Handout. Critical Discourse Analysis

References
For an extended bibliography, see http://www.discourses.org/Resources.html


CDA always works with authentic, extended text, in the tradition of ethnography. Also increasingly incorporates the analysis of visual material.

Officially started in the late 1980s and became associated with the names of Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, Teun Van Dijk, Paul Chilton, etc. – but it has its roots in work done in the late 1970s, especially
Fowler et al. (1979). The group regards itself as a ‘School’ and promotes its activities worldwide (discussion lists, journals, etc.).

Part of a ‘critical turn’ – by contrast with descriptive studies. Question of ethics; advocates interventionism. But has been criticised for lacking a reflexive stance.

Most extended application in translation studies in the work of Hatim & Mason (1990, 1997).

**Discourse**: “the institutional-attitudinal framework within which both genre and text cease to be mere vehicles of communication and become fully operational carriers of ideological meaning” (Hatim 2009:89). It may be defined as “systematically organised sets of statements which give expression to the meanings and values of an institution” (Mason 1994/2010:86).

Discourse is “a particular way of constructing a particular (domain of) social practice ... Discourses are relatively independent of genres, in the sense that, for instance, a technocratic medical discourse might show up in interviews, lectures, news items or textbooks” (Fairclough 1995b:76).

“A discourse is a particular way of representing some part of the (physical, social, psychological) world – there are alternative and often competing discourses, associated with different groups of people in different social positions. ... Discourses differ in how social events are represented, what is excluded or included, how abstractly or concretely events are represented, and how more specifically the processes and relations, social actors, time and place of events are represented” (Fairclough 2003:17).

The focus is on how language participates in shaping relations of power and ideology in society. Discourse seen as both constitutive of social relations and shaped by them: “The relationships between texts and society/culture is to be seen dialectically. Texts are socioculturally shaped but they also constitute society and culture, in ways which may be transformative as well as reproductive” (Fairclough 1995b:34).

**Discourse, individual text and individual subject**

Wodak and Meyer (2001/2009:38): “A single text has minimal effects, which are hardly noticeable and almost impossible to prove. In contrast, a discourse, with its recurring contents, symbols and strategies, leads to the emergence and solidification of ‘knowledge’ and therefore has sustained effects. What is important is not the single text, the single film, the single photograph and so on, but the constant repetition of statements”.

Wodak and Meyer (2001/2009:6): “The discourse-historical approach ... views ‘discourse’ as structured forms of knowledge, whereas ‘text’ refers to concrete oral utterances or written documents”.

Wodak and Meyer (2001/2009:10): “it is not the individual resources and not the specifics of single-exchange situations that are crucial for CDA analyses, but the overall structural features in social fields or in overall society”.

Jäger and Maier (2001/2009:37): “From a discourse-theoretical point of view, it is ... not the subject who makes the discourses, but the discourses that make the subject (which may be irritating for those attached to the idea of the uniqueness of the individual). The subject is of interest not as an actor, but as a product of discourses”.

Mason (1994/2010:92): “the discourse belongs to the user, who also belongs to it”.

**Foci and methods of analysis**

Discourses of modernisation, commodification, technologisation, etc. Preferred topics: racism, immigration, gender, globalisation, capitalism. Preferred genres/types of discourse: media/news, advertisements and promotional literature, political discourse, institutional discourse.

Textual analysis draws heavily on systemic functional linguistics (including Hallidayan metafunctions and specific categories such as voice, agency and transitivity) but is complemented by other types of analysis based on a variety of sources, most notably the work of Michel Foucault.
“... in a corpus analysis of texts of New Labour and ‘old’ Labour (i.e. texts from earlier stages of Labour Party history), it emerged clearly that although the word ‘work’ was, rather obviously, rather common in both, its collocative patterns were different. ‘Back to work’, ‘into work’, ‘desire to work’, ‘opportunities to work’, ‘Welfare-to-work’ reflect common collocations in the New Labour corpus, whereas ‘out of work’, ‘right to work’, ‘democracy at work’, ‘health and safety at work’ reflect common patterns in the ‘old’ Labour corpus. Generalizing over the results, the focus in New Labour is on getting people off welfare and into work, the focus in ‘old’ Labour is on improving conditions and relations in work, on unemployment as an infringement of the ‘right to work’ and a responsibility for Government” (Fairclough 2003:131).

Fairclough’s three-dimensional framework:

(1) **Discourse-as-text (level of description)**: at this level, the analyst examines linguistic features in a concrete instance of discourse: choice of vocabulary, patterns of transitivity, cohesion, etc.

(2) **Discourse-as-discursive-practice (level of interpretation)**: here, the analyst looks at the circulation of concrete textual objects (instances of discourse) – how specific text types are produced and consumed. Aspects that link the text to its wider social context here include coherence and intertextuality. Intertextuality is divided into ‘manifest intertextuality’, which involves drawing on other texts (and the selection of what bits of text and what texts to draw on is important here, including issue of voice), and ‘constitutive intertextuality’, which refers to a text’s drawing on generic conventions, particular styles, etc.

(3) **Discourse-as-social-practice (level of explanation)**: this involves investigating Foucaultian ‘orders of discourse’ – the way discursive practices change to support hegemony and effect control, and the way discourses reflect struggles over control.

“The critical discourse analysis approach thinks of the discursive practices of a community – its normal ways of using language – in terms of networks which I shall call ‘orders of discourse’. The order of discourse of a social institution or social domain is constituted by all the discursive types which are used there. The point of the concept of ‘order of discourse’ is to highlight the relationships between different types in such a set (e.g. in the case of a school, the discursive types of the classroom and the playground): whether, for instance, a rigid boundary is maintained between them, or whether they can easily be mixed together in particular texts. The same question applies to the relationships between different orders of discourse (e.g. those of the school and the home): do they commonly overlap and get mixed together in language use, or are they rigidly demarcated? .... orders of discourse can be seen as one domain of potential cultural hegemony, with dominant groups struggling to assert and maintain particular structuring within and between them” (Fairclough 1995b:55-56).

Framing, in CDA, seems to be restricted to the issue of representing voices in discourse, e.g. framing what someone said through the choice of reporting verb (claim vs. said), through a preceding clause or phrase (e.g. in ‘Faced by the threat of more sanctions, the Libyans said they wanted more time to sort out the details of the handover’, the initial clause frames what the Libyans said as potentially an attempt to stall, or as a delaying tactic; see Fairclough 2003:53).
Extracts from Enoch Powell’s ‘Rivers of Blood’ Speech, Delivered to a Conservative Association Meeting in Birmingham on 20 April 1968

**Background:** A speech by the Conservative MP Enoch Powell (1912–1998) criticising a proposed anti-discrimination legislation. The proposed legislation – the Race Relations Act 1968 – was a British Act of Parliament making it illegal to refuse housing, employment, or public services to a person on the grounds of colour, race, ethnic or national origins. It also created the Community Relations Commission to promote ‘harmonious community relations’. Although the phrase ‘rivers of blood’ (an allusion to a line from Virgil’s *Aeneid*) does not appear in the speech, it does include the line “As I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding; like the Roman, I seem to see ‘the River Tiber foaming with much blood’”. The speech caused a political storm, making Powell one of the most popular though divisive politicians in the country, and leading to his dismissal from the Shadow Cabinet.

**Extracts from speech**

“In 15 or 20 years, on present trends, there will be in this country three and a half million Commonwealth immigrants and their descendants. That is not my figure. That is the official figure given to parliament by the spokesman of the Registrar General's Office.

There is no comparable official figure for the year 2000, but it must be in the region of five to seven million, approximately one-tenth of the whole population, and approaching that of Greater London. Of course, it will not be evenly distributed from Margate to Aberystwyth and from Penzance to Aberdeen. Whole areas, towns and parts of towns across England will be occupied by sections of the immigrant and immigrant-descended population.

As time goes on, the proportion of this total who are immigrant descendants, those born in England, who arrived here by exactly the same route as the rest of us, will rapidly increase. Already by 1985 the native-born would constitute the majority. It is this fact which creates the extreme urgency of action now, of just that kind of action which is hardest for politicians to take, action where the difficulties lie in the present but the evils to be prevented or minimised lie several parliaments ahead.

The natural and rational first question with a nation confronted by such a prospect is to ask: "How can its dimensions be reduced?" Granted it be not wholly preventable, can it be limited, bearing in mind that numbers are of the essence: the significance and consequences of an alien element introduced into a country or population are profoundly different according to whether that element is 1 per cent or 10 per cent.”

... "But while, to the immigrant, entry to this country was admission to privileges and opportunities eagerly sought, the impact upon the existing population was very different. For reasons which they could not comprehend, and in pursuance of a decision by default, on which they were never consulted, they found themselves made strangers in their own country.

They found their wives unable to obtain hospital beds in childbirth, their children unable to obtain school places, their homes and neighbourhoods changed beyond recognition, their plans and prospects for the future defeated; at work they found that employers hesitated to apply to the immigrant worker the standards of discipline and competence required of the native-born worker; they began to hear, as time went by, more and more voices which told them that they were now the unwanted. They now learn that a one-way privilege is to be established by act of parliament; a law which cannot, and is not intended to, operate to protect them or redress their grievances is to be enacted to give the stranger, the disgruntled and the agent-provocateur the power to pillory them for their private actions.”
The stories and experiences of people who came to settle in Reading were collected in a series of interviews which took place in 2006. Those interviewed gave their time freely and generously so that we can hear them talking about their lives and how and why they came to Reading, UK.

Read the interviews...

Maya Malhotra

*Born: 27th January 1937*
Agra, India

*Date of interview: 7th June 2006*

I was born in Agra. I think, it’s a famous city. It is known for Taj Mahal. And, I spent my early childhood in different cities, whereby my father was in a different job so he used to move around, three years mostly in every city so we travelled Punjab, widely travelled in India. But most of my education was done in Allahabad, that’s another famous city in the religious point of view.

**Childhood**

*Can you tell me, thinking back to when you were a very young child, what’s the earliest thing you can remember?*

Oh I have a very good memory of my childhood. I remember my teachers in the first school where I went. I went to school at the age of four and then stayed in that school till seven, then change school again. And after the age of ... nine I left school. I did my private study ... I was a bit bright for my age so, so my father took me away from school where, I did my ... what you say equivalent to O level, my matriculation at the age of twelve and then I did all the private education till my PhD.*