Critical discourse studies and mixed-method approaches

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1 CRITICAL DISCOURSE STUDIES: AN OVERVIEW

1.1 Key terms and core assumptions

Discourse Analysis vs. Discourse Studies

Discourse Analysis is a systematic analysis of language as it is used in social contexts focused on identifying representative patterning of text/talk in institutional settings, unlike (1) content-oriented analysis in social sciences, (2) subjective interpretations in literary and cultural studies, (3) decontextualized corpus-based analyses of texts in corpus linguistics.

Discourse Studies is a broader field of interdisciplinary studies of meaningful social phenomena to which the entry point is language use/text with the aid of various methodologies.

The critical in CDS

Criticism is not necessarily a rejection or condemnation; it can be appreciative (PDA).

Criticism is not subjective evaluation, but systematic analysis and substantiated conclusion-drawing (avoiding researcher bias).

Criticism is not deconstructive, but also creative (analysis and synthesis).

Criticism looks at what is not there, not only what is there in text/talk (silence).

Criticism is an interrogation of some naturalized aspects of text and talk (with a conscious attempt to defamiliarize them), which can be explained by referring to social categories, e.g. dominant ideologies, hegemony, interest and used to for empowerment.

Core assumptions despite heterogeneity of CDS

CDS starts with a social issues or problems that manifest, among other ways, in language;

CDS proceeds from the constructivist assumption that language and social reality are dialectically related;

CDS has an emancipatory aim not only to analyze, but also to intervene;

CDS uses only authentic language data and usually analyses various levels of linguistic realizations (from macrostructures to minute lexico-grammatical choices);

CDS approaches texts in contexts (socio-political, cultural, historical) accounting for how they are produced, distributed and received.

1.2 Inspirations and origins

The origins: Critical linguistics (1970s-1980s)

How specific language choices (lexical choices, grammatical structures, textual organizations) affect the meaning of discourse (larger stretches of text).

Example from a British geography textbook for pupils: *The large size of farms in Africa is needed because of the land's poor crop yielding capacity*.

Observation: Discourse is a social practice not a collection of transparent forms.

The origins: Systemic-functional linguistics (1970s-1990s)

How various language components and structures are conventionally arranged to fulfill three metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, textual.

Example from a print news item about a demonstration (UK youth and other organizations demonstrating against a rise in tuition fees and government policy): *Responsible citizens know that police must be determined in their efforts to constrain various forms of social unrest. The threat from extremists to hard-working tax-paying citizens should be annihilated*.

Observation: Discourse is strategically coherent (a social-semiotic).

The origins: Rhetoric (400BC -)

How various figures of speech and patterns of argumentation can be used to naturalize views as common-sense, to persuade receivers to accept certain claims:

Example from a conservative politician's campaign speech: *Premature sexualization is like pollution. It is the air that our children breathe. All the time. Every day*.

Observation: Discourse can be used for ideological persuasion or manipulation.

1.3 Interdisciplinarity

CDS is known for merging concepts from functionalist *linguistic approaches* (text linguistics, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, conversation analysis…) and *social theory*: Gramsci's hegemony theory (using language to win consent to dominance), Bourdieu's social construction of habitus/taste (using language to establish normativity), Foucault's discourse theory (using language to establish relations of knowledge/power), feminism (using language to represent female/male experience), postmodernism (using language to defer meaning-making to the receiver)

CDS is known for using *historical studies, political science, economics, media and communication studies* to explain certain meaning-making practices, genres and patterns and to account for the relations between text and context or discourse change/evolution.

CDS has also started using *psychology, neuroscience* to account for such mechanisms of meaning-making as conceptualization, information processing and memorizing, influence or manipulation.

1.4 Paradigms and schools

Established paradigms

Norman Fairclough's social theory of discourse 1990s; argumentation in discourse 2010s

Ron Scollon's interactional/mediated discourse analysis; intercultural research 1990s

Teun van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach, focus on mainstream media (2000-2010s)

Ruth Wodak's discourse-historical approach (Vienna school) 2000-2020s

Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen's multimodal analysis (2000-2020s)

New foci, inspirations

From cognitive science: to determine how knowledge is produced, how discourse is processed;

From sociology: to see how individual and group characteristics shape discourse production and reception;

From cultural and media studies: to broaden the analysis on how language is used in the context of new mediation technologies;

From hard sciences: to use triangulation, replication and verification with software that allows quantifying and visualizing results.

1.5 Aims and procedures

Analysts' attention is not only directed to what is said/written, but *how and why* it is produced like that;

They inquire how representations are *conventionally* produced and received in specific social contexts;

Questions that tend to be asked: Which *ideologies* underpin specific representations; How representations reproduce social inequalities; How power abuses, manipulations can be *exposed and remedied*.

- producer-text-consumer context
- description-interpretation-explanation
- patterned form-function relationship
- meaning-power relationship

Example

Tony Blair (2010): *Religious understanding is key to defeating hostilities threatening the world. (...) What needs to be globalised is knowledge and understanding. (...) It is knowledge that gives us foresight and helps people realize what they have in common.*

1.6 Summary

Discourse analysts, despite interdisciplinarity, share some common assumptions:

1. they are concerned with the actual use of written or spoken language and other symbolic forms used in social practices of meaning-making (multimodality)

2. they emphasize that the practical uses of signs and meanings are socially constructed and that these phenomena are thereby constituted in/through/by their social reality (contextualization)

3. they claim that individual instances of meaning-making (production and interpretations) may be understood as parts of more comprehensive discourse structure that it temporarily stabilized by specific institutional-organizational contexts (patterning, type-token relation)

4. they assume that the use of symbolic orders is subject to rules of interpretation and actions that may be reconstructed, explained and evaluated (criticism)

5. they avoid pure theory but rather seek for grounded frameworks that are practice-oriented and account for various levels of social activity: micro – specific examples of language uses, meso – strategies and patterns, macro – discursive formations

Discourse Theory: an eclectic understanding of discourse

6. communication is action mediating between individual agency (use/choice/function) and structure (system/rules) (Gramsci, Giddens, Halliday)

7. discourse is political and involves normative models to aspire to (Bourdieu, Habermas)

8. discursive formations are changeable and evolving (Foucault, Latour, Wodak)

9. discourse is an entry point to studying society (Keller, Fairclough)

2 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES IN CRITICAL DISCOURSE STUDIES

2.1 Methodology or toolbox?

Discourse Analysis and methodological choices

DA uses operationalizations of concepts derived from linguistics and social studies (representation, identity, legitimization, appraisal, newsworthiness, persuasion).

Data-driven approaches – where object of study, research question and sample often influence the set of methodological choices in a study design (purpose-built)

Mixed-methods approaches suggested to give a more systematic and in-depth understanding of mechanisms of meaning-making (semiotics/multimodality, rhetoric/discursive strategies),

CDS involves a programmatic methodological innovation but shortage of verifications/replications and methodological reflection (except in earlier phase and recently with digital tools).

Purpose-built methods

Some recommendations:

- Choosing from the toolbox is not random (mixed-methods or triangulation?).
- Academic socialization matters.
- Multi-stage research design requires justification and transparency.
- Eclectic/synthetic methodological approach vs. systematic/cyclic approach to data (coding, intercoder validity) => methodological integration rather than just mixing/combining.
- Accessibility of data and results to overcome possible methodological limitations.

2.2 Triangulation

WHY use triangulation (multiple data sets, methods,…)

to corroborate or confirm results, illustrate through overall/sectional results,

to offer diversity of views/models/ theories; increase credibility or neutrality,

to bring together (or set off) through comparison or contrast,

to offer complementation or extension of (case) study,

to offer enhancement of results through detailing or deepening,

to explain through qualitative analysis of quantitative parameters,

to contextualize by studying attendant social or historical dimensions.

2.3 Small or large datasets

Corpora and Corpus Linguistics (in CDS)

CL as a collection of tools to overcome small-scale study design, sampling and researcher bias.

Corpus-driven or corpus-basd? Corpus (large collection of texts – general or purpose-built) as a way to test hypotheses in CDS, not develop them.

Software to reveal various layers of annotation (tags that mark time, text-type, area) and to perform automated operations (beyond the reading scope/control of a researcher) to bring together features that are far apart – patterns "above-the-text"

Frequency lists, collocations, concordances, clusters (algorithms matter!)

Quantitative/qualitative divide

CL as a tool to serve analysis guded by specific research questions, not a method for analysis and interpretation.

Quantitative approaches: objectivity, researcher control, reliable results, replicable data, generalizable conclusions (?)

Qualitative approaches: validity, descriptiveness, process-orientation, depth in terms of data, case-specificity (?)

NB: CL involves human choices at each stage (research questions, building corpora, techniques and categories, interpretations of numerical results, framing explanations).

E.G., keyword analysis vs. semantic fields, concordances vs. semantic prosody

Integration: cyclical, back-and-forth, motivated

Example of stages in an integrated methodology for CL/CDS study designs

Summary: Benefits and risks of integration and general recommendations regarding limitations

2.4 Various sorts of data

Criticism of CDS in terms of logocentrism

CDS is criticised for its primary focus on linguistic data, which is magnified by CL biases towards lexical patters. In CDS language is a primary semiotic system, texts studied are often monomodal (linguistic/written) and stripped of multimodal features for convenience.

Yet, much (public) discourse is in fact multimodal and visual culture and media technologies call for attention to other literacies (the multimodal turn in CDS in 2000s).

Inspirations for including non-linguistic data come from Cultural Studies, Film Studies, Media and Communication Studies, Speech Therapy, Musicology, Journalism, Arts and Architecture.

Example: Development of multimodal annotation tools (photography in news media Bednarek and Caple, 2012, 2017)

Theoretical accounts for multimodality of data

Object-centred, problem-centred and inclusive object/problem-centred approaches show that it is difficult to incorporate observations and interviews into text-based approaches;

Systemic functional (linguistics) shows that assigning function and meaning to resources and "grammars" of modes is problematic.

Ethnography of communication (how communicators/recipients act) requires studying people, not just texts.

Conversation analysis (speech as primary) revisits the problem of speech transcription (possibly together with non-verbal aspects of speaking).

Intercultural communication (beyond language to background knowledge of cultural formations)

Semiotics (holistic perspectives on linguistic landscapes)

Cognitive science (embodied cognition for linguistic and visual)

Research practice with multimodal perspective

2.5   Different levels of discourse

Modelling discourse – creating levels of description/analysis

Abstract vs. concrete (social vs. linguistic dialectics)

D-iscourse vs. d-iscourse/ discourse vs. a discourse (levels of discourse)

Discourse types/discursive formations (interdiscursivity)

Macro, meso, micro (conceptual structure/level of description): socio-historical context, discursive strategy, linguistic realization

Structured linguistic/semiotic realization (lexico-grammatical level, sentence level, argumentative/rhetorical level, compositional/design level, text type/genre level)

Levels of context (culture, society, institution, situation, participants); social fields

Dimensions of discourse analysis

2.6   Synchronic and diachronic perspectives

Mapping change across time (longitudinal, diachronic, historical studies)

Archeology/genealogy of discourse – multiplification of data, contextual information

Social change mirroring discursive change and vice versa? Linear causality?

Large-scale transformations: technologization, conversationalization, mediatization

Moments of crisis and discursive shifts (9/11, terror attacks, financial crisis, „refugee" crisis, election campaigns)

Recontextualization and terminological change

Mechanisms and patterns of discursive change: normalization, colonization, structuration/framing, hybridization, legitimization, topoi

3   MULTIMODAL CATEGORIES FOR CDS

CATEGORIES FOR CRITICAL MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS based on

Machin D. and A. Mayr (2012) *How to do Critical Discourse Analysis.* London: Sage

Verbal	**Visual**
Lexis	*Iconography*
word denotations/connotations	Image denotations/connotations
under/overlexicalization	people/objects
suppression	attributes
structural oppositions	settings
genre/register indications	salience (cultural symbols, size, colour, tone, focus, foregrounding, overlap

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Presenting Speech	*Presenting Speakers*
neutral speech reporting verbs	gaze (engaging, off-frame)
metapropositional verbs (interpretation)	pose (space taken, performance, open/closed)
metalinguistic verbs (speech act)	
descriptive verbs (features of voice)	
transcript verbs (related to whole discourse)	

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Classification of/reference to social actors	*Representation/positioning image/viewer*
personalization/impersonalization	distance (close-up, medium range, long shot)
individualization/collectivization	angle (face-to-face, up/down/side)
specification/genericization	individuals/groups
nomination/functionalization	generic/specific depictions
use of honorifics	exclusion
objectivation	
anonymisation	

aggregation/polarization

suppression/absence

Representing Action	*Representing action visually*
material processes	material processes
mental processes	mental processes
behavioural processes	behavioural processes
verbal processes	verbal processes
relational processes	relational processes
existential processes	existential processes
adjuncts/prepositional phrases,	
subordinate clauses/embedded phrases	
abstractions/nominalizations derived from verb phrases	

Concealing: Nominalization and its effects

removal of the agent/responsibility

removal of the affected entity

removal of the sense of time, causal relations

addition of quantifiers/qualifiers/intensifiers

nominalized actions become "agents" stable entities (e.g. globalization)

 simplification of complex processes, reduction of detail

text compression, density, factuality, "objectivity"

Taking for Granted: Presupposition and its effects

assuming the existence of entities (labels), oppositional meanings (negation), truth claims (theme/embedding/nominalization/emphasis),

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Rhetorical tropes

metaphor (personification/objectification)

metonymy, synecdoche

hyperbole

Committing and Evading

epistemic/deontic/dynamic modality

(asserting power over others and over knowledge)

Visual modality (realism of representation)

degrees of articulation of detail/background

degrees of depth articulation

degrees of articulation of light and shadow/tone

degrees of colour modulation/saturation

Hedging (strategic ambiguity, avoiding directness, reducing resistance to claims) – quantifiers, approximators, balancing, concessive connectors, backgrounding, non-factive verbs, comparative forms, temporal references, officialese, definitions, quotes, circumlocutions, rare vocabulary.

4 CASE STUDIES

The demonstrative presentations revisit the analyses of linguistic realizations of legitimization, discursive strategies of identification, rhetorical devices of topoi and pathos, evaluation, etc. from a critical discourse studies perspective. I draw on research projects across a variety of contexts to identify some of the questions and issues raised in these projects. The main focus of each case study will be on linking text analysis to important methodological concerns and principles discourse analysis (quantification, legitimacy, evidence, impact). Whenever possible I explain how data triangulation (linguistic and non-linguistic data) and methodological triangulation (mixed methods) were usefully incorporated.

Issues discussed include:

- the selection of texts for analysis;
- the analysis of different modes (intra- vs intersemiotic analysis) and patterns;
- the direction of analysis (bottom-up vs top-down) and the granularity of analysis; through units (words/structures-prosody, paragraphs, texts, genres, concepts, news values);
- the semiotic resources and modes' affordances;
- the transparency and consistency of the analysis;
- the decisions taken behind the uses of methods/techniques for the analysis.

I approach each topic from the perspective of my own background as an empirically-oriented discourse analyst. The talks will also increase researcher reflexivity and transparency in the analysis.

SLIDESHOW 1.: Environmental charity appeals (based on missions of UK top environmental organizations): A multimodal analysis

SLIDESHOW 2.: Distance crossing in humanitarian discourse (based on Polish Humanitarian Action's online publicity): A multimodal, socio-cognitive analysis

SLIDESHOW 3.: Discursive identifications of Poles in Britain in glocal media (based on Moja.Wyspa.co.uk corpus): A discourse-historical approach to discursive construction of identities

SLIDESHOW 4.: Text-image relations in popular science journalism (based on New Scientist's biotechnological coverage)

SLIDESHOW 5.: Mediated populist discourse: A newsworthiness and stylistic analysis of Tea Party's newsfeed (based on party coverage of American mid-term elections 2018)

SLIDESHOW 6.: Visual rhetoric of political campaigning on Instagram (based on a corpus of 1976 Instagram posts by candidates in Polish elections to European Parliament 2019)

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