaning (e.g., Fairclough, 1992). While Fairclough himself has gone on to develop more refined and sophisticated accounts of text-context relations, his initial formulations are still widely cited in the work of others.

One of the more useful accounts of the relations between text and context has been Jay Lemke's work on "contextualising relations" in *Textual Politics* (1995). Echoing Bourdieu's concerns with the constitution of sociological facts, Lemke is concerned to focus on questions of limits:

> We say that when an act occurs it occurs in some context and that 'its' meaning depends in part on what that context is. Better to say that we make the act meaningful *by* construing it in relation to some other acts, events, things (which we then call its contexts).
>
> …The key question is what goes with what? With what alternatives is an act in contrast? What are the relevant contexts in which the act has meaning? It is because there are patterns and limits to what is expected to go with what in a particular community, that meaning becomes *possible* .
>
> …Meaning consists in relations and systems of relations of relations. These relations are basically contextualising relations, they tell us what the contexts are in relation to which an act or event has its meanings in our community. They specify what the *combinations* are that an event of a given type can belong to, *and* what the kinds of events are, the sets of alternative events or acts of the same kinds, that can make up the various sets of combinations.
>
> …In all cases, contextualizing relations are constructed or construed by meaning-making practices of the community. They cannot be deduced from inherent or intrinsic properties of acts, events or things, for these do not 'have' such properties.
>
> …Actions make meanings and sustain the Meaning System of a community by not violating its limits, by conforming to its patterns (Lemke 1995, pp.166-167).

Lemke goes on to argue that two sets of relations are salient: first, relations between text and event or formation or genre; and second, and relations between texts, formations or genres and larger issues of social structure and process (Lemke 1995, p. 167):

> The text or event takes its meaning in part from being seen in the community as an instance of one or more formations. We interpret it against the background of other instances of the same formations to see how it is distinctive and we contrast it with instances of other formations. Different formations (codes, genres, registers, voices of heteroglossia, discursive formations,) are not just different, however. They have systematic relations to one another and those relations define and are defined by the larger social relationships of classes, genders, age groups, political constituencies, and significant social divisions of every kind (Lemke, 1995, p. 168).

A further complexity in theorising text-context relations is rendered visible from the perspective of contemporary literary theory and poststructuralism. Green (1991), for example, works with a notion of reading as an "undecideable play" of text and context. What he explicitly refuses is a view of context that posits matters of occasion, place and situation as independent and outside human events and activities, as existential "containers" for them:

> This notion of context needs to be understood semiotically, however, as a register of the practices and dynamics of meaning-making – rather than realistically or naturalistically. Contexts aren't simply 'containers' or 'frames' for living and learning; rather they are thoroughly implicated in and indeed inextricable from living and learning. Our world only seems ready-made and ready to hand; whereas in actuality it is constantly be[ing] formed and reformed … The very distinction between 'text' and 'context' is fraught with difficulty – not just philosophically or theoretically but practically (Green, 1998, p. 216).

Green is drawing here from Derrida, for whom context is an indeterminate concept that is virtual rather than empirical and is constantly shifting, dynamic, multiple and heteroglossic. Green articulates the need for an appropriately understood concept of context in terms of "meaning and action".

Furthermore, within this theoretical frame it is important to problematise the notion of text itself, to refuse the reification of the concept of the text but to see it as similarly problematic and 'undecidable'. Thinking about text as 'given' or simplistically in terms of 'presence' is problematic, a point underscoring Bourdieu's point about the pre-constructed nature of data. What presents itself to the researcher must be treated skeptically. As Bourdieu calls for 'radical doubt' in the constitution of the sociological fact, so is such radical doubt necessary in relation to the constitution of the text – precisely because the text appears fully present, pre-formed or even pre-determined. What is understood as 'text' (whatever the modality) is always predicated on preceding constitutive work, which is mostly naturalised, forgotten or denied: in Bourdieu's terms, the "box the balls are in".

Thus, the very distinction between 'text' and 'context' is difficult and ambiguous. Text is a misleading idea, for Green as for Mowitt (1992) and Fairclough (2004), as suggested earlier, though for different theoretical reasons. The very idea of 'text' appears to fix an object in time and space by means of some kind of method or procedure. If anything can be text, then what determines the constitution of the text is some kind of act of meaning making in relation to the object. This then brings to the fore the question of *reading* and hence of textual commentary or analysis.

According to Green's (1991) formulation, reading is a social signifying practice involving a "complex interplay of text/context relations characterised by a motivated and constrained undecidability" (p.216). Readings are complex, dynamic and relational, constitutive of the text-context relations they purport to reflect.

Text-context relations, then are determined by readers and readings, rather than being fixed, pre-determined or given. Bob Hodge and Alec McHoul (1992) have theorised relations between text and commentary relations in terms of two extreme types of disciplinary formations, which they refer to as "mastery" and "liberty". The first formation coheres around the notion of commentarial dominance over, and colonisation of, the object-text. The second is characterised by a more "humble" gesture by which the commentary allows the object- text the position of dominance- to "speak for itself". In relation to the position of "mastery", the text is positioned as containing a "mystery", available only to the skills of the analyst:

> What is paradoxically interesting about the approach … is that it flatters the text equally with itself. The two, as it were, look as if they are in a conspiracy to defraud 'ordinary' readers. The text's meaning is 'deep' – but the commentary's skill is more than equal to that depth. This is the characteristic mode of explanation and owes some allegiance to traditional (Baconian) natural science models. The text, like nature, is an infinite mystery. But the commentary, like the mathematical gesture, presumes to unlock that mystery, privileging, in one move, both itself and, to a lesser extent, its object (Hodge & McHoul, 1992, p.190).

At the opposite end of this binary formation, 'libertarian' approaches to 'letting the text speak for itself', dating from the 1960s, involve such traditions as those Hodge and McHoul refer to in terms of "ethnomethodological indifference"- letting the text "speak for itself" ranges from various traditions within "non-intrusive" sociology, to approaches within phenomenology and ethnography. The text "becomes the master: it 'teaches' the analyst", who remains silent, acting as a medium through which the "text emerges to full consciousness" (Hodge & McHoul, 1992, p.194).

Hodge and McHoul point out, however, that text-libertarianism is a "panopticism under another name". The silence of the analyst is "far from innocent and is in fact part of a very effective strategy of power". Here they refer to crucial yet unexamined issues such as which texts are to be selected and which excluded. As they note, "libertarians who self-consciously take the side of the victim still face the dilemma of which particular victim to choose" (Hodge & McHoul, 1992, p.195).

The question of 'when is a text' is taken up in terms of the politics of text and commentary. For Hodge and McHoul, it is important to ask, questions concerning the institutional and historical conditions under which textual analysts come to be authors and the constraints under which forms of analysis take place. Hodge and McHoul give an account, drawing on Foucault and Lyotard, of some of the politico-theoretical problems of textual commentary that seek to displace the problematic binary of text/commentary, self/other, leaving the intensive scrutiny of the 'insides' of texts and taking into account such matters as the conditions of their production and circulation. Ultimately, they insist on the notion of text as 'spectacle', as performance and as writing (p.195).

## CONCLUSION

The purpose in laying out this particular set of provocations, drawing on literary theory, postmodern sociology and anthropology and poststructuralist philosophy and semiotics is to augment what have become dominant accounts of text-context relations within the more widely circulated versions of critical discourse analysis. CDA is espousedly multi- or even inter-disciplinary in its orientation as a movement, which involves many theoretical traditions and multiple methodologies (see Lee & Otsuji this volume). Each rests in some way upon a particular construction of the text or, as in Fairclough's case, on a questioning of the very term text and its replacement with ideas of semiosis and interdiscursivity.

Many, if not most, accounts of textual analysis within CDA, it might be fair to say, focus intently upon the analysis and less on a radical questioning of the idea of the text itself. This is a theoretical lacuna, in the sense that the epistemological work we are asked to do by Bourdieu in radically questioning the constitution of the objects of our inquiry is often forgotten. There can be a too-easy elision between an object already constituted in literal terms as a text, for example a child's essay or a policy report, and objects such as interview transcripts that are artefacts of a research process that halts, captures and recontextualises a moment of semiosis in the flow of time and place, and thus constitutes it as a text, to be subjected to analysis of one kind or another. These acts are acts of selecting, setting limits and boundaries, reading and re-writing, parts of the world. This chapter has sought to re-introduce some questions that remain unresolved and unresolvable, yet critical to a skilful reflexive scholarship of textual capable of working within social, cultural, economic and environmental complexity and uncertainty.

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*Chapter 5*

# APPLYING MEMBERSHIP CATEGORISATION ANALYSIS TO DISCOURSE: WHEN THE 'TRIPWIRE CRITIQUE' IS NOT ENOUGH

*Jill Freiberg and Peter Freebody*

## ABSTRACT

This chapter provides an outline of Membership Categorisation Analysis, exemplifies some of its applications, and argues for its significance for the agenda of critical discourse analysis. The chapter describes and illustrates the organisation of categories in everyday discourse, categorisation devices and their rules for application, and the relationship of categorisation practices to the interpretation of activities, features, and attributions. As part of these processes, the use of topic selections, list formations, and embedded stories in the assembly and interpretation of categories and features is also illustrated. We conclude by suggesting that the application of MCA is one alternative to the 'tripwire' approach to critique, which searches for allegedly tell-tale signs of unacceptable moral and ideological attitudes in the surface features of language.

**Keywords:** membership, categorisation, critique, interpretation

## INTRODUCTION

Constructing and interpreting intelligible texts are everyday accomplishments of co-ordination that rely on the mastery of many intersecting aspects of "natural language" use (Garfinkel & Sacks, 1970). In this chapter, we analyse how such accomplishments are routinely achieved via membership categorisation activities. One of our purposes here is to show that an adequate critical analysis of discourse requires attention to all of the sources of meaning that are brought to bear in any given instance. That is, we argue and aim to

demonstrate that critical analysis is not just a matter of finding an element of communication to be a pivotal source of meaning, developing an analysis of the text as if that element clinches the 'critical' interpretation, and then producing a set of interpretive assertions on that basis – a form of practice that can be thought of as 'tripwire analysis. In this chapter we aim to present a principled alternative to tripwire analyses by providing an exposition of membership categorisation analysis (MCA), exemplifying MCA's potentially productive application to critical analysis of discursive practices, and putting the case that a concern with categorisation practices is at the heart of both redistribution- and recognition-based critical approaches (e.g., Fraser & Honneth, 2003). Both of these general classes of critique draw on categorisations of persons (along lines of class, race, gender, able-bodied-ness, generation, and so on) and on common understandings of their recognisable characteristics. In this chapter we argue for the occasioned rather than fixed nature of these categorisations and characteristics, and we expand on the technical features of such occasioned categorial work and its significance for analysing social practice.

Membership categories are notional concepts used by cultural members to classify persons (Sacks 1992a [1966], pp. 40 – 48). They are essentially meaning-making resources in that the classification of a person as a type or member of a social category enables others to interpret, classify and assign meaning to actions/utterances as relevant to particular activities (Sacks 1992a [1966], p.241). Interpretively, category membership has been found to constitute an adequate basis for particular inferences to be made about persons, objects and actions. Identifying a person as member of a recognizable social category provides a warrant for further inferences, as Sacks (1992a [1964]) observed "to become a member is to make state-able about yourself any of the things that are state-able about members of that commonsense category" (p.47).

Membership categorisation is a mechanism as are sequential and topical organisations whereby people construct meaning in and from discourse. For texts to be mutually intelligible, each action within the text must be sensible as an utterance or action with respect to the incumbency of the speaker as a member of a category, and that membership category must be recognizably relevant for the type of activity, specific participants and other aspects of the social ontext. Watson (1997) observed of categorial and sequential organisation, that

> [c]onversational sequences are categorically instructed, both for lay speakers and analysts: the sense of a sequence – even its sense *as* a sequence – is, in significant ways, given by its categorical order (Watson, 1997, p.73).

Via the "layering" of the resources provided by the different organizations (i.e.,sequential and topical), the work of making sense for and with others can be accomplished in orderly ways. Sacks (1992b [1972], p. 561) referred to the effects of concurrent organisations as the "thick surface" of social activity. The surface is thick not because the accomplishment of each form of organisation requires the use of different sets of verbal tools and practices, but because each utterance is thick *with* the various concurrent meanings that it glosses (Garfinkel & Sacks 1970, pp. 342 – 345).

Thus, a single interactional move may concurrently accomplish: local and extended sequential order; particular category membershipping activities (Eglin & Hester 1992, 1999; Garfinkel 1967; Hester & Eglin 1997; Sacks 1992); and topical ordering work (Sacks 1992a, 1992b; Schegloff 1979). One result of this multiple sense of any utterance is that there is no

direct correspondence between what is said and what may be inferred, and that it is the sense-making work of co-participants using cultural knowledge of these same organising frameworks and resources, that accomplishes situated meaning (Garfinkel 1967). These operations (i.e., making sense *for* and *with* others and *of* others' actions) involve the management of literal and inferential meaning resources, including sequential, categorial, and topical organisational matters, taking account of the 'scenic' attributes of the conversations; and having all of these converge to accomplish the practical business at hand (Goodwin & Heritage 1990; Schegloff 1999). That is, sense-making involves the management of all aspects of the 'context' of actions.

We illustrate these initial points in a brief analysis of an excerpt from a speech by Australian Catholic Cardinal George Pell, delivered to the Australian National Press Club, in Canberra, on 21 September 2005. The address was entitled *The dictatorship of relativism.* This speech was widely quoted at a time of public debate about literacy and English education, about the qualities of Australian schools, and about the moral circumstances of western societies more generally. It is not our aim to display our agreement or disagreement with its contents but rather to use it to show the discursive artfulness that comes to light when an MCA is applied to textual construction and interpretation.

Excerpt 1:

> One reason for optimism is that no one believes deep down in relativism. People may express their scepticism about truth and morality in lecture rooms or in print, but afterwards, they will go on to sip a cappuccino, pay the mortgage, drive home on the left side of the road, and presumably avoid acts of murder and cannibalism throughout their evening. People, unless insane, do not live as relativists. They care about truth and follow clear cut rules.

The sense of this utterance relies on the speakers' understanding of significant elements of its context – a context in which it is legal to drive on the left hand side of the road, where murder and cannibalism are illegal and socially unacceptable, where sipping cappuccino and having and paying a mortgage are demonstrations of normality and social and moral rectitude. It is also a context in which it is appropriate for the speaker to make such pronouncements, to speak as an authority on moral matters, to hold particular views about truth, morality, optimism, and believing. In other words, the sense of this talk trades on the speaker's incumbency in a particular social category (i.e., leader of the Catholic Church in Australia), and the activity in which he is engaged (i.e., making as speech to news reporters at a press club).

The talk also reflexively constitutes Pell and his audience as members of those social categories. As part of the work of assembling his membership as an authority on moral 'law' and his right, therefore, to authoritative talk on the topic, Pell invokes other social categorisations, university lecturers, scholars and writers ("in lecture rooms or in print") and attributes values and beliefs to the members of these categories via the description of a series of mundane actions. Through this simple descriptive narrative, he undermines the authority of members of these categories on matters of truth and morality. This descriptive narrative thereby also necessarily shows, in Jayyusi's (1984, p. 28) terms "the normatively and morally organized character of categorisation work, accounts, descriptions, predictions and discourse-interactional work in general."

Central to meaning in this talk is the feature that it is a categorially ordered set of actions that cannot be discovered if the analyst refers only to the selection of words, grammatical structures, and rhetorical strategies. We propose, therefore, that MCA provides a practical supplement to other methods for critical analysis of discourse. We now outline in brief, some of the analytical resources applied in MCA. The concepts explicated in this section relate to categorial organisation, namely, categorial resources and membership categorisation procedures used by cultural members to make sense of, and in social interaction and to reflexively constitute orderly social life. It draws on the work of Sacks (1992a, 1972a, 1972b), Jayyusi (1984, 1991), Eglin and Hester (1992; 1999), and Hester and Eglin (1997).

## CATEGORIAL ORGANISATION: MEMBERSHIP CATEGORISATION

So much of social meaning is embedded in categorially organised information that membership categorisation activities will be evident in the familiar features of many social activities. This is not to say that the membership categorisation activities are an end in themselves (i.e., as they are depicted in critical sociological accounts of power, dominance and control). Rather, it acknowledges that the scenic features of social settings as well as their rational properties are constituted by membership categorisation activities. In other words, the organised procedures used to describe the indexical features of category concepts *for* the specific practical tasks conventionally associated with institutional settings are the same discursive features that form the familiar scenic features of those activities. The array of membership category concepts available for making meaning in any activity is limited by the meaning-making work at hand. Recognisable incumbency of one participant in a specific social category invokes other related categories that can be common-sensically aligned with the initial categorisation and, therefore, may entitle or oblige co-participants to act in particular ways.

This is not to say that particular culturally, socially, or institutionally relevant categories have fixed sets of attributes, rather, "categories like other concepts (and categorisations like other descriptions) are open-textured" (Jayyusi 1984, p.39). One central understanding is that situated categorial order, category descriptions, and relational configurations of categories are indexical expressions, relevant to their "local, contextual specificity and use" (Hester & Eglin 1997, p.25). Membership category description and analysis are routine procedures in everyday events as category concepts are shaped and re-shaped for the context and occasion of their use (Hester & Eglin 1997, p.25 and see for instance, Cuff 1994; Cuff & Francis 1978; Eglin & Hester 1992, 1999; Francis & Hart 1997; Hester 1992; Hester & Eglin 1997; Jayyusi 1984; Sacks 1972b). Meanings are assigned and interpretable on the basis of situated categorisations of persons in relation to co-participants and to the activities in which they are engaged. Coordinated action and mutual understanding is made possible on the basis of categories and the ways they are described and relationally configured for the specific occasion.

## MEMBERSHIP CATEGORISATION DEVICES

Analysis of the meaning of categorisations begins with an analysis of the activity *in* or *for* which the discourse has been produced. Category concepts invoked are analysed to determine the overall commonsense collective to which a particular category is notionally connected on the specific occasion. For instance, the category concept 'child' can be used with reference to one or more of the following collectives: stage of life, family, social activities such as education, health care, etcetera. These notional 'collectives' are called membership categorisation devices (MCDs). and the location of a category concept within one of these conceptual devices operates to specify how incumbents of the category should be interpreted this time. Thus, MCDs are "collections of categories for referring to some persons, with some rules of application, where these devices can be applied to populations and members apply them to populations to say things about them" (Sacks 1992a [1966], p.238). Sacks specified that MCDs are collections in the sense that the categories observably go together for some purpose. He defined an MCD as "[a]ny collection of membership categories, containing at least a Member, so as to provide, by the use of some rules of applications, for the pairing of at least a population member and a categorisation device member. A device is then a collection plus rules of application" (Sacks 1992a [1966], p.246).

Collections may also imply particular relational configurations of the categories, including notional hierarchically "*positioned categories"* (Sacks 1992a [1967], p. 585), and along with those configurations, particular features of incumbents of the related membership categories. Central to Sacks's descriptions are two collections, "R" and "K." He defined "R" as a collection of "programmatically relevant" paired relational categories or "standardized relational pairs" (e.g., "husband-wife, parent-child, neighbour-neighbour, …stranger-stranger") related with respect to "a set of rights and obligations concerning the activity of giving help" such that the occurrence of one of the pair makes the other relevant or noticeably absent (Sacks 1972a, pp.37 – 38). Collection"K" was defined as "composed of two classes (professional and laymen (sic))" and constructed by reference to special distributions of knowledge existing about how to deal with some trouble" (Sacks 1972a, pp. 37 – 39).

### MCDs – Rules of Application

Category-concepts, category descriptions and MCDs are the components of organised categorial meaning-making structure. Category concepts should not be analysed on the basis of the analyst's commonsense understanding of the category concept; warrantable analysis of the contextual meaning of the categorisation is based only on evidence in the text analysed. Based on empirical evidence, Sacks found that members accomplish recognisable social activities and actions using membership categorisation. According to Sacks (1992a [1966], p.242), "the simplest way you make a recognisable description is to take some category and some activity that's bound to it, and put them together." Collections of categories (MCDs) and relational configurations of categories in collections have meaning-making potential and there are various commonsense procedural rules for constituting the local rationality and intelligibility of actions with reference to categories, MCDs and category-action relationships.

The rules pertain to: (a) selections of categories and MCDs used to classify the range of persons that are subjects of the discourse analysed, (b) judgements about how categories and MCDs can be used, including how many can be used, to accomplish adequate classifications; and (c) judgements about the relevance of relationships between activities, membership categories, and MCDs and thus, the orderliness of sequential actions (Sacks 1992a [1966], pp.238 – 266). Each of these is summarised below.

Selections of categories and MCDs used to classify the range of persons involved in a particular social event may be organised via the application of "relevance' rule[s]" (Sacks 1992a [1966], p.146), such as:

- the *Consistency Rule*: "If some population of persons is being categorized, and if a category from some device's collection has been used to categorize a first Member of the population, then that category or other categories of the same collection may be used to categorize further Members of the population" (Sacks 1972a, p.33 emphases in original; see also Sacks 1992a [1966], p.239);
- the *Hearer's Maxim*: "If there are two categories used, which can be found to be part of the same collection, hear them as part of the same collection" (Sacks 1992a [1966], p.239); and
- *Category Relevance Rules 1 and 2*: These pertain to the 'programmatic relevance' of particular categories given the use of an MCD. For example, for the MCD 'parties to a medical service event,' GP and P are programmatically relevant, while other categories, such as friend, neighbour, or husband are not programmatically relevant but may be made relevant. Given the use of one of the programmatically relevant categories (e.g. GP) another can be expected to be relevant (e.g., P or medical clinic ancillary staff member). These are made relevant using knowledge of "standardised relational pairs" (SRPs), that is, categories that may be made relevant on the invocation of another (e.g., for a collection "R" device – husband-wife; for a collection "K" device – GP-P) (Sacks 1972a, pp.33 – 37).

The intelligibility of observed actions provided for by linking actions to categories of persons and activities relies on social members' collaborative application of these rules within social discourse. The identification of the person as an incumbent of a category can be formulated with reference to actions, activity, setting, and/or co-participants where one or all of these can be normatively linked to such a category. Membership categorisations are descriptive and their function in social discourse is to provide the basis for the local descriptions and classifications of persons that give meaning to actions; categorizations point to the direction in which a search for meaning may proceed.

## Members' Methods of Membership Categorisation

As we have indicated, the object of situated membership categorisation and analysis is assigning meaning and directing inferencing and interpretation. Interpretations and the interpretability of local action are organised and constrained via the invocation of and situated description of membership category concepts (Jayyusi 1984; Schegloff 1972; Watson 1983). Because sense-making and interpretation management are complex and multi-layered, they

cannot possibly be managed through explicit formulations. It has been established that category concepts, MCDs and "categories of social configuration or collectivity-categorisations" (Hester & Eglin 1997, p.157) are locally constituted to extend the meaning potential and to design the procedural consequentiality of local actions (as well as to constrain possible interpretations). The classification of persons, objects and actions as members of a class provides for unspoken things to be 'known' or assumed about them.

Via using MCA it is possible to determine how abstract category-concepts are: made concrete, occasioned by local sense-making needs, and accomplished by local descriptive practices. Beginning with a search for expectable attributes and predicates of common-sense category-concepts, MCA identifies and examines the methods used by participants to assemble other category descriptions and locally relevant MCDs to meet their situated social purposes. Category incumbency can be attributed based on the display of particular attributes, actions, assumptions of rights, and obligations but others can be assembled for particular purposes and contexts. Jayyusi (1984, pp. 20 – 56) distinguished different relationships between types of activities and membership category invocation and description. The table below (Freiberg, 2003, p.136) summarises the different types of and category-related features and their relationship to membership categorisation activities.

**Table 1. Category-activity/feature relationships**

| Constitutive Features | Tied Features | Occasioned Features |
|---|---|---|
| *"Type-embedded" and criterial to that categorization i.e., that MUST be observable or describable.* | *Criterial to that categorization under certain conditions (e.g., during some specific event) i.e. that WILL be observable or describable under those conditions.* | *Not criterial to that categorisation but might be made so under certain conditions.* |
| Any feature that WILL generate that specific category-concept i.e., is both necessary and sufficient to ascribe or confer incumbency in the category. | Any feature that CAN generate that specific category-concept i.e., is necessary but not sufficient to ascribe or confer incumbency in the category. | Any feature that MAY be made relevant to the category-concept already generated i.e., is neither necessary nor sufficient to ascribe or confer incumbency in the category. |
| May Include:<br>required/predicated attributes, skills, knowledge, values, behaviours;<br><br>associated criterial rights & obligations; and<br><br>programmatically relevant task-relationships with others. | May Include:<br>relevant attributes, skills, knowledge, values, behaviours;<br><br>associated rights & obligations; and<br><br>relevant task-relationships with others. | May Include:<br>attributes, skills, knowledge, values, behaviours that can be made locally relevant;<br><br>associated rights & obligations that can be made locally relevant;<br>task-relationships with others that can be made locally relevant. |

Source: Freiberg, 2003, p.136.

Methods of "category accretion" (Jayyusi 1984, p. 114), that is, the binding of occasioned features to a category-concept in use, achieved using common-sense descriptive techniques such as 'mapping' (Watson 1983), are identified and analysed because of the evidence they provide of the purposeful action of participants in discourse to assemble meaning. Such analysis will discover how attributes and predicates from other category-concepts have been made relevant, for the practical activities at hand, and how the category-concepts initially invoked are modified, transformed or fabricated into "event-specific or event-tied" categories (Jayyusi, 1984, pp. 114 – 121).

MCA first identifies patterns of selective formulations of items such as terms of address, descriptions of locations, actions, persons, category-sensitive identifications of action and co-selected category and action descriptions, then analyses how these are implicated in the constitution and transformation of the familiar and expectable features of category-concepts "*for* a focus" (Schegloff 1972, p.102) and for local practical purposes, (Jayyusi 1984; Schegloff 1972; Watson 1983). Evident co-selection of category concepts is analysed as are the ways that these category concepts are described and tied in specific ways (e.g., using notional hierarchies, comparison and contrast, or causal relationships) to the attributes and predicates of the categories programmatically relevant in a setting (Hester & Eglin 1997; Jayyusi 1984; Sacks 1972a; 1992a, 1992b; Schegloff 1972). The work of MCA is to document and examine the ways that abstract category concepts (Lynch & Bogen 1997, p. 121) are employed as the point of departure for the description of the local features of categories and the implication of other MCDs.

Co-selection of category-concepts may either assemble a new version of a category or an alternative categorisation. For instance, membership categorisation procedures have been shown to provide for: "expert witness" to be transformed into "unreliable witness" via the co-selection of "witness", "good criminologist", and "bad criminologist" (Lynch & Bogen 1997); "nigger" to be mapped onto "victim" (Watson 1983); "young men" to be transformed either into "victims" or "offenders" depending on the motivation for a "category-fitted account" (Jayyusi 1984, pp. 103 – 114); "problem pupil" to be transformed into "shy boy" (Hester & Eglin 1997); and "offender" into "murder suspect" (Eglin & Hester 1999).

MCA can identify whether and how programmatically relevant categories have been differentiated in ways that are consequential for the meaning and political force of a text. For instance, MCA will reveal whether and how the predicated features (i.e., constitutive or tied) of a category, for which a high level of ethical obligation normally applies, have been waived. This type of category transformative work is seen where insanity is ascribed to a person who has committed a crime. The transformation via membership categorisation work, from category, "criminal", to category, "criminally insane" is procedurally consequential as it "removes the agency from the person's acts" (Eglin & Hester 1999, p. 212) and thereby the obligation to display category – constitutive or tied features on that occasion.

Extract 2, below, also taken from the speech by Cardinal George Pell, demonstrates this form of membership categorisation work.

Excerpt 2:

> Recently some newspapers have given considerable coverage to demonstrating how relativism's intrusion into the classroom as post-modernism or "critical literacy" affect education at both secondary and university level. In some schools the study of English texts andEnglish language has been abandoned altogether for the lower secondary grades and

> replaced with a blancmange of English, social studies and comparative religion called "Integrated Studies".
>
> While parents wonder why their children have never heard of the Romantic poets, Yeats or the Great War poets and never ploughed through a Bronte, Orwell or Dickens novel, their children in many cases are engaged in analysing a variety of "texts" including films, magazines, advertisements and even road signs as part of critical literacy. Of course there are always rationalisations for why school syllabuses are manipulated in this way.

We see a number of features in this excerpt. The MCD 'school' is located via the activity 'critiquing English curriculum'. This leads to an analysis of the implicit category concept 'teacher' as the transformed category 'bad teacher' on which the sense of this passage relies (*abandoned, manipulated*). We also see the use of lists in this excerpt and in many other sections of the address. There are potentially an indefinite number of ways of selecting a categorisation, but also of organising and producing descriptions through lists. The list is a common choice because of the organisational options it offers a speaker or writer. The reader's or hearer's task is to infer the organisational principle that informs the list; that is, a list could be a 'beads-on-a-string' collection of categorisations, activities, or attributions (e.g., an "etcetera" or "you know" procedure seen later in Pell's speech: "only 50 years ago to believe we would abort 100,000 babies a year, contemplate men marrying men, killing the sick, experimenting on human embryos, and so on."), or a device that delivers a categorisation or attribute, when the items are taken together (e.g., "Bronte, Orwell or Dickens novel …" delivers English 'literary canon'); an elaboration of an initial item that acts as the interpretive device; or an up- or down-grading progression ("films, magazines, advertisements, road signs …", and later "relativism is powerful in Western life, evidenced in many areas from the decline in the study of history and English literature, through to the triumph of subjective values and conscience over moral truth and the downgrading of heterosexual marriage"). So sometimes hearers have to 'hear' that the sequence matters, and sometime not; sometimes the comprehensiveness of the list matters, and sometimes not; and sometimes the items are interchangeable, and sometimes not.

Lists, because of the interpretive options they make available, can be a central stratagem in masking their organisational specifications and thus their moral or ideological consequences: the origins of the items, as attributions drawn from devices with particular provenances, and the criteria by which they are selected and sequenced. They thereby can camouflage the essentially moral and ideological nature of descriptions of the social world. So lists, among other things, offer near-perfect opportunities for "methodic, motivated equivocality" (Jayyusi, 1984, p. 80) – designed ambiguity – through their organisation. Understanding the categorial work done through list formations allows the analyst to see discourse and description as part of the organisation or moral relations.

What these observations show is that membership categorisations are motivated descriptions, oriented to the achievement of particular practical tasks in the local context, and that membership categorisation is achieved through a variety of everyday, mundane methods. MCA is predicated on the understanding that what the discoverable membership categorisation activities in any piece of interactive or monologic discourse do is document local, social and practical purposes and reasoning practices. Other methods, briefly outlined below, include the use of topic, the co-selection of disjunctive categories, embedded narratives, and sequential patterning of discourse.

## Using Topical Talk to Assemble Categories and Category Features

The categorial ordering power of topics has been well documented with respect to: group therapy sessions (Sacks 1992a [1966]; [1967]); newspaper texts (Eglin & Hester 1999); referral meetings (Hester & Eglin 1997); and classrooms (see for instance Baker & Freebody 1987; Freebody & Freiberg 2000; Freiberg & Freebody 1995; Freiberg 2003). Topics of spoken, written or visual texts can be "*pervasively important"* (Sacks, 1992a [1966], p. 390) for membership categorisation activities. Talk on particular topics and formulating topical talk in particular ways operates in the constitution of particular categories (Sacks 1972b; 1979; 1992a): Talking on certain topics can generate a category where such action is a predicated activity of a category and MCD; for instance, engaging in an "automobile discussion" as constitutive of the category "young man" in the company of other young men (Sacks 1992a [1966], pp. 320 – 322); and "'problem talk' (about referrals)" as constitutive of relevant category memberships in the MCD "parties to a referral meeting" (Hester & Eglin 1997, pp. 32 – 33). Talking on a topic in a particular way using category-evocative referential terms (e.g., referring to "hotrods" rather than "cars," "tuning your pipes" rather than say, "starting the motor") can generate a type-classification such as "hot-rodder" or "teenager" (Sacks 1992a [1966], pp.169 – 174). When this occurs, the sense of utterances is documented as related to topical and categorial organisations.

## Constituting Recognisable social Activities

### *Using Disjunctive Categories and MCDs to Describe Participants within, and to Assemble the Features of a Recognisable Activity*

Eglin and Hester (1992, 1999) illustrated the reflexive workings of membership categorisation procedures in their analysis of newspaper headlines and news stories. They noted that newspaper stories (and headlines) conventionally provide newsworthy versions of events (Eglin & Hester 1992, 1999) and found that the tasks of reporting and finding newsworthiness were typically accomplished using networks of MCDs implicated by specific categories rather than single MCDs and their relevant category collections. Eglin and Hester's analyses demonstrated that different MCDs were used to provide for the intelligibility of a series of events as a newspaper headline (1992) or story (1999). For instance, their analysis of news stories (1999) associated with the event known as 'the Montreal Massacre' showed that particular focuses of newsworthiness (e.g., the constitution of the event as stories of horror, tragedy, crime, or gun control) were organised categorially by establishing the necessary condition of a news story, that is, a disjuncture between "setting related and event based categories and their conventional predicates" (Eglin & Hester, 1999, p.204).

The "Story of Tragedy" (Eglin & Hester, 1999, pp.205 – 206), for example, was constituted "in the disjuncture between the predicated and actual futures of these murdered young people, these dead students" (205) using scenic properties such as descriptions of "family and collective biographies" (205) that implicated:

- 'stage-of-life,' collection "R" via various standardised relational pairs (SRPs) including: daughter-parent; sister-brother; friend-friend; and

- the murdered young persons' incumbency in the category "student" that invoked expectations of successful futures, cut short because of their re-location in the MCD, "parties to a killing".

In the first instance, the organisation of newsworthiness in the form of a story of tragedy was established using contrastive and disjunctive categorisations of those involved. The tragedy was constituted in the disjunction between youthful expectations of a successful future and their unnatural deaths. The tragic story was organised by an additional disjunction between the young persons' entitlements to and the potential availability of "help" via their incumbency in the collection R standardised relational pairs (SRPs) (e.g., student-teacher, daughter-father, citizen-police) and their drastically reduced rights to access such help during the 'massacre'. Eglin and Hester (1999, p. 205) found that the "category-predicate disjunctions are what make the tragedy, as the tragedy makes the news, and does so recognizably."

Thus the membership categorisation activities made relevant by the tasks conventionally associated with the social activity constructing and finding newsworthiness for a newspaper story were found to be the same activities that made the text identifiable as a news story. The essential reflexiveness of contingent action and the 'normative' features of social activities have also been demonstrated in other media texts and institutional interactions as illustrated below.

### *Using Embedded Stories to Assemble Category Descriptions and Recognisable Social Activities*

Many social activities organised for specific institutional business purposes (e.g., medical consultations, trials, television commercials etc.) include story-tellings (see Freiberg, 2003). In these contexts, the story-teller may feature in (and may be categorisable within) both the ongoing activity and the stories that are told as part of the activity. Where the scenic features of an activity include the telling of a story, category incumbency may, therefore, be organised with reference to both the ongoing activity and to the characterisation of the teller as a character within the story. Thus telling a story may be used as a procedure for category accretion. A third feature of story-tellings – not considered in this section – is that as story-tellers, participants may be attributed particular interactional rights that affect local sequential order in an interaction. For instance, Sacks (1992a [1968]; 1974) found that story-tellers were attributed particular rights and obligations by auditors and vice versa. Incumbency in the category story-teller, for instance, carries with it: the right to 'hold the floor'; obligations to have a 'tellable' point that relates to the social purpose of the activity within which it is embedded; and an obligation to ensure that the story-telling sequence will come to a distinct end.

Story-tellings provide opportunities for characters in the story to be described and categorised and for generalisations to be drawn about the effects of particular actions and about category-action relationships. Category descriptions within stories are not limited to those that are explicit within the story-telling; rather, the "narrative intelligibility" (Francis & Hart 1997: 123) of a story itself can also be traded on for the classification of persons, objects and actions. The activity of story-telling sets up particular expectancies, including the recognisable text structures, that constitute the rationality and meaning of particular actions of

characters in the story. Thus where stories are used within, say, institutional service encounters, moral lessons can be conveyed for instance, about the effects of good or poor service or special service requirements of an individual.

One property of stories embedded in other social activities is that they are knowingly designed as part of the other activity not as entities in themselves. The task for co-participants is to find the rationality of the story to the accomplishment of the institutional purpose of the institutional activity. It is an available cultural commonsense understanding that a story, for instance, about one's self, embedded in another institutional activity, will not be gratuitous self-description. Membership categorisation activities accomplished either explicitly or implicitly via embedded stories relate to situated relevancies and the specific tasks at hand (Jayyusi 1984; Sacks 1992a).

For instance, Francis and Hart's (1997) analysis of a television commercial showed that the intelligibility of various inclusions (e.g., a visual 'story' of a sequence of events in a Quayside scene and a song) were oriented to the constitution of the sense of the entire text as a TV commercial. Their rationality and intelligibility depended on the viewer's understanding of that relationship. The viewer's understanding of the text required an orientation to the text as "a virtual text *designed to be viewed as such*" (Francis & Hart 1997, p. 151). The story of a young man embedded in the commercial was a method of conveying meanings and co-selecting categories *for* the accomplishment of the advertisement of the product (a beer product). The relevance of the embedded story was that the co-selection of persons, activities and objects in the story ("crowded quayside," "customs official," "passengers," "dockhands," "boat," "cabbage," "crates and netting," "young man," "bald man," etc.) only provided a "consistent sense of scenic orderliness" if they were seen as components of a narrative (Francis & Hart 1997, p. 134). However, the categorisation of the central character as a young man missing things associated with 'home' particularly beer (and football) was oriented to making the exact sense required for the activity central to a television commercial (i.e., advertising a commercial product).

What Francis and Hart showed was that the embedding of a story within the television commercial not only set up particular opportunities for membership categorisation activities but that the co-selection of the story-narrative and TV commercial provided for a particular interpretation of the actions of the central character. A third co-selected text, a song played concurrently with the visual narrative (specifying the name of the product being advertised), provided another layer of meaning also organised categorially. The conflation of two direct sources of information about the characters made available by the visual text and the song together with the activity that watching a television commercial consists of (i.e., looking for the advertised product) combined to specify the features of the category 'young man' on this occasion.

What this example demonstrates is not only the descriptive potential of embedded stories for tasks conventionally associated with other institutional activities but that, because they are so widely used, the 'embeddings' make the activities that contain them, recognisable cultural activities. In terms of descriptive potential, they serve to make more than one category-concept and MCD concurrently relevant for an individual and, by implication, for their co-participants. Embedded stories provide opportunities to include "occasioned" MCDs (Francis & Hart 1997: 135), that is, a collection of categories that might not otherwise seem sensible and, therefore, to effect category accretion and transformation.

### *Using Sequential Patterns to Assemble Recognisable Institutional Categories and Activities*

The action of talking in particular ways using specific sequential structures in interactional events such as: classroom talk (Freebody & Freiberg 2000; Macbeth 1990); broadcast news interviews (Heritage & Greatbatch 1991); and medical consultations (Freiberg 2003; Maynard 1992) have documented the category-constitutive power of such actions. These same activities reflexively constitute the recognisable features of those settinged activities.

For instance, the specialised speech exchange system associated with "instructional, curricular activity" in elementary school classrooms was shown by Freebody and Freiberg (2000) to be constitutive of the "occasioned" MCD (see Francis & Hart 1997) "parties to a literacy lesson" composed of the categories "teacher," "kind teacher," "good student," "bad student," where the rationality and intelligibility of the actual event also depended on the invocation of a second MCD, dysfunctional family consisting of the categories "neglected child" and "neglectful parent." Activities and interactional patterns predicated of the category 'teacher' were effectively used to naturalise and to "sanction the topicalisation of non-curricular domains" such as the moral values of the students, and features of parental care, and household routines in the students' homes (Freebody & Freiberg, 2000, p.142). These interactionally accomplished topics in turn provided opportunities for descriptive accounts of the category "student" to be formulated not only in terms of activities typically associated with classroom learning but conflated observable conduct including "students' behaviour and body movements with both assessable cognitive activity and intellectual ability". These actions invoked category features and assembled the MCD 'parties to a literacy lesson', the categories teacher and student, and typical question-answer-evaluation (Q-A-E) sequential structure of teacher-student talk, in extended and non-normative ways.

Trading on normative features of the MCD "parties to a classroom lesson" in conjunction with the understandings provided by the MCD "dysfunctional family," and recognisable pedagogic routines, the category "teacher" was constituted as a kind of clairvoyant moral police officer. Based on these category features, students' performance of mundane actions (e.g., moving about the room, answering questions and postural positioning) were available to the teacher as evaluations of their own and their families' "social and moral attributes, dispositions and values" (146). The assembled accounts of the programmatically relevant MCD "parties to a literacy lesson" and the programmatically relevant categories "student" and "teacher" were networked with the other MCDs and categories to achieve, in seen-but-unnoticed ways, the relevance of the teacher's public moral judgements made of the student and his parents, and the activity of enlisting the support of other students in these judgements so that, in turn, making moral judgements of other students and their families was constituted as a category-bound activity for the category "student". The teachers' embedded accounts of their own and the students' rights and obligations and the students' reciprocal (and compliant) accounts of the categories constituted the indexical features of the local MCD and the categories normatively associated with it. The situated account was achievable because it was grounded in and members oriented to the normative sequential structures of talk in the classroom setting. Freebody and Freiberg's (2000) study demonstrated a procedure, that, according to Jayyusi (1984), is recurrently used as a device to extend or reduce the activities that will be considered to be morally adequate in a setting on specific occasions. Jayyusi (1984, p.172) found that,

> [t]he use of setting inappropriate actions as a device by members enables them to extend their inferential horizon not only along a descending order of settings categorized and ordered thus by reference to that action, but also along an ascending or escalating order of possible actions in those settings, thus maintaining a consistency of evaluation of a person's in situ actions.

## CONCLUSION

Membership categorisation work is a normative feature of many everyday social activities. The local rationality and intelligibility of actions and activities are contingent on the accomplishment of categorial order. This, in turn, relies on the local transformation, for situated, practical purposes, of abstract and open-ended category-concepts and category-collections. The reciprocal activities, adequate membership categorisation, and membership categorisation analysis, are central to the organisation, management, and achievement of practical tasks in everyday life. We take it that members' actions demonstrate that the thickly textured nature of everyday social activity is contingent on local, ongoing membership categorisation work; this is the understanding upon which we base our recommendation that, to avoid 'tripwire analysis', rigorous critical discourse analysis should include MCA.

In reflecting on the particularity of MCA's perspective, Schegloff has commented on its contrast with conventional sociological accounts of social order and categories of people in that it provides:

> an alternative to the possibility that order manifests itself at an aggregate level and is statistical in character is what [Sacks] termed the 'order at all points' view… …This view[e.g.,MCA], rather like the 'holographic' model of information distribution, understands order not to be present only at aggregate levels and therefore subject to an overall differential distribution, but to be present in detail on a case by case, environment by environment basis… A culture is not then to be found only by aggregating all of its venues; it is substantially present in each of its venues… (1992, p. xlvi, inserts added).

Claims to some version of aggregated ontology in conventional interpretations of description of people ("maybe not all, but most … teachers/students/ cardinals/politicians …" etc) are at the core of hegemonic practice, but they also are part of the epistemology underlying some variations of critical discourse analysis and other forms of critical theory and social-justice-oriented advocacy. In this significant way many forms of critical discourse analysis mirror the reasoning practices of hegemonic uses of discourse. MCA, in contrast, allows us to identify how these descriptions are morally and ideologically constituted in everyday discourse, generally via unremarked lexical, grammatical, rhetorical, and structural choices. Using MCA, the critical discourse analyst is able to discover warrantable meanings via an analysis of the situated structures of these choices. Analysis produced by the application of MCA, is therefore, more likely to avoid the linguistic trip-wires that lie on the surface of discourse. It is in the constitutive sense that MCA offers useful applications for critical discourse analysts.

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*Chapter 6*

# CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND THE PROBLEM OF METHODOLOGY

*Alison Lee and Emi Otsuji*

## ABSTRACT

The question of methodology in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is complex and emergent as the field grows and develops after coming to prominence as a major arm of the broader field of discourse analysis over the past decade or so. The boundaries of CDA within this broader field have formed in relation to a certain conception of the 'critical' – itself a particular subset of possible ways of being critical. As a consequence, CDA evinces a particular set of research questions that can be asked by means of the particular kinds of critical theory that are drawn on.

This chapter discusses key questions that arise in a consideration of CDA in terms of research methodology: is CDA a methodology, a set of methods, a theory, or theoretical orientation? Is it a movement, a school? What methodological questions are and are not being addressed within the literature in CDA? We consider the methodological underpinnings of CDA in terms of their epistemological implications – what kind of knowledge is produced by CDA methods. W first present a brief overview of some of the key discussions of method and methodology within a representative array of recent texts, then take up a set of issues for further debate, in order to situate CDA within contemporary debates about social research methodology. These issues include dialectical relations, researcher positioning, reception and reflexivity. The chapter challenges CDA to become more reflexive about its epistemological and methodological underpinnings.

**Keywords:** methodology, social research, discourse, reception, reflexivity, epistemology

## INTRODUCTION

The question of methodology in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is complex and emergent as the field grows and develops after coming to prominence as a major arm of the broader field of discourse analysis over the past decade or so. The boundaries of CDA within this broader field have formed in relation to a certain conception of the 'critical' – itself a particular subset of possible ways of being critical. As a consequence, CDA evinces a particular set of research questions that can be asked by means of the particular kinds of critical theory that are drawn on.

CDA identifies itself as 'inter-disciplinary' in orientation, by which is generally meant that its practitioners draw on a diverse array of methods, though more recently there has been a concern to theorise inter-disciplinarity more carefully in relation to CDA (e.g., van Leeuwen, 2005). What brings the different disciplinary and methodological approaches together, through all this diversity, is a problem-focused approach, a particular theoretical preoccupation with, and orientation to, power, and a transformative agenda flowing from that orientation.

What is the relationship between the theoretical underpinnings of CDA and its methodologies? For our purposes in this chapter we suggest that the term methodology is not concerned just with methods, procedures and techniques but with epistemology – what counts as knowledge and how it is produced. In the remaining sections of this chapter we consider these questions of epistemology in a discussion of the methodological underpinnings of CDA as represented in a set of key recent accounts of this growing and diverse field.

Several important questions arise in a consideration of CDA in terms of research methodology: is CDA a methodology, a set of methods, a theory, or theoretical orientation? Is it a movement, a school? What methodological questions are and are not being addressed within the literature in CDA? How does that affect the growth and consolidation of discourse-analytic research more generally?

In considering these problems, we first present a brief overview of some of the key discussions of method and methodology within a representative array of recent texts, to see what issues are and are not considered in these discussions. We then take up the particular question of reflexivity, situating CDA within contemporary debates about social research methodology more generally through its common deployment of ethnography as the social research method most conducive to critical discourse-analytic purposes and sensibilities. In this way we hope to contribute to building better links between discourse-analytic research and contemporary methodological questions and issues within social research.

## CDA AND METHODOLOGY

CDA is described in a range of exegetical accounts as a 'critical and hermeneutic' approach to discourse analysis. It is developed through a focus on ideological, institutional and social perspectives in discourse and as a synthesis of the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, neomarxism and poststructuralism (Blommaert, 2005; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002; Luke, 2002; Pennycook, 2001; Weiss & Wodak, 2003b; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). What is 'critical' in this work is the political and social commitment

brought to the discourse analysis. It is 'critical', not merely because it critiques existing social and linguistic practices and structures, but also because it mediates linguistic practices with the broader historical, social and cultural frame of activities, practices and ideologies. This inevitably makes distribution of power, solidarity and status relevant to the analysis (Gee, 2004).

The main areas of inquiry for CDA are the workings of political, economic, media, institutional, educational, racial and gendered discourses (Blommaert, 2005). A survey of a range of accounts of CDA identifies the following characteristics: first, CDA is problem-oriented, in that its objective is to address practical political and social concerns. Second, it provides an explanatory paradigm for the analysis of discourse by associating the micro level of text/discourse with the macro level of society and institutions. Third, it is concerned with power and ideologies underlying text, discursive and social practices. Fourth, it considers the effects of discourse and aims to remedy and transform problematic discursive and social practices. Fifth, and finally, as we have already noted, CDA takes an interdisciplinary approach towards discourse (Blommaert, 2005; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 1992, 1995, 2001a, 2001b; Pennycook, 2001; T.A. van Dijk, 1993, 1995; Weiss & Wodak, 2003b; Wodak & Meyer, 2001; Wood & Kroger, 2000).

There is, however, no consensus amongst CDA researchers as to whether CDA is a theory, methodology or neither/both of these. Luke (2002) suggests CDA may be conceived as a 'standpoint' rather than a methodology, since there is no uniform view concerning method. Some conceive CDA as a 'school' (Blommaert, 2005; Weiss & Wodak, 2003b), while others as 'theory and method with dialectic relations' (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999) and as a 'shared perspective on doing discourse analysis' (van Dijk, 1993). Most recently, Van Dijk claims that CDA is neither method nor theory but is a movement of critical scholarship and should therefore allow any methodologies and theories to be employed (van Dijk, 2001, 2008). Correspondingly, Weiss & Wodak (2003b) identify CDA through a multivalent and inclusive orientation towards theory and methodology. This, they assert, should be seen as a positive asset (Weiss & Wodak, 2003a).

Accordingly, there are various theoretical and methodological approaches within CDA. What brings the different orientations together is a shared underlying methodological grounding in the interconnectedness between the text/discourse and context (i.e., historical, social and political actions and structures). Luke (2002, p. 100) emphasises the indexicality of this relationship: '[I]f there is a generalisable approach to CDA, then, it is this orchestrated and recursive analytic movement between text and context'. Despite the enormous variation, what is common to all is the mutual constitution of discourse/text and social, historical and political actions, backgrounds and structures. The diversity of CDA lies in the different ways in which movement between text and context is realised, as well as by the different focus in explicating the interface between the two. This different focus is precisely what makes the work of key figures such as van Dijk, Wodak and Fairclough distinct, and this in turn has caused them develop their own methodologies by focusing on cognitive, historical and hegemonic aspects respectively. We will draw out these distinctions briefly here as, although there is an increase in number of scholars who are considered to be advocates of CDA, these three - van Dijk, Wodak and Fairclough – arguably, the most influential figures in the field represent something of the range of approaches (Blackledge, 2008; Blommaert, 2005).

Van Dijk is concerned with the cognitive dimension in discursive and social practice (van Dijk, 2001). Social cognition and personal cognition mediate between text/interactions and

context as well as between the individual and the group. By context, van Dijk is referring to *global* context: social, political, cultural and historical context, and *local* context: situated interactional context and goals and intentions (van Dijk, 1993, 1995, 1997, 2001). In relation to text analysis, van Dijk points out that a range of linguistic and structural features such as stress and intonation, word order, lexical style, pragmatics, stylistics, rhetorical figures, and semiotic organisation can potentially be analysed. These aspects are put under such analytical categories as analysis of macrostructures (topics), analysis of local meanings (meanings of words, structure of propositions, and coherence), analysis of 'subtle' formal structures (intonation, syntax structures, rhetorical figures, etc), analysis of context. These features are seen as carrying socio-cognitive values such as the socially shared beliefs of participants and as revealing power relations (van Dijk, 2001).

Wodak's discourse-historical approach, in contrast, is characterised by its interdisciplinary and multi-methodological orientation, drawing on a variety of empirical data and background information (Weiss & Wodak, 2003a; Wodak, 2001a: Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). This version of CDA is centrally devoted to the historical and political analysis of context. According to Wodak, the discourse-historical approach requires movement between data and theory. She outlines a series of systematic steps to achieve this movement, which include undertaking ethnographic inquiry to establish context, genre, discourse, interdiscursivity and intertextuality, selecting appropriate explanatory theory, generating questions and linguistic categories for interpretation, and so on (Wodak, 2001a).

The third of these three figures,Fairclough, has produced what is generally considered to be the most elaborate and comprehensive in CDA (Blommaert, 2005). His work has been widely cited and deployed in various studies not restricted to the study of language, in part perhaps because he has explicated his methods in such detailed, practical and replicable ways. His methodology entails three stages of analysis: description, interpretation and explanation, as well as a three-dimensional conception for analysis: analysis of discursive practices (processes of text production, distribution and consumption), text (grammar, vocabulary, cohesion and text structure) and social practices (ideological effect and hegemonic process of discourse) (Fairclough, 1992). Although discursive and social practices are treated separately, discursive practice is seen as a specific form of social practice.

The three-stage analysis was extensively argued in *Language and Power* (Fairclough, 2001b), providing a step-by-step demonstration of the process of the analysis. The relationship between the three-dimensional conceptions and the three stages has remained unclear in Fairclough's later work, though Blommaert (2005) proposes juxtaposing the two in an 'additive' way. It does appear that they are closely intertwined, that is, text analysis in the three-dimensional analysis is concerned with the description of text; the analysis of discursive and social practices appears to correspond to the interpretation stage. According to Fairclough, interpretation entails an attempt "to make sense of the features of text by seeing them as elements in discourse practice, in particular as 'traces' of the processes of text production", as well as "to make sense of the features of texts and of one's interpretation of how they are produced and interpreted, by seeing both as embedded within a wider social practice" (Fairclough, 1992, p.198).

In the third stage, 'explanation' is drawn from the result of the analysis of discursive and social practices. It is at this stage that discourse analysis becomes 'critical' when explicating the previous descriptive and interpretive analysis in the light of power and social structures. Here, the analysis is concerned with the effect of discourse and the dialectic relations between

discourse/texts and the social to denaturalise the underlying ideological assumption realised in the text.

This brief summary demonstrates the impracticality of attempting to provide a definitive account of what constitutes methodology in CDA. The diversity is demonstratively enormous. In one account of the field, Meyer (2001, p.23) concludes that "CDA does not constitute a well-defined empirical method but rather a cluster of approaches with a similar theoretical base and similar research questions". Moreover, as Chouliaraki & Fairclough (1999) point out, CDA's method is constantly rewritten alongside social change. Weiss & Wodak (2003a) suggest that the aims of the research as well as the type of data can become the variables for determining the methodology to be employed.

However, notwithstanding the varied approaches and the methodological apparatus developed by each CDA scholar (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 1992, 2001a, 2001b; van Dijk, 1993, 1995, 2001; Wodak, 2001a, 2001b), these accounts are primarily concerned with the descriptive work of methodology, with, we suggest, insufficient attention given to an exploration of the epistemological underpinnings of the methodologies of CDA, nor the effects of these underpinnings in terms of the status of the knowledge that is produced through these methodologies. We will return to this point in the next section of the chapter and suggest the needs for more reflexive epistemological work in developing the sophistication of the field.

## THREE CRITICAL QUESTIONS FOR METHODOLOGICAL DEBATE IN CDA

Many questions arise from the study of the discussions of methodology in CDA, both from these three key figures, van Dijk, Wodak and Fairclough, and from the variety of commentaries produced over the past decade (e.g., Billig & Schegloff, 1999; Blommaert, 2005; Hammersley, 1996; Luke, 2002; Pennycook, 2001; Weiss & Wodak, 2003b; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). Important questions remain unresolved. In this section we select three of these questions for a closer look: questions of discourse itself in relation to the 'dialectic'; of positioning, and of reception. In the final section we consider the implications of these problems in terms of a core problem of reflexivity by focusing briefly on the methodological field most commonly invoked in CDA texts for the generating of social data: ethnography.

### Discourse, Dialectic and Transformation

CDA is concerned with the relations between discourse and social practices. Its ultimate aim is to transform the existing social inequalities and structures. Its analyses are not therefore, complete until the description/interpretation/explanation stages are taken to the stage of transformation. The complexities and challenges of this formulation are exacerbated through an increasingly uncertain and unstable conceptual field of 'discourse' itself.

In CDA, the relationship between discourse and social and cultural formations is conceived as dialectical. That is, both are shaped and reshaped by each other, thus producing and reproducing social and discursive practice and structures. It is in the process of

production and reproduction that CDA aims to ameliorate social structures and relations (Fairclough, 1993, 1995, 2001b; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; van Dijk, 1993). It is believed that change in the existing discursive practices can bring about transformation of the social practices in question. However, for it to be possible to transform and remedy existing social and discursive inequities, it is necessary to allow for agentive and creative capacity and room within the social-discursive dialectic relationship.

Fairclough (1992) claims that this transformation occurs through ideological struggle realised in intertextuality and interdiscursivity. Fairclough has been explicit about the shifts in his own thinking about discourse, and its relation to other key theoretical constructs, from the publication of *Language and Power* in 1989 to the present. In 2005 he summarised his position thus:

> The term 'discourse' is used in various ways within the broad field of discourse analysis. Two are of particular relevance here. First, 'discourse' in an abstract sense as a category which designates the broadly semiotic elements (as opposed to and in relation to other, non-semiotic, elements) of social life (language, but also visual semiosis, 'body language' etc). I prefer to use the term 'semiosis' (Fairclough, Jessop & Sayer, 2004) to avoid the common confusion of this sense of 'discourse' with the second, which I retain: 'discourse' as a count noun, as a category for designating particular ways of representing particular aspects of social life (*e.g.,* it is common to distinguish different political discourses, which represent for example problems of inequality, disadvantage, poverty, 'social exclusion', in different ways). The category of 'discourse' in this second sense is defined through its relation to and difference from two other categories, 'genre' and 'style' (Fairclough 2005, p.77).

The question of the epistemological grounds for different conceptions of discourse is an important and unresolved one in CDA. Notwithstanding the work on defining discourse in a relational way, as evidenced in the above quote, there remain difficult issues of conceptual boundaries, which are of different orders. Some of these are the boundaries between text and context, between ideological and the so-called 'non-ideological' discourses and between discursive and so-called 'non-discursive' elements of social structures. Indeed, the constitution of the core term, 'discourse' is often conceptually ambiguous. Phillips & Jorgensen (2002, p.89), for example, argue that the boundary between 'topic' and 'discourse' is not comprehensible. As a result, the demonstration of the intertextual and interdiscursive properties of the text may not be sufficient to fully explicate the transformative capacity of CDA. Phillips & Jorgensen further argue that the actual processes in which the dialectic leads to social transformation are not unequivocally demonstrated. They ask: 'how can one show exactly *where* and *how* the non-discursive moments influence and change the discursive moment – and vice versa?' (Phillips & Jorgensen 2002, p.89).

These questions are, we suggest, fundamental when we scrutinise the way CDA operationalises the dialectic relationship as the nexus of the framework. In this way, we suggest that the dialectic relationship itself, generally construed in the literature as given, may need to be problematised. Phillips & Jorgensen (2002, p.89) ask: 'how can one demonstrate empirically that something is in a dialectical relationship with something else?' Further: 'where does one locate the line of demarcation between two or more things that are in dialectical interplay?' In the next sections we address the questions of positioning and reflexivity, in order to find ways to address these methodological dilemmas.

## Positioning: Researcher and Researched

We have established that CDA construes discourse and social practice as mutually constitutive and dialectical. Further, this relationship is mediated by ideology (Fairclough, 1992, 2001b; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Wodak, 2001b) or social cognition (van Dijk, 1993, 1995, 2001, 2003). We suggest here that the status of this ideological mediation is problematic in relation to the positioning of the objects and subjects of the analysis. That is, in broad terms within CDA, while the object of the analysis is understood to be ideologically laden, the subject of the analysis, the analyst, remains largely invisible or insufficiently accounted for (Lee 2000).

We would emphasise in relation to this problem that the subject is neither a-historical nor constituted only by one dominant ideology. Theorisations of the subject as multiply constituted suggest that not only the 'dominant ideology' but also other positions the subject has taken up in the course of their biographical history may influence the production and interpretation of the text. CDA's tendency to focus on the dominant ideology in relation to power and discourse can often appear monolithic. Pennycook (2001) critiques the theorisation of power in CDA in relation to an over-emphasis on dominant groups. Similarly, Luke (2002) points out that CDA has been principally concerned with the connection between normative reading of texts and a normative reading of the social world.

In relation to these criticisms, Wodak (1996) includes biographical and personal factors in her analysis and claims that social and individual aspects are embedded in any given linguistic utterance (Wodak, 1996). Van Dijk similarly acknowledges the individual's contribution to the analysis. That is, van Dijk's cognitive approach incorporates specific individual events and cognition in the light of the social ones by proposing the notion 'models': 'Models' are mental representations of specific personal experiences regarding past events or situations. They are therefore subjective and 'unique' (van Dijk 1993; 1995). Models link actual personal events, discourses and opinions with social ones by having bi-directional relations: generalisation and decontextualisation of models into social cognitions, as well as instantiation of social cognition into models (van Dijk, 2001). This accentuates the uniqueness and subjective nature of models, but still acknowledges social influences. Van Dijk sees models as holding a strong interpretive power to explain why people do not say the same thing in the same social context. He notes that:

> It is methodologically crucial to realise that ideologies cannot always simply be 'read off' discourse structures without taking into account the possibly transforming role of intervening factors of personal events and context models and of conflicting attitudes controlled by the ideologies of the various groups language users identify with (van Dijk, 1995, p.255).

Van Dijk notes that personal experience, biography, motivation, emotion and other factors also affect and intervene in the process of social and discursive practice (van Dijk, 1995), whereas these factors are not specifically taken into consideration by Fairclough. Nevertheless, the extent to which particular textual and linguistic features are the realisation of the models of social cognition, as well as the relations between the two in the analysis, remains, we suggest, unclear. Thus van Dijk's analysis, too, tends to neglect the position of the subject – the analyst – in the analysis.

This problem of positioning is ultimately an epistemological one, in that it presupposes a status to the act of analysis that implicitly appears to transcend social positioning. This, in spite of rigorous attempts to position the texts of analysis in their social and historical contexts, appears bears the trace of what Haraway (1991) calls the 'God trick' – the 'view from everywhere and nowhere' – the illusion that creates a belief in an infinite vision and hence a detached observer perspective from which 'objective' scientific theory can be produced. According to Haraway's critique, all theory is a 'place of seeing' and is hence always positioned and partial. It is this positioning, and its implications for the kinds of knowledge that are produced through this 'place of seeing' that we suggest remains in need of further theoretical work in CDA.

## Reception

The third critical question we raise for methodological debate CDA is that of 'reception'. By this we refer to the 'interpretation' or 'reading' of texts by actors in the social situations in which the texts circulate. Analysis in CDA, following from the discussion of researcher positioning in the previous section, is almost always productivist in orientation and 'etic' – produced from 'outside' (Blommaert, 2005; Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002; Luke, 2002; Pennycook, 2001, Lee 2000).

Interestingly, these criticisms are contrary to the stated intention of key proponents of CDA at different points. For example, Fairclough (2001b) acknowledges that interpretation deals with how participants come to understand the text and thus the analyst needs to align herself to the participant's perspective. This is deemed possible by drawing on the analyst's own MR (membership resources: cognitive resources, with internalised social structures, norms and conventions) to explicate the participant's own interpretive process. However, as Fairclough himself points out, discrepancies in the knowledge and assumptions between analysts and participants may occur.

As a way to resolve this problem, Fairclough (2001b, p.141) notes:

> At this stage of the procedure, it is only really self-consciousness that distinguishes the analysts from the participants she is analysing. The analyst is doing the same as the participant interpreter, but unlike the participant interpreter the analyst is concerned to explicate *what* she is doing.

We will consider this critical issue of reflexivity in the final section. Here we are concerned to problematise the backgrounding of reception, or reading, by participants in a situation, as a primary resource for the interpretation of texts and hence for the analysis of discourse. Within literary theory, poststructuralism, postmodern ethnography and other bodies of theory informing contemporary social research, the role of the reader or the member becomes critical to the meaning and effect of a text or semiotic event. As Hodge and Kress (1988, p.4), in *Social Semiotics* note: "each producer of a message relies on its recipients for it to function as intended". They propose the idea of 'reading regimes' to construe regularities and the operations of power in the ways messages circulate and take their meaning. Further, as McHoul (1991) and Green (1991) explain with nuanced theoretical precision, 'reading' refers to the fundamental acts of sense-making in relation to any event in the world. Reading,

according to Green, is a "social signifying practice involving a complex interplay of text/context relations characterized by a motivated and constrained undecideability" (Green 1991, p.216). In this sense, there is no 'outside' to reading. In relation to contemporary textual theory, Threadgold (1997, p.2) reminds us that the source of textual meaning has been relocated from inside the text to the "negotiations between readers, writers and texts". This in turn has necessitated a "theorisation of the subjects who read and write" (See also Lee this volume). The question for CDA in the face of these formulations is which readings, whose readings and by what warrant, come to constitute authoritative accounts.

## REFLEXIVITY AND METHODOLOGY: THE CASE OF ETHNOGRAPHY

Van Dijk (2003, p.96) has claimed that 'CDA is biased – and proud of it'. Wodak (2001a, p.65), on the other hand, suggests that:

> CDA is not concerned with evaluating what is 'right' or 'wrong'. CDA – in my view – should try to make choices at each point in the research itself, and should make these choices transparent. It should also justify theoretically why certain interpretations of discursive events seem more valid than others.

In the previous discussion we have pursued a set of questions pertaining to the analyst's relationship with the participants and the objects of research. In this section we will bring these together in a consideration of reflexivity in research, with particular reference to the prevalence of ethnography as the nominated method of acquiring knowledge about social situations in which discourses, as well as interdiscursive and intertextual relations are to be ascertained in CDA.

A feature of much of the literature in CDA is, we suggest, that the focus on texts often serves to generalise and homogenise the social situations and cultures within which discourses and texts circulate. Social structures and power relations are read 'off' texts. Moreover, while great care is exercised by key proponents of CDA to explicate the relations between discursive and social practices, in the hands of the unwary or inexperienced the voice of the analyst often appears 'stentorian' and authoritarian (Blommaert, 2005). As we have noted in the previous section, the relationship with participants and 'members' is often elided, deferred or subordinated to that of the analyst.

These points become more visible when CDA is positioned within contemporary discussions about social research methodology, particularly ethnography. Many if not most accounts of research methodology in CDA draw on ethnography to supply the research tools that produce the texts that are subjected to interpretation and analysis (e.g., Titscher, Meyer, Wodak & Vetter, 2000; Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). Whether these are formally constituted texts prior to the research (e.g., reports, memos, letters) or whether they are artefacts of the research process itself (e.g., transcriptions of interviews or natural conversation etc), this is an overwhelmingly textualist form of ethnography, though it is rarely theorised as such from within CDA. That is, there are dimensions of social and cultural life that are elided and suppressed in a textualist orientation, particularly the material and embodied nature of social practice, and of the nature of social practice itself.

The question of authority in interpretation is perhaps the most important methodological question that remains relatively unexplored in terms of its profound epistemological implications. As noted in earlier work (Lee 2000, p.188):

> Discourse analysis is most often conceived of in terms of what someone does *to* a particular site or text. There is assumed a relationship of exteriority with regard to that site, an 'etic' relationship, where the analyst's tools, whatever kind they might be, are applied in the production of an authoritative account *about* the site. There is, in general, a paucity of commentary concerning the political relations, that is, the relations of power-knowledge, that obtain between the analyst and the object domain of analysis. In particular, there has typically been a tendency to assume the capability of analysis, given the truth-revealing capabilities of particular methods, to strip away what might, admittedly provocatively, be inferred as 'false consciousness' of the text or object of analysis, its failure to know itself, and to reveal a better truth about that object.

Within the 'writing culture' debates in anthropology over the past fifty years or so, the critique of monological authority in social science writing produced an imperative towards a 'democratisation' of representation. For the purposes of briefly restaging some of the crucial moves in that debate, Clifford's historical account of the emergence of the dialogic as a principle in ethnographic writing is instructive here. According to Clifford (1983, p.41), the 1950s ushered in mounting criticism of 'colonial' forms of representation: "discourses that portray the cultural realities of other peoples without placing their own reality in jeopardy". In response, Clifford, citing Dwyer, examines models of dialogue between researcher 'self' and researched 'other' that stress a "hermeneutics of vulnerability" Clifford (1983, p.43). Such a stance stresses the 'ruptures' of fieldwork, the 'divided position' and 'imperfect control' of the ethnographer, and represents the experience of research in ways that "tear open the textualised fabric to the other, and thus also of the interpreting self" (Clifford 1983, p.43).

As Pierides (2007) describes elegantly, the emergent ways with which objects of study are defined necessitate different orientations towards research in CDA. In recent work, he suggests the notion of 'situated discourse' as a way of undermining the themes of an assumed world system that continue to be performed through the kinds of critical orientations that appear in CDA. In this critique Pierides brings into questions the extent to which these tools can be useful in defining objects of study through the changing relations between ethnographic subjects.

It would seem necessary for CDA, at this stage in its growth and consolidation as a research field, to take up these questions of the situatedness of its own analytic positionalities, and the limitations of the notions of reflexivity in research that continue to constrain discourse-analytic research in its capacity to account for the epistemological (and ideological) work it is implicitly doing. For example, by analysing transcultural workplace communication between 'Japanese' and 'Australians', Otsuji (2008) points out that CDA tends to rely on eurocentric accounts and notes the lack of reflexivity in this regard. Clearly within cultural globalisation this need for reflexivity is greater than ever, and as is the need for social and cultural theory that can better 'situate' the analysis being conducted within CDA.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has asked questions about how critical discourse analysts locate and situate themselves in their research. Our particular interest in the question of reflexivity as it applies to the processes of the research itself subsumes other more technical and particular questions concerning theoretical categories and boundaries within CDA. Of principal concern to us is the epistemological question of what knowledge is produced through CDA methods. Whose problems are identified and who identifies them? What are the relations between the subjects and objects of the research? How are texts constituted for analysis (see Lee this volume) and how are they received and read – within the social situations in which analysts enter as ethnographers?

These questions are asked from the perspective of contemporary orientations towards, and debates within, social research, in terms of reflexive (re)defining of objects and relations among subjects in the practice of research. There remains a curious absence of such considerations within the discussions of methodology within CDA. Yet these questions are central to building methodological sophistication within the field and for dealing with some ongoing important criticisms of CDA as it is currently articulated and practised. In concluding, we would comment that CDA – as movement, school, theory etc – is yet to take up the challenge of reflexivity in the broader sense referred to by Giddens and other social theorists as the condition of 'reflexive modernity' (see e.g., Beck, Giddens & Lash, 1994). In CDA, what counts as research methodology, more often than not, is discourse-analytic method. In terms of uptake, if not in the broad array of theoretical literature, there is a will to technicality and replicability that can disguise or 'forget' the constitutive and relational epistemological work of research. What remains to be further explored, through an expanded engagement with reflexivity in research, is the question of responsibility in accounting for the knowledge-claims made in the name of CDA.

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*Chapter 7*

# THE ANTINOMIES OF POWER IN CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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## ABSTRACT

This paper provides an overview of the conception of power in critical discourse analysis (CDA). It is a conception influenced by the thought of Michel Foucault and realized in CDA as the study of the discursive construction of domination. The concern for power as domination links CDA to struggles against inequality and power abuse, and to the demystification in language of mechanisms of inculcation and control. The development of critical language awareness and critical consciousness as key CDA objectives, and the deliberate incorporation of socio-theoretical insights, associates CDA with a Marxist and neo-Marxist emancipatory problematic which has had a particular appeal for critical practitioners in education, who adopt its models for the teaching of CDA courses and for the classroom analysis of texts. Recent scholarly critiques have led to questions being raised about the limitations of CDA's negative understanding of power, and theoretical reformulations by prominent CDA scholars have seen CDA engage with the relativist challenges presented by poststructuralist thinking. In education in particular, but also in the CDA mainstream, the negative conception of power seems to narrow the range of objects which are open to a critical analysis of discourse due to the implicit need to focus on texts which carry traces of positions to which CDA is opposed. The paper discusses the theoretical and methodological implications for CDA of adopting a more positive interpretation of power and presents a critique of CDA's engagement with poststructuralism.

**Keywords:** power, emancipation, poststructuralism, education, ethics

## INTRODUCTION

This paper concerns power and its relation to discourse within critical discourse analysis (CDA). Today, this is a wide and multiply-varied area of study offering several perspectives and approaches (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997; Wodak and Meyer, 2001; Wodak and Chilton, 2005), in addition to critiques (Blommaert and Bulcaen, 2000; Slembrouck, 2001; Pennycook, 2001; McKenna, 2004; Rajagopalan, 2004; Luke, 2004; Blommaert, 2005; Chilton, 2005; Maingueneau, 2006). In this paper we reflect upon how power has been understood in CDA and how this affects the practice of CDA, especially in the choice of the social phenomena/objects/texts that it studies. We wish to make some observations regarding how power has been perceived in CDA which may have implications for these choices. In the main our interest here is applied, because the issues we raise are derived from our experience of teaching university courses in CDA and the justifications which we have presented to ourselves and students for teaching a method of discourse analysis which is 'critical'. These justifications have principally been motivated by a desire to intervene at the level of the text in reified systems of social injustice, inequality and exclusion, in an attempt to understand how these systems operate discursively, and to consider how, or whether, they might be destabilized. Implicit in this practice is that we have hoped that as critical discourse analysts and as teachers we might make some contribution to the creation of more equitable and just alternatives. This is a perspective which many critical discourse analysts as well as critical pedagogists seem to share (e.g., Janks, 2000; Guilherme, 2002; Wallace, 2003; Luke 2004; Giroux, 2006; Rymes, Souto-Manning and Brown, 2005; Goatly, 2007). This aim may be characterized as moving society away from orders of power which are based on systems of domination, inculcation and control, to ones which are based on principles of social justice, equity and understanding. It is views such as these which have made CDA critical and which are responsible for constructing the critical practitioner as someone who is politically-minded and committed to just alternatives. As Blommaert and Bulcaen (2000) amongst others have noted, scholars identifying with the label CDA seem to be united by "an explicit commitment to social action and the political left wing" (p. 454). From the social theory perspective, this orientation has from the beginning been realized according to a largely Marxist and neo-Marxist problematic and vocabulary which places particular emphasis on the operations of ideology and power in the discursive construction of asymmetrical social relations. In addition, the focus on language and on the development of critical language awareness as a possible means of emancipation has been a central feature of the approach, whether openly stated or implied (O'Regan, 2000).

In recent years there have been various critiques presented of the neo-Marxist problematic in CDA (Pennycook, 2001; Rajagoplan, 2004; Luke, 2005; Blommaert, 2005) and a certain amount of rethinking (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999; Wodak and Meyer, 2001; Wodak and Chilton, 2005), but this does not seem to have deflected the wider perception that the main purpose of CDA is as Fairclough has maintained, "to help increase consciousness of how language contributes to the domination of some people by others, because consciousness is the first step towards emancipation" (Fairclough, 1989, p.1; 2001, p. 1). For this reason the main areas in which CDA practitioners work continue to involve issues of manipulation, exploitation and control, and the raising of 'critical consciousness' about them (*passim*). The domains covered include politics, race and gender inequalities, media

discourse, industrial relations, advertising, globalization and literacy (see Blommaert and Bulcaen, 2000; McKenna, 2004; and Blommaert, 2005, for overviews). It is not unexpected then that in educational approaches which follow these precedents (e.g., Goatly, 2000; Guilherme, 2002; Wallace 2003; Janks, 2005) a similar range of interests and principles can be identified. This is reasonable enough, as such interests and principles are clearly relevant in a world rent by economic inequality and armed barbarism. That said, the focus on inequality and power asymmetry commits the CDA practitioner – particularly the teacher-practitioner – to an explicit political stance and to selecting texts which ideologically lend themselves to a CDA type of critique by presenting subject positions to which CDA is opposed. As a consequence of the problematic, educational practitioners are thus implicitly encouraged to filter out texts which do not bear traces of dispreferred positions and to concentrate their efforts on those that do, or which seem to.

## POWER AS DOMINATION: NEGATIVE POWER

The central signifier in CDA has been the concept of power (*passim*). According to van Dijk, 'the real ethical problem we need to focus on in critical discourse research is… the *illegitimate* exercise of power, that is power *abuse* or *domination* (van Dijk, 1997, p.24; original emphasis). This perspective is echoed by Fairclough, for whom the "critical analysis of discourse is nothing if it is not a resource for struggle against domination" (Fairclough, 2001, p.216). Power as domination is understood as an oppressive force in society; one which is calculated to subjugate opposition to the mechanisms by which the status quo is maintained in the interests of power holders. These are loosely presented as consisting of an alliance of governments, capitalists and general stakeholders in capital, who together constitute the dominant bloc within capitalist societies, and within global capitalism more generally (Fairclough, 1999, 2001; Wodak, 2001; Meyer, 2001). Theorizations of the concept of power in this tradition present power as closely aligned with ideology and the construction of consent, particularly as this is expressed in the work of Althusser (1971) in relation to the operation of ideological state apparatuses, and Gramsci (1971, 1986) on ideological hegemony and the manufacture of consent.

The idea that power is not simply oppressive but circulates between and through all social relations and practices is derived from Foucault (1980, 1981). Foucault conceives of power as a net-like organization in which we are entwined.

> And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation (Foucault, 1980, p.98).

This view of power is also recognized by Chouliaraki and Fairclough.

> We believe that the view of modern power as invisible, self-regulating and inevitably subjecting … needs to be complemented with a view of power as domination … Otherwise it can collapse into structural determinism and anti-humanism which leaves no space for agency in social practices (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999, p.24).

From this re-evaluation it seems that power as an invisible network is placed in a primary relation to power as domination. In practice, CDA has more often opted for the reverse

arrangement whereby power as domination is put first and it has been in this sense – particularly in education – that CDA and critical language study have been popularly perceived.

> Critical discourse analysis is used to understand how language works to position readers in the interests of power. It assumes a critical theory of ideology … which sees power as negative and productive of inequitable social relations (Janks, 2000, p.177).

The view of power as both an invisible network and as domination which Choulariaki and Fairclough introduce has been a relatively recent departure in CDA. The understanding of power as an invisible network is not often recognized in mainstream – especially pedagogic – CDA, although critically-oriented scholars such as Pennycook and Blommaert have proposed this type of view.

> There is a danger in some approaches to CDA or other critical discussions of education that power is simply linked to a notion of *dominant groups* … [P]ower is not something that is owned and possessed but rather something that operates through society (Pennycook, 2001, p.90).
>
> [A] critical discourse analysis should not be a discourse analysis that reacts against power *alone*. It is a commonplace to equate 'critical approaches' with 'approaches that criticise power'. My point of view is that we need to be more specific. The suggestion I want to offer is that it should be an analysis of power *effects*, of the outcome of power, of what power *does to* people, groups, and societies, and of *how* this impact comes about (Blommaert, 2005, p.2; original emphasis).

## POWER AS KNOWLEDGE: POSITIVE POWER

Foucault's poststructuralist realization of power, from which the perspectives of Pennycook and Blommaert are derived, retains a conception of power as domination while simultaneously placing it in a secondary position to power and its constructing effects. On power as domination he says, "Let us not deceive ourselves; if we speak of the structures or the mechanisms of power, it is only insofar as we suppose that certain persons exercise power over others" (Foucault, 1982, p.217); he also says "where there is power, there is also resistance" (Foucault, 1981, p.95). Qualifying this, Foucault questions the idea that the resistance to such power can be predicated on foundational notions of truth, or an appeal to moral principles, and that by opposing domination it is possible to reveal true knowledge and so promote a better world.

> [T]he problem does not consist in drawing the line between that in a discourse which falls under the category of scientificity or truth, and that which comes under some other category, but in seeing historically how effects of truth are produced within discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false (Foucault, 1980, p.118).

For Foucault then, the point is to examine how different discourses operate in making claims about truth, and the purpose of discursive analysis is to study how such discourses construct the world in the way that they do. It is not part of this analysis to determine which

discourses are true and which are false. We are unable to decide this because we are beings "who are historically determined" (Foucault, 1984, p.43), and so we are unable to stand outside these relations in order to make judgements of truth. In his words, **"**one can't, however regrettable it may be, put these notions forward to justify a fight which should … overthrow the very fundaments of our society" (Foucault cited in Rabinow, 1984, p.7). The collapse of the boundary between truth and falsity, and the lurch towards relativism which results, threatens a CDA which requires moral foundations and truth, even when a poststructuralist – and quasi-relativist – working perspective is adopted.

> An important emancipatory political objective [in CDA] is to maximise the conditions for judgements of truth to be compared and evaluated on their merits … Retreating into a helpless relativism when faced with issues such as war crimes in ex-Yugoslavia, which require judgements of truth and falsity, is in my view serious ethical failure, whatever theoretical voices may be used to rationalize it (Fairclough, 1995, p.19).
>
> [W]e see ourselves as working within a post-structuralist perspective, but without adopting either post-structuralist reductions of the whole of social life to discourse, or post-structuralist judgemental relativism (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999, p.32).

Both extracts present arguments against relativism. The first presents the familiar modernist position of an emancipatory CDA and rejects relativism in terms of the need to be able to judge truth in the face of the atrocities of war. The second, reiterates this rejection in terms of an opposition to discursive reductionism (i.e., that everything is discourse) but does so now from an apparently poststructuralist perspective. Putting the argument about discursive extent to one side (see Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, 1990, on this), the claim to be working within a poststructuralist perspective while simultaneously reserving the modernist right to make judgements about truth somehow seems at odds with itself. The problem here is that working within a poststructural perspective precludes the possibility of making this type of judgement, for to do so is to claim a transcendental view. If there is such a thing as a standard position in poststructuralism, it is that there is no privileged insight or "God's eye view" (Smith and Deemer, 2000, p.887). Chouliaraki and Fairclough qualify their poststructuralism by arguing that, "Although epistemic relativism must be accepted – that all discourses are socially constructed relative to the social positions that people are in – this does not entail judgemental relativism – that all discourses are equally good" (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999, p.8). Their perspective here is that knowledge as presented in and through discourse is socially constructed, and that different 'knowledges' and therefore discourses obey their own internal systems of logic. It is these logics which reproduce and sustain social institutions and the contexts of which they are constructed as particular types of knowledge and practice, or 'orders of discourse'. The order of discourse is a term CDA has adopted from Foucault and represents the totality of the discursive practices of a social domain – "a distinctive articulation of discourses, genres and styles" (Fairclough, 2005, p.53). Orders of discourse can be envisaged as existing at three levels of realization: *situational* (relating to immediate social contexts), *institutional* (relating to the knowledge domains of a society: medical, judicial, educational, scientific, religious, familial, political, etc.), and *societal* (relating to the overall configuration of situational and institutional domains together). At the third level the institutional orders of discourse together constitute a 'social

formation' or *society*. They also, in the totality of discourse practices which they represent, construct a society's, or a collection of societies', *episteme* or regime of truth.

> Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish between true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (Foucault, 1980, p.131).

Discourse as a social practice is what produces structural differentiation within and between societies and distinguishes one 'order of discourse' from another, and through which different types of formation are endowed with properties of regularity and coherence. Inasmuch as orders of discourse as specific formations of knowledge and practice exhibit differential coherence, they are in Chouliaraki and Fairclough's perspective internally self-legitimating and therefore epistemically relative. But this does not entail that they cannot be judged against truth – a modernist sensibility is retained. It is by this reasoning that Chouliaraki and Fairclough are able to reject poststructuralist judgemental relativism while accepting epistemic relativism, and to claim that they are working within a poststructural perspective, if one which is narrowly defined.

The delimitation of poststructuralist thinking to the epistemic in orders of discourse occurs simultaneously with, and is a consequence of, the privileging in CDA of power as domination over power as a constructing and constituting force. It is by focusing on the former that CDA is able to critique power abuse as a central element in the discursive construction of social practices, and to do so from a firmly non-relative base. To do otherwise, as Foucault does, is to take this foundation away and this, according to the modernist logic, leads to moral relativism and all the dangers which that entails. This is why in CDA Foucault's perception of power has to be constrained. In an oft-quoted passage, Fairclough explains that it is not possible simply to apply Foucault's ideas to CDA, it is rather a matter of "putting Foucault's perspective to work" within it (Fairclough, 1992, p.38).

The constraining of the concept of power in CDA involves privileging analysis of the discursive construction of domination, 'negative power', over the discursive construction of social life in general – 'positive power'. For Foucault, "Rather than analyzing power in terms of its internal rationality" (Foucault, 1984, p.211), i.e., in terms of what it oppresses and excludes, the purpose is to analyze power in terms of what it produces.

> What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is the fact that it does not only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole of society, much more than a negative instance whose function is repression (Foucault, 1980, p.119).

The preoccupation with relations of domination in CDA places some limits upon 'the study of language as a form of social practice' (Fairclough, 2001, p.18) because social practice as a way of being in the world is more than a relation of oppression. It is also a relation of expression in multiple modalities of meaning and practice. Borrowing a phrase from Ricoeur, we come to know who we are only by "the long detour of signs of humanity deposited in cultural works" (Ricouer, 1981, p.144). In a CDA whose focus is oppression the

risk is that many of these signs will be overlooked. In other words, by preferring to struggle against power and mystification in texts, CDA misses the 'everyday'. What we are pointing to is a neglect of mundanity, functionality and utility in the objects which CDA feels obliged to study, and an explicit prioritizing of texts which seem more readily implicated in obfuscation, manipulation and control. Thus CDA studies political and corporate discourse, sexism, racism, and discursive realizations of class division and social inequality, and always with the bedrock of a modernist teleology to support it. It is not that these areas should not be studied, on the contrary they should, but there needs to be more reflexivity applied to the reasons for studying them if CDA is to break out of its modernist shell. If CDA is to be something more than a form of politically left-wing auto-critique, it requires a more consistent re-evaluation of its relationship to poststructuralist thought by means of a rigorous self-interrogation of its assumptions and methods, a self-interrogation which Chouliaraki and Fairclough appear to have left incomplete. In particular, CDA needs to revisit its methodological approach in order to make critical enquiry and analysis less a matter of suspicion, attack and demystification and more one of interpretation, mapping and problematization. Slembrouck (2001) and Blommaert (2005) have both drawn attention to the claims to explanatory power which are suggested by Fairclough's three dimensions of description, interpretation and explanation, and O'Regan (2006) from the perspective of education has proposed removing explanation altogether in favour of a wholly interpretative approach to texts.

The Text as a Critical Object.

1. *Descriptive interpretation*: the frame of the text, the visual organization of the text, the topic, the reading position, the preferred reading and the ideal reader.
2. *Representative interpretation:* description and interpretation of the image, grammar, vocabulary and genre choices of the text.
3. *Social interpretation:* the social context(s) which the text seems to be a part of: e.g. contexts of gender, race, economy, politics, family, class, income, age, sex, property, geography, etc.
4. *Deconstructive interpretation:* aspects of the descriptive, representative and social dimensions of the text which appear to contradict or undermine the preferred reading (O'Regan, 2006, p.191).

Our view is that the social practice dimensions of meaning should be given greater methodological priority in CDA, particularly in educational contexts, so that CDA can be applied to an unlimited range of texts and phenomena. Rather than an analysis of the negative operations of power and the narrowing of methodological focus which this implies, CDA needs to give greater moment to the discursive construction of social life in all its forms and delineations, and to make this strategy more explicit in its approach. The focus on power as a negative effect is a particular shortcoming of educational as well as mainstream approaches. Here, the influence of the emancipatory agenda has skewed the analysis of texts and phenomena towards the demystification of manipulation and prejudice, and away from a more ideologically unencumbered – but still problematizing – discursive mapping of the social and the orders of discourse which make it up.

In a discursive mapping model in which all texts and social phenomena are necessarily valid objects of study, the discursive construction of domination does not simply disappear.

Such relations are still part of the way we construct and understand our world and so continue to be part of the way we practice a discourse analysis which is critical. In addition, since there is no limit to the number and types of phenomena and texts which a society produces, in this methodology all phenomena and texts are potential 'critical' objects, and not just the objects of negative power. Rearticulating critical practice in order to privilege the constructing and meaning-making character of discourse over its role in the construction of domination (i.e. positive power over negative power) presents certain advantages for educational applications. Firstly, it makes it possible to analyze and discuss texts in a wide range of genres without the constraint of having to demonstrate how the text in question may be contributing to the production and maintenance of asymmetrical power relations, and secondly, for the same reason, it also gives the educational practitioner a much freer choice in the selection of texts.

## REFORMULATING A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ETHICS

While these are advantages, to move the focus from negative power to positive power leaves CDA with the problem of how it grounds itself as a critical practice, since foundational truths no longer have a place in the theorization of power. As Pennycook puts it, "If there is no way of establishing reality or truth outside a particular sign system, how then can we still make judgements about preferable outcomes?" (Pennycook, 2001, p.136). He cites James Paul Gee, who suggests that we must consider the effect on people of what we do and say. In Gee's view, "That something should harm someone else … is always a good reason … not to do it" (p.136). Gee offers a second reason; this is that "One always has the ethical obligation to explicate … any social practice that there is a reason to believe advantages oneself or one's group over other people or groups" (p.136). The problem for these perspectives is how we are supposed to appreciate in the absence of foundations why not harming someone is 'a good thing', or why a social practice which advantages oneself over others is, if it is not explicated, possibly 'a bad thing'. Because, by appealing to 'goodness' its inverse 'badness' is also implied, and therefore so is our ability to claim to be able to differentiate between them.

If we are to try to find a way out of the circularity of a discourse ethics reliant on foundational truths, we first need to accept that discourses which are grounded in such truths are unreliable, and therefore that to talk in terms of good and bad, true and false, only returns us to where we started.

We therefore require an alternative discourse which can be seen to perform a similar role but which, in the absence of the ability to tell whether one truth is preferable to another, may nevertheless lead to not dissimilar outcomes. In such a discourse, ethics would be effaced and yet in some ways also remain present. This is the position which is captured the Derridean notion of *différance* (Derrida, 1982). According to which all signs carry within them the implication of their other. For Derrida, there can be no originary or pure notion of good (as opposed to bad), of the outside (as opposed to the inside), or of truth (as opposed to untruth) which does not already include the implication of its 'other'; in short, 'there is no experience of *pure* presence' (Derrida, 1988: 10; original emphasis). Différance is the formulation which for Derrida captures absence and presence simultaneously. It is therefore through Derrida that a discourse ethics which is not grounded in foundational truths might be proposed. Such an ethics, if it is to have any value at all, must give grounds for making judgements which are

not dependent upon transcendentals. This is why in the discourse ethics of Derrida the grounds on which judgements may be made are determined according to the synonymic principle of an opposition to closure and an openness to the other.

> Once you grant some privilege to gathering and not to dissociating, then you leave no room for the other, for the radical otherness of the other, for the radical singularity of the other. I think, from that point of view, separation, dissociation is not an obstacle to society, to community, but the condition (Derrida, 1997, p.14).

Rather than trying to determine whether different truths are good or bad, this discourse ethics asks instead whether putting a particular discourse or set of discourses into practice would lead to a Heideggerian 'gathering' or 'closing' of 'the universe of discourse' (Marcuse, 1964), and therefore also a turning away from, or denial, of the other. A critical discourse analysis which is concerned with adjudicating between truth claims, would on this basis seek to adjudicate between different truths according to whether the field of alternative possibilities – 'the radical otherness of the other' – would continue to remain open, and not be shut off or closed down. This is why Derrida insists on the need to be able to sustain both an interminable questioning of the social, and an open-ended hospitality towards the other, because in his words, "pure unity or pure multiplicity … is a synonym of death" (Derrida, 1997, p.13). For Derrida, there are no absolute truths to guide our actions. Instead what we have is a reflexive attitude towards our responsibility, that is, towards our infinite responsibility to openness and to the other, and towards the discourses, conventions and practices which our responsibility entails. We have this responsibility because it is this which carries our acknowledgment of other. It also enables decision-making and is a counter-force to inertia.

## CONCLUSION

A discourse ethics which is founded upon an opposition to closure and an infinite responsibility to the other implies a critical discourse analysis that is aware of its limits while still retaining a critical edge. Such a CDA would be reflexive about the concept of truth and wary of the claims, moral or otherwise, which are made in truth's name. In place of emancipation it would put unceasing problematization and the eschewal of sedimented understandings and beliefs. This CDA may not sound so different to the one which this paper started with, except that it would apply this reasoning also to itself. It might then accord with the sentiment of Chouliaraki and Fairclough of working 'within' a poststructuralist perspective and not, as we have suggested, of one which still appears to be working 'without'. In a world which is increasingly realized in terms of closure, the undoing, decentring and problematization of fixed systems of meaning, and the critically reflexive articulation of alternative views, continue to be necessary openings in discourse and in critical discourse analysis. This is CDA's responsibility to the future, albeit in the absence of the certainties of the past.

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