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CRITICAL DISCOURSE STUDIES: A SOCIOCOGNITIVE APPROACH

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Keywords

discourse, critical discourse studies, sociocognitive approach, cognition, mental model, ideology, knowledge, context, racism, anti-racism, Brazil

Terminology and definitions

This chapter introduces the sociocognitive approach in critical discourse studies (CDS), more traditionally called critical discourse analysis (CDA). I avoid the term CDA because it suggests that it is a *method* of discourse analysis, and not a critical *perspective* or *attitude* in the field of discourse studies (DS), using many different methods of the humanities and social sciences.

The critical approach of CDS characterizes scholars rather than their methods: CDS scholars and their research are sociopolitically committed to social equality and justice. They are specifically interested in the discursive (re)production of power abuse and the resistance against such domination. Their goals, theories, methods and data and other scholarly practices are chosen as academic contributions to such resistance. CDS is more problem-oriented than discipline-oriented, and requires a multidisciplinary approach.

A critical approach to discourse presupposes an ethics. Its research may conclude that some forms of dominant text or talk are unjust or illegitimate, for instance because they violate human and social rights. For example, sexist or racist discourse may be found to flout basic norms and values of gender and ethnic equality and justice.

The Discourse–Cognition–Society triangle

Within the broader framework of critical discourse studies my sociocognitive approach to discourse is characterized by the Discourse–Cognition–Society triangle.

Whereas all approaches in CDS study the relations between discourse and society, a sociocognitive approach claims that such relations are cognitively mediated. Discourse structures and social structures are of a different nature, and can only be related through the mental representations of language users as individuals and as social members.

Thus, social interaction, social situations and social structures can only influence text and talk through people's interpretations of such social environments. And conversely, discourse can only influence social interaction and social structures through the same cognitive interface of mental models, knowledge, attitudes and ideologies.

For most psychologists such cognitive mediation is as obvious as it is fundamental. Yet, many interactionist approaches to discourse today still tend to be as anticognitivist as behaviorism many decades ago, while limiting their analysis to what is believed to be directly 'observable' or socially 'available'. Such an empiricist limitation ignores that grammatical and other discourse structures, and especially the semantic, pragmatic and interactional ones, are not observable at all, but language users' cognitive representations or inferences from actually occurring discourse or conduct. Indeed, language users not only act (communicate, talk, write, listen, read, etc.), but also *think* when they do so.

A triangular sociocognitive account of racist discourse

The relevance of a triangular sociocognitive approach may be illustrated with reference to the study of racist discourse. First of all, the discursive component of the theory deals with the many structures of racist text and talk, such as specific topics, negative descriptions of minorities or immigrants, disclaimers, the lexicon and other grammatical structures, topoi, argumentation or metaphors, among many other structures of ideological polarization between 'Us' and 'Them'. Secondly, such discourse structures are interpreted and explained in terms of underlying, socially shared ethnic prejudices and racist ideologies and the ways they influence the mental models of individual language users. Thirdly, such discourses and their underlying cognitions are socially and politically functional in the (re)production of ethnic domination and inequality by white dominant groups against minority groups or immigrants. They are controlled by powerful symbolic elites and organizations, e.g. those of politics, mass media and education, who have privileged access to public discourse. Each of these components of the theory and the analysis is necessary to account for racist discourse in society. We shall show below that a similar triangular approach is necessary for the study of racism and anti-racism.

An example: Racist propaganda in the European Parliament elections of 2014

In the elections for the European Parliament (EP) in 2014 many political parties, and not only at the extreme right, more or less blatantly engaged in racist and xenophobic propaganda to win votes. In Britain, the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), for instance, used billboards such as in Figure 3.1.



Figure 3.1 Election billboard used by UKIP in the 2014 European Parliament elections

A critical sociocognitive analysis of this billboard will first analyse its **discursive and semiotic structures**, such as the strategic use of numbers (*26 million people*), rhetorical questions (*whose jobs are they after?*), commands or recommendations (*take back, vote*), possessive pronouns (*our country*), on the one hand, and the image of a finger pointing at the readers and different colours on the other hand. Part of such a discursive-semiotic analysis is the study of the implied and implicated meanings of this propaganda, namely that the unemployed in Europe (which in the UK means the European mainland) are after British jobs, an implication semiotically expressed by the finger pointing at *you* readers of the billboard in the UK. Similarly *our country* contextually refers to Britain, and *take back* presupposes that 'we' have lost control of 'our' country.

Already in this brief discourse analysis of the billboard the very interpretation of this message requires various **cognitive structures**. For instance, the message does not make sense without shared *sociocultural knowledge*, for instance about current unemployment in the UK and the arrival of many immigrant workers from (mostly) Eastern Europe, as well as the ongoing debate on immigration and the claims of the Right that such immigration is out of control. The billboard also expresses a xenophobic *attitude* of UKIP, featuring, among many other norms and values, that British workers should have priority over foreign workers. This attitude is based on a more fundamental racist *ideology* polarizing ingroups and outgroups, and enhancing the superiority or priority of (ethnic) ingroups, also in many other social and political domains, and specified in many other xenophobic or racist attitudes – such as associating immigrants or minorities with crime.

Finally, these discursive and cognitive structures function as such in the communicative **interaction** between UKIP and readers of the billboard, especially (white) British citizens, as addressed by the deictic expression *our (country)*, as it is based on the context model (see below) of the participants, featuring the Setting (Time: expressed by the date of the elections – *22nd May*; Space: expressed

by *our country*), Participants (and their identities: UKIP, British citizens), Actions (election advertising and the commands *take back*) and Aims (getting votes for UKIP). The context model of readers in the UK may also feature emotions such as anger or fear. This advertising action of UKIP, at the level of **societal and political macrostructures**, is a form of organizational communicative action (propaganda) of a political party, part of a political system, and as part of a state (the UK) and an organization of states (the European Union) and its organization (the European Parliament), on the one hand, and of white dominant racism in the UK and Europe on the other hand, for instance in terms of a politics of fear.

After this very brief analysis (summarizing a *How to do sociocognitive critical discourse analysis*) let us now examine these three different dimensions of a sociocognitive analysis of discourse in more detail.

The cognitive component

While less generally recognized to be crucial, also in CDS studies, let us pay special attention to the cognitive component of the sociocognitive approach to discourse. Such a component deals with the mind, memory and especially with the cognitive processes and representations involved in the production and comprehension of discourse.

Cognitive structures

Memory. Memory or Mind, as implemented in the brain, is usually divided into Working Memory (WM) – also called Short Term Memory (STM) – and Long Term Memory (LTM). LTM itself features remembrances of autobiographical experiences and knowledge stored in Episodic Memory (EM), on the one hand, and more general, socially shared knowledge, attitudes and ideologies in Semantic Memory (SM), on the other hand.

Mental models. Our personal experiences, as processed in Working Memory, are represented as subjective, unique, individual *mental models*, stored in Episodic Memory. Such mental models have a standard hierarchical structure of a spatiotemporal Setting, Participants (and their identities, roles and relations), Actions/Events, and Goals. Such categories also appear in the semantic structures of the sentences that describe such experiences. Mental models are multimodal and embodied. They may feature visual, auditory, sensorimotor, evaluative, and emotional information of experiences, as differentially processed in different parts of the brain.

Social cognition. Whereas mental models are personal and unique, human beings also have various forms of socially shared cognitions. Thus we all have generic and abstract *knowledge* of the world, shared with other members of

the same epistemic community. And as members of specific social groups, we may also share *attitudes* (e.g. about abortion, immigration or the death penalty) or more fundamental *ideologies*, such as those of racism, sexism, militarism or neoliberalism, or opponent ideologies such as those of antiracism, feminism, socialism, pacifism or environmentalism. Our personal experiences are interpreted, and hence construed and represented as mental models, on the basis of these various forms of social cognition. Hence, unique, personal mental models may be more or less similar to those of other members of the same community or group. These crucial features of human cognition allow cooperation, interaction and communication, and hence discourse.

Discourse processing

Discourse is strategically produced and understood on the basis of these cognitive structures. Its words, phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs or turns are sequentially processed in WM and represented and controlled by the mental models, knowledge (and sometimes ideologies) in LTM.

We distinguish between two types of mental model in discourse processing:

- a. **Situation models** represent the situation a discourse is *about*, refers to and hence may also be called **semantic models**. Thus, the UKIP poster is about the upcoming EP elections. These models account for the personal meaning or interpretation of discourse and define its meaningfulness and (local and global) coherence. Mental models are more complex and complete than the meaning explicitly expressed in discourse, because language users are able to infer relevant aspects of a situation model by applying their shared knowledge.
- b. **Context models** ongoingly represent the dynamically changing communicative situation or experience *in which* language users are ongoingly involved. As all mental models, they are subjective and hence represent how each participant understands and represents the communicative situation. They define the *appropriateness* of discourse with respect to the communicative situation, and therefore may also be called **pragmatic models**. They not only control what information of the situation model (e.g. a personal experience) can or should be appropriately talked about, but especially also *how* this should be done. Indeed, we tell about the same experience (and hence the same mental model), for instance of a break-in, in a different way (or style) to our friends than to the police.

Thus, we have seen above what the parameters of the probable context models of the Participants (UKIP, UK citizens) of the propaganda billboard are (Setting, etc.). At the same time, this context model defines the *genre* of the billboard as a form of political election propaganda. These parameters of the context models of discourse participants can be established by the analysis of indexical expressions (such as *our country* or *22nd May, vote UKIP* in the UKIP text) referring to Setting, Participants, Actions and Aims of the communicative situation, as well as of

speech acts (commands and advice: *Vote!*) and the analysis of *relevant* sociopolitical structures in which such political propaganda functions (elections, etc.).

This is why *understanding* text or talk involves a strategic process in which units of sentences and discourse are sequentially analysed and interpreted in WM in terms of semantic structures related to an underlying situation model in EM. Conversely, the *production* of discourse about a personal experience starts with a situation model of which pragmatically relevant information is selected for the semantic structure of a discourse, under the control of the context model – which also controls *how* such meanings are appropriately formulated and in what discourse *genre* (a conversation, an e-mail, a lecture, news report or police report).

Knowledge

The basis of all cognition, and hence of all thought, perception, understanding, action, interaction and discourse, is the system of knowledge accumulated during our lifetime, and as shared by the members of epistemic communities. Although the precise overall organization of the knowledge system is still unknown, it is assumed to be locally organized by hierarchical categories of concepts and schemas of different types, such as scripts of everyday episodes, schemas of objects, persons or groups of people, and many more. Knowledge is defined as beliefs that meet the (historically developing) epistemic criteria of each community, such as reliable perception, discourse or inference.

Generic, socially shared knowledge is ‘instantiated’ (applied) in the construction of personal mental models that represent our individual experiences, perceptions and interpretations of events and situations. It is partly acquired and extended by the generalization and abstraction of these mental models, by discourses about such experiences (stories, news) as well as by pedagogical and expository discourse that expresses such knowledge directly, for instance in parent–child discourse, textbooks or the mass media.

The relations between knowledge and discourse are crucial for both: Most of our non-experience-based knowledge is acquired by discourse, and the production and comprehension of discourse requires vast amounts of socially shared knowledge. Many structures of discourse require description and explanation in epistemic terms, as is the case for the topic-focus articulation of sentences, (in) definite articles, evidentials (indicating the source of our knowledge), implications, implicatures, presuppositions, argumentation, among many others.

Since knowledge of participants is crucial for all discourse processing as well as for all talk in interaction, its use is part of the communicative situation. Hence, context models have a special *knowledge device* (K-device), which at each moment of discourse processing ‘calculates’ what knowledge is (already) shared by the recipients, and hence is common ground that may be presupposed, and which knowledge or information is (probably) new, and hence need to be asserted. This K-device controls the vast number of epistemically relevant structures of discourse mentioned above.

Especially relevant for CDS is that knowledge is a power resource. Some groups or organizations in society have privileged access to specialized knowledge and may thus manipulate or otherwise control public discourse and the

subsequent actions of others. Thus, in the billboard analysed above, UKIP uses knowledge about unemployment statistics in the EU to manipulate UK citizens, e.g. by the implication that all those millions of unemployed would want to come to the UK and take jobs there.

Attitudes and ideologies

Whereas social knowledge is defined as beliefs shared by all or most members of epistemic communities or cultures, there are forms of social (often evaluative) beliefs that are only shared by specific groups: attitudes and ideologies. Thus, most people know what abortion or immigration is, but some groups may have different attitudes about them — for instance as being good or bad, prohibited or allowed, depending on their underlying ideologies.

Although the precise mental structure of such socially shared attitudes is still unknown, it is likely that they are also schematically organized, as is the case for most of our beliefs. For instance, an attitude about immigration may feature beliefs about the identity, origin, properties, actions and goals of immigrants, their relations with 'our own' group, each associated with positive or negative evaluations based on norms and values. Thus UKIP propaganda uses a xenophobic attitude about foreigner unemployed 'taking *our* jobs'.

Attitudes tend to be based on or organized by more fundamental ideologies that control the acquisition and change of more specific ideologies. Thus, a racist ideology may control negative attitudes about immigration, affirmative action, quotas, ethnic diversity, cultural relations and many more.

As is the case for much social cognition, we still ignore the precise mental organization of ideologies, but some of their general categories often appear in ideological-based discourse: identity, activity, goals, relations to other groups and resources or interests. These are all crucial for the social definition of groups, and especially of Us vs Them, a polarized structure controlling power abuse, domination, competition and cooperation among groups, as well as all ideological discourse.

General ideologies, as well as their more specific attitudes, also control the personal experiences, that is, the mental models of the members of ideological groups. And if these (biased) models control discourse, they are often expressed in the polarized ideological discourse structures. Hence, in such ideological discourse we may observe a positive representation of 'Our' group, and a negative representation of the 'Others' — always depending on the communicative situation, that is, our context models — at all levels of text or talk: topics, lexicon, descriptions, argumentation, storytelling, metaphors and so on. The UKIP billboard does just that: the Others are represented as a menace to Us.

The relevance of the cognitive component

From the brief summary of personal and social cognition we may already conclude that the cognitive component is crucial for a theory of discourse in general, and for critical studies in particular. Power and power abuse, domination

and manipulation, as well as all other illegitimate forms of discourse, interaction and communication are rooted in social structure and relations between social groups. Yet, in order to explain how such complex societal structures influence the actual structures of text and talk, and vice versa, we need cognitive mediation. Such mediation is defined in terms of the shared knowledge and ideologies of group members and how these influence mental models that finally control the structures of individual discourse. If discourse were directly dependent on social structure, instead on mediating (personal and social) cognitive representations, all discourses in the same social situation would be the same. Semantic and pragmatic models, thus, define the uniqueness of all text and talk.

Since underlying cognitive structures in many ways are expressed in, or control, discourse structures, detailed discourse analysis may in turn be used as a valid and sensitive method for the assessment of such cognitive structures, for instance in cognitive and social psychology and the social sciences. Such a method is not circular, because underlying cognitive structures are not only manifest in discourse but also in other social practices, such as discrimination, exclusion or violence. Also, such cognitive structures may remain implicit (as is the case for much knowledge) or be transformed in text and talk – depending on the context models of the participants. For instance, racist ideologies and attitudes are not always expressed in discourse, or they may be strategically adapted or denied in specific communicative situations, for instance in disclaimers ('I am not a racist, but ...!').

The social component

Obviously, the critical study of discourse needs an important social component. We are dealing with power abuse of dominant groups or the resistance of dominated groups, as well as with organizations, institutions, enterprises and nation states, among other societal macrostructures. In CDS we are especially interested in the groups and organizations that directly or indirectly control public discourse, as well as their leaders, the Symbolic Elites, for instance in politics, the mass media, education, culture and business corporations.

Part of this societal account of discursive domination and resistance has been formulated in terms of *social cognition*, that is, as the specific knowledge, attitudes and ideologies shared by the members of these societal organizations.

A more sociological approach focuses on the micro-level of everyday interaction of social members on the one hand, and on the macro-level of the overall structures and relations of groups and organizations on the other. For instance, much of the information we read in the paper or see on television depends on the internal organization of news production within media organizations on the one hand, as well as on the relations between such corporations and the government, political parties or social groups, on the other hand.

Such high-level societal macrostructures are actually implemented and reproduced by the everyday actions and interactions of their members at the basic micro-level of the social order. And much of such local (inter-)actions are carried out by text and talk.

The overall structure of the sociocognitive account of the relations between discourse, cognition and society may now be summarized in Table 3.1.

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Table 3.1 The organization of the sociocognitive approach of discourse

Level of structure	Cognition	Society
Macro	Socially shared knowledge, Attitudes, ideologies, norms, values	Communities, groups, organizations
Micro	Personal mental models of (experiences of) social members	Interaction/discourse of social members

Power and domination

Since CDS is specifically interested in the critical analysis of discursive power abuse or domination, we briefly need to define these complex concepts of the social component of the theory.

Power and domination are here defined as a specific relationship of *control* between social groups or organizations – and not as a property of interpersonal relations. Consistent with the overall system presented here, such control has a social and a cognitive dimension: control of the actions (and hence discourses) of dominated groups and their members, on the one hand, and control of their personal and socially shared cognitions – mental models, knowledge, attitudes and ideologies – on the other.

Discourse plays a pivotal role in the exercise of power. It is like any other social action that may control (members of) dominated groups, for instance by laws, commands and prohibitions, as well as their discourses. But discourse also expresses social cognition and may thus ‘manage the minds’ of other groups and their members.

Group power is based on material power resources, such as property or capital, and also on symbolic power resources, such as knowledge, status, fame and access to public discourse. In ethnic relations, such symbolic power resources may be skin colour, origin, nationality or culture.

We see that in the definition of the crucial notion of power we again need the three main components of the theory: (i) society defined in terms of controlling groups and organizations at the macro-level, and members and controlling interactions at the micro-level; (ii) cognition in terms of the personal mental models of members, or the shared knowledge and ideologies of groups and organizations; and (iii) discourse of members of groups or organizations as forms of controlling interaction and as expression and conducive of underlying personal and social cognition.

Whereas power in general may well be legitimate, for instance in democratic societies or between parents and children in families, CDS is more specifically interested in **power abuse** or **domination**. Such a ‘negative’ social relationship of power may be defined in terms of legitimacy, and the violation of social norms and human rights. This typically involves that control is in the *interest* of the powerful group, and against the interest of the less powerful group. Thus, racism is a social system of domination that favours the interests of white (European) people and that is against the interests of non-white (non-European) people.

The discourse component

Whereas the details of the cognitive and social components of the theory presented here need to be specified in cooperation with psychologists and sociologists, the discourse component is obviously the main task of critical discourse analysts. These often also need to establish the relations with the other components — as is also the case for linguists in their research in psycho- and sociolinguistics.

Critical discourse analysts do not need their own theory of the *structures* of discourse, which they may largely share with other discourse analysts. However, they typically go beyond such structural theories of discourse. They also describe and explain how discourse may be involved in the (re)production of power abuse, or against such domination, in society. In the approach presented here, this also involves a cognitive component that is necessary to account for the role of knowledge, attitudes and ideologies in such discursive domination.

Structures of discourse

While not specific for CDS, we shall be brief about the structural account of discourse. Such an account was initially formulated as an extension of structural, functional or generative grammars of the phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic structures of sentences. For instance, it was shown that the intonation or syntax of sentences may depend on the structure of previous sentences or turns of text and talk.

More specific of such text or discourse grammars was the account of semantic local and global coherence of a discourse, for instance in terms of functional relations between its propositions (such as generalization or specification) on the one hand, and semantic macrostructures on the other. In a later stage, however, it was found that a fundamental notion such as coherence could not be accounted for only in terms of relations between propositions (meanings), but needed to be formulated in terms of the mental representation of what a discourse is about: mental models. For instance in such a mental model a causal or temporal relation between events may be represented and thus provide a basis for the local coherence of the discourse based on such a model.

After this early grammatical account of discourse structures beyond the level of the sentence, many other theories of discourse have introduced a host of other structures and strategies that cannot be described in terms of the usual linguistic categories of grammar. Thus, many genres of discourse have their own, overall schematic organization (or superstructure), with specific categories, as is the case for stories, news items in the press or scholarly articles, such as Summaries (Headlines, Titles, Abstracts, Announcements, etc.), Introductions or Orientations, Complications, Interesting Events or Experiments, and Resolutions, Commentary and Conclusions or Coda — depending on the genre. Similarly, argumentative genres, such as everyday debates, scientific articles, or editorials, may feature various kinds of Arguments and Conclusions.

Conversation Analysis introduced the specific units, structures and strategies of talk in interaction, such as turns, side sequences, topics, various forms of organization (e.g. how to start or terminate a conversation, or change topics) and how each turn or segment of talk may be related to previous or next ones, for instance by (dis) agreeing, aligning, or preparation.

In each of these fields, the last decades has seen the development of sophisticated structural accounts of text and talk, far beyond the grammar of sentences of traditional linguistics.

Ideological structures of discourse

More specific for research in CDS is the analysis of those structures of discourse that are specifically involved in the (re)production of power abuse. Since power and power abuse are defined in terms of the relations between social groups or organizations, such discourse generally will be ideologically based. Let us therefore briefly focus on those discourse structures that tend to exhibit underlying attitudes and ideologies of dominant social groups.

If ideologies have the schematic structure of fundamental categories postulated above (Identity, Activity etc.) for the identification of social groups, their properties and their relations (friends or enemies), as well as their interests, we may expect ideological discourses to feature pragmatically controlled expressions of such categories. Here are some of these ideological discourse structures:

- **Polarization.** Underlying ideologies are polarizing between a positive representation of the ingroup and a negative representation of the outgroup. Such polarization affects all levels of discourse.
- **Pronouns.** Language users (including collective ones such as organizations) speaking as members of ideological groups typically use the ‘political’ pronoun *We* (as well as *us*, *ours*, etc.) to refer to themselves and fellow group members. Similarly they refer to members of other, competing or dominated groups in terms of *They* (*theirs*, *them*). Given the overall polarization between ingroups and outgroups, its pronominal expression is the pair *Us vs Them*. Distance or a negative opinion about outgroups may also appear in possessives, such as *Those people ...*
- **Identification.** The main category of group ideologies is their identity. Members of ideological groups ongoingly identify with ‘their’ group, and express such identification in many ways, e.g. *As a feminist, I/we ... Speaking as a pacifist, I/we ...*
- **Emphasis of positive self-descriptions and negative other-descriptions.** Ideologies are often organized by a positive self-schema. Under the influence of ideological ingroup–outgroup polarization, we may typically expect an emphasis on positive self-descriptions (e.g. in nationalist discourse we typically find glorification of Our country) and an emphasis of negative other-descriptions, for instance in racist or xenophobic discourse. On the other hand Our negative properties (e.g. Our racism) will tend to be ignored or mitigated as is also the case of Their positive properties. This rhetorical

combination of hyperbolic emphasis and mitigation of good or bad things of ingroups and outgroups is called the **Ideological Square**.

- **Activities.** Ideological groups are often (self) identified by what they do, what their typical activities are. Hence we may expect that ideological discourse typically deals with what 'We' do and must do, e.g. to defend or protect the group (or the nation), or how to attack, marginalize or control the outgroup.
- **Norms and values.** Ideologies are built on *norms* of (good) conduct, or *values* of what should be striven for, as is the case for Freedom, Equality, Justice, Independence or Autonomy. These may be explicitly or implicitly expressed in many ways in discourse, especially in all evaluative statements about groups of people. They typically also appear in the Aims we want to reach.
- **Interests.** Ideological struggle is about power and interests. Hence, ideological discourse typically features many references to our interests, such as basic resources (food, shelter, and health) as well as symbolic resources such as knowledge, status, or access to public discourse.

For each of these ideological structures and strategies in discourse there may be many local units and moves that express them, depending on discourse genre. For instance, in order to emphasize Our good things and Their bad things, we may use headlines, foregrounding, topical word or paragraph order, active sentences, repetitions, hyperboles, metaphors and many more. Conversely, to mitigate Our bad things, we may use euphemisms, passive sentences, backgrounding, small letter type, implicit information and so on.

The integration of the components

The sociocognitive approach in CDS does not deal with the structures of discourse, cognition and society as independent components. Crucial, both in theory as well as in analysis, is their integration – an important characteristic of multidisciplinary research. Thus, for each discourse structure we not only need an explicit description in terms of a relevant theory, as well as a description of their relations with other structures of the same or different levels. At the same time, such a structure needs to be described and explained in terms of underlying mental representations, such as mental models, knowledge or ideologies, as part of their actual production and comprehension by language users. And finally, the structure and its cognitive basis is accounted for in terms of its sociopolitical or cultural functions in the communicative and social contexts, such as the (re)production of domination or resistance.

Illustration: Immigration as WAVE

A concrete example may illustrate the integration of the three components of the sociocognitive approach.

Much public discourse about immigration, for instance in politics and the media, is replete with metaphors emphasizing the negative aspect of the arrival of many immigrants, such as WAVE. Such lexical items are identified and described as metaphors, which in turn may be related to other metaphors (e.g. AVALANCHE, TSUNAMI, etc.) in the same discourse, or with other negative descriptions of immigrants — as part of a semantic or rhetorical analysis.

Next, such metaphors are cognitively interpreted as expressing underlying concepts, such as 'large quantities of people', represented in the multimodal mental model governing such discourse. At the same time, however, such a model explains the relevance of the metaphor, because it embodies and emphasizes the fear of drowning in so many immigrants. The WAVE metaphor thus cognitively concretizes the more abstract concept of massive immigration.

Finally, the use of such metaphors and their cognitive effects on recipients are not socially or politically innocent. On the contrary, if they indeed cause fear of immigrants among many people, these may develop an anti-immigrant attitude, e.g. by the generalization of concrete mental models of other negative properties attributed to immigrants. As is the case in Europe of the last decades, and especially the European Parliament elections of 2014, such fear and such negative attitudes are strategically used by many political parties to muster votes and to curb immigration. We thus link the use of a metaphor at the local level of discourse, via mental models of experience, with immigration policies and institutional practices of parties and parliament, and the reproduction of xenophobia or racism at the social macro-level.

Whereas discourse analysts may thus focus on some relevant aspect of discourse structure and then search for its discursive relations and functions, its mental basis and its social political functions, social scientists may primarily focus on a social phenomenon or problem, such as ethnic discrimination in many fields of social life. Besides describing the details of everyday discrimination and its links with other social actions, they may then search for an explanation in terms of the underlying ethnic prejudices shared by many people. And, finally, to study and explain the cause of such prejudices they may finally record and analyse discourse among white group members. We now also see in more detail how, via what stages and levels, a complex system of racism is discursively reproduced in society.

Discourses of resistance: anti-racist discourse in Brazil

In much of my earlier work of the last three decades I presented a systematic analysis of racist discourse in Europe and the Americas. To stress that CDS also deals with dissident discourse, the analysis of a concrete example in this chapter

will focus on anti-racist discourse. More specifically, I examine some of the discursive strategies of anti-racist contributions to a parliamentary hearing on the Bill for Racial Equality in Brazil.

Racism

As we have seen above, I define racism as a social system of racial or ethnic domination, consisting of two major subsystems: racist social cognition (prejudices, racist ideologies) underlying racist practices (discrimination). Racist discourse is one of the discriminatory racist practices, and at the same time the major source of the acquisition and reproduction of racist prejudices and ideologies. Consistent with a sociocognitive approach, we thus account for racism in terms of the triangular relation between discourse, cognition and society.

The social component of the theory of racism is not limited to an account of everyday discriminatory practices in interaction, whether discursive or non-discursive, at the micro-level. More broadly it identifies the groups and organizations that control the public discourse on immigrants and minorities, that is, the main source of the reproduction of racist attitudes and ideologies. This control, and hence domination, is exercised by the Symbolic Elites, who have privileged access to the influential public discourses in politics, the media, education and business corporations.

Racism in Europe and the Americas has been a dominant system for centuries, legitimating colonialism and slavery in the past, to anti-immigration policies, xenophobia and racist parties in most European countries today.

Anti-racism

Many if not most systems of domination provoke dissent, resistance and opposition, first of all among the dominated groups, and secondly among dissident members of the dominant group. Thus, slavery was opposed, for various (also economic) reasons, by the anti-slavery movement. Colonialism was discredited and opposed by independence movements, as well as by anti-colonialist dissidents, both in the colonies as well as in the metropolis itself.

Anti-racist movements, actions and policies in Europe, today, continue a long tradition of resistance against racist and xenophobic power abuse. They vary from official organizations, such as the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) in the UK, or the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) of the Council of Europe, to a vast number of grass-roots movements, such as SOS-Racism in France and Spain. Anti-racist aims and values can be found in many official documents, policies and the constitutions of many countries, both in Europe as well as the Americas.

Despite these official anti-racist organizations, discourses and grass-roots movements, however, it would be inconsistent with widespread discriminatory practices and racist prejudices to declare the system of anti-racism to be dominant in Europe and the Americas. Despite official anti-racist discourse, anti-immigrant legislation is increasingly harsh in most European countries,

xenophobic and racist parties are getting around 25% of the vote in local, national and European elections, whereas conservative parties and newspapers, eager to compete with the racist extreme right, similarly express and stimulate prejudices against asylum seekers and immigrants.

In the USA, racism has often been declared a thing of the past, but anti-immigrant policies and practices are dominant, as well as a wide array of different forms of everyday discrimination against African and Latin Americans that continue to reproduce white-European hegemony.

The theory of anti-racism

If anti-racism is a system of resistance and opposition, the theory of anti-racism may be formulated in a complementary way to the system of racism. That is, also the social system of anti-racism consists of a subsystem of anti-racist social practices (protests, etc.) based on a subsystem of anti-racist social cognition (anti-racist ideology and anti-racist attitudes). Again, anti-racist discourse is a major anti-racist practice, which also is the way anti-racist cognitions are being acquired and reproduced. Indeed, anti-racism is no more innate than racism, and needs to be learned – largely by text and talk. Anti-racist ideologies – and hence their attitudes and discourses – are also polarized, but in this case the outgroup is defined as ‘racist’. Associated to anti-racist ingroups, however, are allies such as the United Nations. The aim is to fight racism and the norms and values feature equality, justice, democracy and so on. As a system of opposition, anti-racism has no other resources than the legitimacy of generally recognized values, such as those of equality, and limited access to public discourse.

Racism in Brazil

Although discriminatory ethnic practices and prejudices in Latin America vary from country to country, for instance as a function of the presence of indigenous people or communities of African descent, white racism imported from Europe and locally adapted and reproduced is dominant. Blacks and indigenous people in Latin America, by any criterion of power, are economically, socially and culturally unequal to the people from European descent.

The same is also true in Brazil, where half of the population is of African descent. Slavery in Brazil was one of the harshest in the Americas, because slave-owners had such a vast supply of slaves that they could work them to death in a few years. Rio de Janeiro was the largest slave market worldwide.

As a consequence, until today, Afro-Brazilians have lower salaries, worse jobs, bad housing, less health care and education and are barely represented in local, regional or federal parliaments, or among judges, professors or the business elites. The ubiquitous telenovelas on TV show few black faces in leading roles. Students in the prestigious public universities are mostly white and mostly come from private (and hence expensive) secondary schools, which most parents of black students cannot afford. Official quotas to remedy such academic inequality may be seen as official forms of anti-racism but are vigorously opposed

(e.g. as ‘reverse racism’ or as ‘dividing the country’) by much of the press and many academics. As part of the ‘war on drugs’, the police and military are ‘pacifying’ the slums, largely inhabited by black people, often with lethal consequences. In sum, Brazil not only is a fundamentally unequal country by social class, but also is characterized by pervasive racial inequality, from the time of the colony and slavery, until today.

Anti-racist discourse in Brazil

Brazil was one of the latest countries in the world to abolish slavery, abolition coming in 1888. Similarly, anti-racist discourse in the twentieth century had a hard time to delegitimize the pervasive myths of ‘racial democracy’ and ‘cordial racism’, celebrating the qualities of a ‘mixed race’ and ignoring the many forms of racial inequality and discrimination. It was only in the 1970s that a Black Movement, partly inspired by the Civil Rights Movement in the USA, began to claim its rights, first mostly in the cultural sphere, but later also in politics and the economy. At the same time quantitative social research finally started to document the facts of the many areas of racial inequality. But we still had to wait to the late 1990s before the government and official organizations and institutions began to formulate and implement policies intended to curb such inequality — such as imposing university quotas for black students.

The debate on the Law of Racial Equality

On 26 November 2007, the Câmara de Deputados held a special plenary session dedicated to the proposed Statute of Racial Equality. The current parliamentary Chair, Arlindo Chinaglia, MP for the State of São Paulo for the governing Partido de Trabalhadores (PT) [Workers’ Party], declared the whole parliament to be a General Committee, so that MPs and invited experts could debate about:

[a] luta do movimento negro; políticas públicas afirmativas nas áreas econômica, social, educacional, da saúde etc.; necessidade de aperfeiçoamento da legislação; mercado e relações de trabalho; sistema de cotas nas universidades públicas; regularização fundiária das comunidades quilombolas; resgate e preservação da memória e da cultura do povo negro no Brasil.

[the] struggle of the black movement, affirmative public policies in the fields of the economy, society, education, health, etc.; [the] necessity to improve legislation; market and labour relations; quota system in public universities; regularization of Maroon communities; [the] recovery and preservation of memory and culture of black people in Brazil.¹

This debate was published in 2008 in a special 81-page publication of the Câmara, a text of about 27,000 words, which serves as our corpus. Participants were not only MPs, but also invited experts and (other) representatives of Afro-Brazilian organizations.

The official focus of the plenary and committee debate was Bill no. 6.264, of 2005, of the Federal Senate, instituting the Statute of Racial Equality. The Bill was presented to the Senate on 11 November 2005 by famous Afro-Brazilian Senator (for the state of Rio Grande do Sul) Paulo Paim (born 1950), author of many political initiatives in favour of the Afro-Brazilian community, member of the governing PT, and just as the (then) president, Luis Ignacio Lula da Silva, originally a union leader and worker in the metallurgical industry.

The Bill itself may also be seen as a form of anti-racist discourse, despite the fact that some of the final amendments toned down some of its original intentions and formulations. The final version of the Statute was formulated in Law 12.288 of 20 July 2010, superseding various other laws, and signed by President Lula. Article 1 (of Title I) reads as follow:

[1]Esta lei institui o Estatuto da Igualdade Racial, destinado a garantir à população negra a efetivação da igualdade de oportunidades, a defesa dos direitos étnicos individuais, coletivos e difusos e o combate à discriminação e às demais formas de intolerância étnica.

[This law establishes the Statute of Racial Equality, which aims to ensure for the black population the realization of equal opportunities, the protection of individual, collective and diffuse rights and to combat ethnic discrimination and other forms of ethnic intolerance.]

The analysis of anti-racist discourse

Within a sociocognitive framework the analysis of the discourse of some of the participants in this debate first of all focuses on characteristic anti-racist discourse structures, such as topics, topoi, arguments, lexicon and metaphors, among others. Secondly, these structures are interpreted and explained in terms of underlying mental models, as well as their sustaining attitudes and ideologies. And finally, the social conditions and functions of such discourse and cognition are formulated as a contribution to the system of anti-racism in Brazil.

We shall ignore here the formal discourse structures that characterize most parliamentary debates and hearings, such a formal presentation of the speakers by the Chair, as well the initial greetings of speakers, mutual compliments and other moves of political politeness. Where relevant, we do examine relevant self-presentations of speakers, since they index their identities as social members and speakers.

Most of our analysis will be semantic, and focuses on topics and local descriptions of events and situations, experiences of Afro-Brazilian people, implications, presuppositions and metaphors, especially those related to underlying attitudes and ideologies.

The pragmatic context models of the speakers will generally be more or less the same, namely the spatiotemporal coordinates of parliament, the current date, the participants and their identities, roles and relations, the aims of the discourses as well as the ongoing action in which they participate. Relevant is also the vast social knowledge of the speakers about racism and inequality in Brazil. Ideologies and attitudes about such racism may, however, be different. Indeed, some speakers

oppose the current Bill, although for different reasons. However, we only focus here on the anti-racist speakers, most of which support the Bill.

Self-presentations

Most speakers begin their speech with a self-presentation that tends to focus on their various social identities. Contextually, such presentations have as a primary function the legitimation of their current role as participant in the debate, namely as knowledgeable experts on the topic of racism in Brazil. Implicit or explicit initial self-definition as experts at the same time functions as a form of positive self-presentation and enhances their credibility. Finally, the legitimation also extends to their role of representatives of organizations, and hence as participants in a democratic hearing –e.g. as voices of the Afro-Brazilian community, or its allies. Here are some of these self-presentations:

[2]... tenho bastante prazer de estar aqui representando o governo federal, na condição de ministra da Secretaria Especial de Políticas de Promoção de Igualdade Racial. (Ministra Matilde Ribeira)

[... I'm very pleased to be here representing the federal government, in my role of Minister of the Special Secretariat of Policies for the Promotion of Racial Equality.]

[3]Sou negro, ferroviário há 27 anos, militante do movimento operário e poderia começar a minha intervenção dizendo que estou extremamente feliz hoje porque estou vindo de Curitiba ... (Roque José Ferreira)

[I'm black, a 27-year-old rail worker, a militant of the labour movement and could start by saying that I am extremely happy today because I'm coming from Curitiba ...]

[4]Sr. Presidente, é uma grande honra poder representar a Universidade de Brasília ... (Timothy Mulholland)

[Mr. President, it is a great honour to represent the University of Brasilia ...]

The self-presentations are couched in the usual politeness formulas (*it is an honour, it is a pleasure*, etc.) and focus on important functions (minister, university rector), on the one hand, and ethnic (black), professional (rail worker), political (militant) and age (27 years old) identities, on the other hand. All three speakers also present themselves as formal or informal representatives of relevant organizations (the government, a workers movement and a university). Hence, they define the still missing part, the identity of the Participant category of the provisional context models of the audience, which will guide the way the hearers will understand and interpret the discourses of the speakers: From a minister, rector or a black, young militant worker, different discourses will be expected.

Group description

Crucial in 'bottom-up' anti-racist discourse, as formulated by members of the Afro-Brazilian community, is the (self) description of the group – expressing underlying collective knowledge. Pragmatically, such fragments do not offer

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new knowledge, because all participants know the facts of the history of slavery, etc. Rather, they function as reminders and emphasis for the necessity of the current law now under debate – hence such fragments are both semantic (descriptions of the history of race relations in Brazil) as well as pragmatic (defining positions in the ongoing debate). After a brief summary by a black speaker as member (marked by the pronoun *nós* ‘us’) of the Afro-Brazilian community, also the (white) rector of the University of Brasilia contributes to such a group description, in more academic style (*data show ... marked by exclusion ... the effective enjoyment of ...*):

[5]... o racismo não foi criado por nós, mas pelos brancos. Quando disseram que tínhamos de ser escravos, criaram o racismo. (Luiz Oscar Mendes)

[... *racism was not created by us but by whites. When they said we had to be slaves, they created racism.*]

[6]Dados apontam com clareza que os brasileiros negros, descendentes de escravos africanos, historicamente foram os mais marcados pela exclusão, sendo mais acentuada a das mulheres negras. Há quase 120 anos da Lei Áurea, ainda temos muito o que fazer para garantir o efetivo gozo da igualdade assegurada pela Constituição Federal. (Timothy Mulholland)

[*Data show clearly that black Brazilians, descendants of African slaves, were historically most marked by exclusion, and this is especially the case for black women. Almost 120 years ago the Lei Aurea [abolishing slavery] was adopted, but we still have much to do to ensure the effective enjoyment of equality guaranteed by the Constitution.*]

Note that the denial of the speaker in example (5) has interactional functions: it responds to the opponents of the Statute, who argue that its opposition to racism and the self-identification of blacks recognizes ‘race’ as relevant in policy, and that such a recognition will cause racial antagonism. Thus instead of the assumed conflicts purportedly created by the Statute in terms of ‘race’ he focuses on what is relevant, namely racism, and the responsibility of the white descendants of Europeans.

Ideological polarization: Us vs Them

The speaker in example (5) already shows that anti-racist discourse is polarized, and especially directed against those who engage in, condone or refuse to act against racism. The same polarization and negation of the opinion of the opposition to the Bill is formulated by the following speaker, formulating in example (7) an **empirical counter-argument** against the denial of current division in terms of the ‘apartheid’ that can be observed in any city:

[7]Em absoluto, não fomos nós que criamos o racismo; não fomos nós que dividimos nada – a sociedade brasileira é dividida. Qualquer pessoa séria que andar por qualquer cidade do país vai constatar a cisão, vai constatar onde estão os negros e onde estão os brancos. E isso foi promovido pelo Estado. (Paulo César Pereira de Oliveira)

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[It was not us at all who created racism; we did not create any division – Brazilian society is divided. Any serious person who would walk through any city in the country will observe the separation and will note where blacks are and where whites are. And that was promoted by the State.]

Although ‘branding’ others as ‘racist’ is usually fiercely resisted by anti-racists, and also by anti-racists as strategically hardly efficient as a form of persuasion, obviously there are many ways to convey the same by implication and implicature:

[8]Fomos arrancados da África, mulheres foram estupradas, fomos roubados, mutilados, e hoje dizem que não temos de falar em raça, senão vamos dividir o Brasil. Que falácia! Que falácia! O Brasil já foi dividido há muito tempo, desde que nos arrancaram da África e nos trouxeram para cá. Essa é a divisão, e agora não querem pagar a dívida secular que têm conosco (Luis Osmar Mendes)

[We were torn from Africa, women were raped, we were stolen, mutilated, and now they say we should not talk about race, because otherwise we divide Brazil. What a fallacy! What a fallacy! Brazil was divided long ago, since they tore us from Africa and brought us here. This is the division, and now they do not want to pay the secular debt they have with us.]

Thus, through a very concrete and dramatic description of the horrors of slavery, the opponents of the current Bill, merely identified by the pronoun *they* and their current position on the Bill, are negatively described as the ideological descendants of the slave-masters. On the other hand, the Afro-Brazilian ingroup is implicitly represented as the victims or survivors of slavery and as the contemporary victims or survivors of those who oppose the Bill because it allegedly promotes racial division. Besides an expression of the underlying ideological **polarization** between racists and anti-racists, and between black and white, this fragment also contributes to a major **counter-argument** in the argumentation against the Bill (its alleged divisiveness). Also, this argument denounces the **presupposition** of the opposition, namely that there was no racial division before this Bill or the current anti-racist policies of the government. At the same time the argument **implies** that the opposition is denying contemporary racism in Brazil and **implicates** that they are racist. Finally, the pragmatic function of the intervention is to **delegitimize** the opponents.

Norms and values

Anti-racist discourse exhibits the underlying **norms and values** of anti-racist ideologies. Thus, the very name of the proposed Statute features the crucial value of equality – as a major aim – while **presupposing** and then documenting that the current situation in Brazil is marked by racial or ethnic inequality:

[9]O movimento negro brasileiro transformou em uma ferramenta de luta aquilo que foi a causa da sua opressão. Imputaram-nos a pecha de seres inferiores por sermos negros, e o que fizemos? Dissemos: ‘Somos negros. Somos negros e somos seres iguais, somos seres diferentes, somos portadores de valores, somos

portadores de uma história'. A partir desses valores e dessa história é que vamos reconstruir nossa existência no mundo. Vamos lutar por igualdade, estamos lutando por igualdade. Estamos lutando hoje aqui, estamos construindo essa igualdade. (Edna Maria Santos Roland)

[The Brazilian black movement turned into a weapon that was the cause of their oppression. They ascribed us the taint of lesser beings because we are black, and what did we do? We said: 'We are black. We are black and we are equal beings, we are different beings, bearers of values, we are bearers of history.' From these values and from this history we will rebuild our existence in the world. Let's fight for equality, we are fighting for equality. We are fighting here today, we are building this equality.]

This intervention combines various ideological-based elements of anti-racist discourse, such as the emphasis of the value of identity, the social group memory of oppression, the self-identity of the community in terms of colour, aims of current action and plans for the future, and so on. The persuasive rhetoric of struggle is at the same time marked by the usual **metaphors**, such as arguments are weapons, and the future of the group as a building.

Norms and values are general and abstract components of underlying ideologies. In more specific attitudes, they need to be translated into more concrete aims and values, as is the case in the following fragment defending the controversial quota policy of the government:

[10]Com efeito, os objetivos das cotas raciais são: a) reduzir as desigualdades raciais quanto ao acesso dos negros (as) ao ensino superior; b) promover a igualdade de oportunidade entre brancos e negros no mercado de trabalho formal; c) concretizar a democracia substantiva; d) dar oportunidade a negros (as) que serão modelos para outros negros das gerações futuras; e) corrigir os eixos estruturantes da reprodução da desigualdade social, isto é, de raça e de gênero. (Antônio Leandro da Silva)

[Indeed, the goals of racial quotas are: a) to reduce racial disparities in access of black men and women to higher education, b) to promote equality of opportunity between blacks and whites in the formal labour market, c) to achieve substantive democracy, d) to provide opportunities for black men and women to be models for other blacks of future generations, and e) to correct the structural axes of the reproduction of social inequality, that is, those of race and gender.]

Thus, equality is specified as reducing differences of access, as equality of students at the (future) labour market, as creating opportunities and as enhancing democracy. As elsewhere in anti-racist discourse, the systematic presupposition of such arguments is that at present there is no equality, equal access, opportunity and democracy for Afro-Brazilians.

Arguments

Debates in parliament are generally argumentative. Speakers defend their own position with arguments, and attack and delegitimize opponents with counter-arguments. We have seen already that one major counter-argument against the

argument against the Bill (namely that differentiating between black and white in a largely racially mixed country leads to division and conflict) is that Brazil already was and is racially divided.

Throughout the debate there are, of course, many other argumentative moves, such as:

- **The number-game.** Repetition of the fact that blacks constitute 50% of the population. Numbers of how few black professors there are in the universities. The success of the quota system in terms of numbers of black students participating.
- **International comparisons.** Comparisons with the USA and other countries where quotas have been implemented successfully.

Conclusion

The sociocognitive approach in critical discourse studies advocates a multidisciplinary, triangular analysis of text and talk integrating a discursive, cognitive and social component. It is critical of CDS approaches that link discourse with society while ignoring the personal mental models of individual experiences and interpretations based on socially shared knowledge, attitudes and ideologies. Thus, the polarized and categorical structure of underlying ideologies also characterizes social attitudes, which in turn influence personal mental models and opinions that finally are expressed and reproduced by discourse.

Thus, a brief analysis of an example of xenophobic propaganda by UKIP (the UK Independence Party) in the UK and anti-racism as a system of opposition against racist domination, for instance in government policies in Brazil, shows how the polarization between Us vs Them (black vs white), as well as basic categories (Identity, Actions, Aims, Norms, Values, Allies/Enemies and Resources) shows in specific attitudes about quotas and finally in a series of discourse structures. The summary of the analysis of the UKIP billboard may be used as a brief *How to do sociocognitive discourse analysis*.

A detailed analysis of the cognitive interface between discourse and society not only provides methodological grounding for many discourse structures, but also explains how discourse is involved in the reproduction of domination and resistance in society.

Further reading

The number of relevant references for this chapter is so high, that I give only some suggestions for further reading on the topics presented in this chapter (for general references to CDS and other approaches to CDS, see the other chapters of this book).

Van Dijk, Teun A. (2008) *Discourse and Power*. Houndmills: Palgrave–Macmillan.

This collection of articles provides a good introduction to the sociocognitive approach, and mainly focuses on political discourse and political cognition, with many examples of critical analyses of racist political discourse, ideology and the definition of power and power abuse.

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Van Dijk, Teun A. (ed.) (2009) *Racism and Discourse in Latin America*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books. This edited book features chapters on racism and discourse in Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Peru, written by local experts. It is the only study in English (translated from the Spanish and Portuguese) on discourse and racism in Latin America written by Latin American linguists and social scientists.

The sociocognitive approach to discourse analysis

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On (anti)racism and discourse in the UK, Europe and Brazil

- Bonnett, A. (2000) *Anti-racism*. London, New York: Routledge.
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Task

Collect 2014 European Parliament election manifestos and propaganda of a (especially right-wing) political party in your own country, and systematically analyse the relevant structures discourse fragments dealing with immigration or immigrants, their communicative contexts, their underlying attitudes and ideologies and their sociopolitical functions.

Note

- 1 The translations of these examples are necessarily approximate and as close as possible to the original. Adequate translation would presuppose detailed knowledge of the social and political situation in Brazil.