Methodological issues in critical discourse studies

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Introduction: critical discourse analysis or critical discourse studies?

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) as an analytic stance and approach appeared in the 1980s (e.g., Fairclough, 1989), creating a subfield within discourse analysis. In the ensuing 30 years, there has been substantial work done in this area (e.g., Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000; Fairclough, 1992a, 2015; Flowerdew, 2008; Gee, 2008; Janks, 1997; Richardson, 2007; Rogers, 2011; van Dijk, 2008; van Leeuwen, 2008; Wodak, 1996; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). However, appropriate to critically oriented scholars’ stances and reflexivities (see McKinley, this volume), there have been numerous debates about and within CDA; methodology being one of the most prominent of them. One issue has recently emerged questioning the very term of critical discourse analysis itself – specifically, the seemingly problematic use of the word ‘analysis’. Teun van Dijk (2009) was the first scholar to argue that the term ‘critical discourse analysis’ should be renamed as critical discourse studies (CDS) as this latter, “more general term suggests that such a critical approach not only involves critical analysis, but also critical theory, as well as critical applications” (p. 62). He pointed out that the use of designation CDS “may also avoid the widespread misconception that a critical approach is a method of discourse analysis” (p. 62). Rather, it should be regarded as “a critical perspective or attitude in the field of discourse studies . . . using many different methods of the humanities and social sciences” (van Dijk, 2016, p. 63). Indeed, in their summarizing of van Dijk’s argument of using the new term CDS, Flowerdew and Richardson (2018) wrote, “the rationale for this change of designation resides in the fact CDA was increasingly not restricted to applied analysis, but also included philosophical, theoretical, methodological and practical developments” (p. 2). Hence, the term CDS will be employed in this chapter referring to past and present works in this research area.

CDS approaches: a brief survey

There are numerous approaches in CDS, including (but not limited to) the discourse-historical approach (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016), the sociocognitive approach (van Dijk, 2016), and corpus linguistics (Mautner, 2016) – all of which are detailed in the recent third edition of Methods of
critical discourse studies edited by Wodak and Meyer (2016). However, a discussion detailing each one is beyond the scope of this chapter; this chapter will instead focus on the historical roots and antecedents of CDS and other related approaches, with the aim of informing and furthering discussion and debate on CDS methodologies.

Much of CDS was originally grounded in systemic functional linguistics (e.g., Chouliarak & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 1989, 1992a, 1992b; Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Hasan, 1989; Young & Harrison, 2004) as its foundational methodological approach. CDS has since evolved to include and/or share a variety of approaches, including intertextuality (Bakhtin, 1981; Bazerman, 2004; Lemke, 1992), multimodal discourse analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001, 2006; O’Halloran, 2004), and mediated discourse analysis (Norris & Jones, 2005; Scollon, 2001, 2008; Scollon & Scollon, 2003, 2004), which are addressed in this section. What these different approaches have in common is the mutual view of discourses being “complex, historically layered, and overdetermined objects” (Blommaert, 2005, p. 131) that are mediated by and through complex ideological processes, social actors, and material, semiotic means (Scollon, 2008). CDS attempts to unearth the “layered simultaneity” (Blommaert, 2005) of discourses that illustrate how the simultaneous, contradictory, and at times inchoate hegemonic ideologies operate in and through multiple discourses in their “differing layers of sharedness, coherence, and historicity” (ibid., p. 160).

Systemic functional linguistics

In Michael Halliday’s functional view of language (e.g., Halliday, 1978, 2014; Halliday & Hasan, 1989), grammar is not viewed as a formalistic set of rules governing and mandating language use. Rather, it functions as a dynamic system of meaning-making resources that enables users to make several simultaneous kinds of meaning in their contextual usages. In situating language use in its specific context, there is Halliday’s notion of three interrelated meta-functions, which he termed the ideational, the interpersonal, and the textual. The ideational is the thematic content: what and how our societies are being represented, or as Ravelli (2000) asked, “how does language represent what’s going on in the world?” (p. 35). The interpersonal focuses on those who are taking part in a particular interaction; specifically, who is being addressed and in what manner? The textual looks at the ways in which discourses are systematically constructed to achieve particular ends through the agentive enactment of our linguistic meaning-making choices. Ravelli (2000) noted that the textual “relates to the organization of the message: how is language used to carry the message? . . . there are choices available in terms of how to organize our language: which part of the message to foreground, which to background” (p. 51).

It is the intertextuality of discourses and how this interacts in various ways with the interpersonal that has important methodological implications for conducting any CDS approach. The interpersonal dimension is embodied and enacted through the ‘hailing’ dynamic of the intended addressee – the ways in which an audience is co-constructed and interpelled by the addressee. The notion of being interpelled was coined by Louis Althusser (1971), who argued that “ideology ‘acts’ or ‘functions’ in such a way that it ‘recruits’ subjects among individuals (it recruits them all), or ‘transforms’ the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation . . . called interpellation or hailing” (p. 174).

Althusser compared the interpellation process to a person turning around on a street in immediate response to the police hailing them, “Hey, you there!” By this very act, the person becomes a subject in their acknowledging the hailing addressing specifically them, and not someone else. As Althusser (1971) noted, words can function as “weapons, explosives or
tranquillizers and poisons. Occasionally, the whole class struggle may be summed up in the struggle for one word against another word. Certain words struggle amongst themselves as enemies” (p. 21). Furthermore, “other words are the site of an ambiguity: the stake in a decisive but undecided battle” (p. 21).

However, Montag (2017) has argued that the word ‘hailing’ was an interpolation of the word ‘interpellation’ in the English language translation of Althusser’s work by Ben Brewster. He noted that since the use of the word ‘interpellate’ is rare in the U.S. and U.K., Brewster perhaps felt compelled to employ the word ‘hail’ to convey how we are addressed by discourses. Yet, Montag also argues that the police do not usually hail people (unless possibly a suspect is being chased); rather, they are more prone (at least in the U.S.) to “a violent tearing (people) away from the crowd to confirm the identity that has been imposed upon them” (p. 67). To illustrate this, Montag offers the image of Eric Garner, an African-American who was placed in a choke hold by the New York City police for selling cigarettes on the street and died as a result from asphyxiation. In this view, interpellation is not merely “a disembodied verbal act” (p. 66) or “the recognition of one consciousness by another” (p. 67), but rather a violent act “even if its material forms are often more subtly coercive” (p. 67). This issue will be revisited in the section on future directions for CDS.

In his work on systemic functional linguistics, Halliday did not explicitly address the issue of the ideological in language and discourse. In basing the linguistic methodology of CDS on systemic functional linguistics, this is what Fairclough and others have done. In this dimension, the methodological seeks the connection between Fairclough’s perspective of how discourse operates with Halliday’s focus on the systemic functionality of language. This posits the ways in which we communicate with one another are not only structured by the various functions we aim or intend to achieve but are also situated in the mutual agreement that the relationship between the language forms and the functions they serve in the different contexts of usage helps to determine and co-construct social meanings. These co-constructions of social meanings have significant implications for any CDS methodology because it is precisely this dynamic range and availability of options of linguistic resources which speakers have at their disposal to co-construct meanings across the ideological spectrum. Thus, some methodological questions that should be asked are:

- Why and how are certain linguistic resource options made available to select individuals?
- How are these resources accorded more weight in terms of framing arguments on issues?
- Why are attendant meanings embedded in select arguments more valued, received or accepted than others?
- And, how are specific social meanings conferred a higher social, political, and cultural capital which then become integrated within a social system reproducing existing economic and social hierarchies without any questioning or challenging from some people? (Chun, 2017)

Intertextuality

Blommaert (2005) observed that “intertextuality grounds discourse analysis firmly into histories of use – histories that are social, cultural, and political, and which allow the synchronic use of particular expressions to acquire powerful social, cultural, and political effects” (p. 46). Thus, this raises a methodological question: How do we construct relationships of meaning between and among multiple texts? Lemke (1992) asked several questions that are the basis
of any methodological exploration into how intertextuality serves as important resources for meaning making in any given context:

Which other texts do we consider to be relevant for the interpretation of this particular text, and why? What kinds of meanings are made by constructing these relationships between texts? And what kinds of meaning are not made because a community will not, or cannot, make these sorts of connections between two other texts available to it?"

(p. 257)

In his work on discourse analysis, which is critically oriented, Lemke (1992) has also drawn upon systemic functional linguistics (e.g., Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Hasan, 1989) as his methodological basis of identifying and interpreting intertextual relationships. It is in this context of systemic functional linguistics that Lemke (1992) argued “we can immediately recognize that thematic intertextual relations, construed between texts on the grounds of being ‘on the same topic’ correspond to semantic similarities in the use of ideational-experiential resources” (p. 259) as providing “a clue as to what to look for in identifying the linguistic basis for thematic intertextuality” (p. 259). In addition to thematic intertextuality, it is also important to understand the textual relationships among “the sorts of social-interactional stances and evaluative points-of-view being constructed in and by” (p. 261) these texts. One example would be that thematic content “takes on different meanings from a shift in orientational stance” (p. 263); that is, if content is presented as a statement or a question. If it is framed as a question, content could be inviting further dialogue and debate; but if it is framed as a statement, does this foreclose any dialogical response? Any foreclosure of a dialogical response is highly unlikely since our language use is indeed always dialogical, as Bakhtin (1981) noted. In any use of language and discourse, “it always constructs an orientational stance toward real or potential interlocutors, and toward the content of what is said” (Lemke, 2002a, p. 72). One example would be the dialogical response of “was it ever great?” from some interlocutors to the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign slogan of the Republican nominee, “Make America Great Again”.

Lastly, in acknowledging that language by itself is not our only semiotic resource for intertextual meaning-making (e.g., Lemke, 2002b), Lemke (1992) argued that it is through “parallelism among different semiotic modalities (language, depiction, gesture, etc.) that the different aspects of a ‘multimedia’ semiotic ‘text’ cohere, interact, and in fact multiply each other’s meaning potential” (p. 265). This semiotic intertextuality takes into account how the increasing dominance of other modalities such as the visual (Kress, 2010; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) are increasingly carrying more informational load and delivery of communication. Indeed, the multiplying effects of our meaning-making potential through multiple literacy practices situated in communication contexts such as online video gaming (Gee, 2007), social media and blogs, and in the classroom itself (e.g., Jewitt, 2008), point to the necessity of broadening methods in CDS to adequately address the complex intersemiotic, intertextual, and interdiscursive relationships of words, the visual, the aural, the gestural, and so on in power dynamics. Thus, I now turn to multimodal discourse analysis as a methodological approach in CDS.

**Multimodal discourse analysis**

For some time now, various CDS approaches have incorporated the study of multimodality (e.g., Iedema, 2003; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001, 2006; Machin & Mayr, 2012; O’Halloran, 2004) in expanding the analytic foci beyond language to include the numerous forms of social semiotic processes of making meaning including imagery in pictures, advertisements, videos, and
film. Drawing upon the aforementioned theoretical and methodological constructs of language as social semiotic (Halliday, 1978), and from Hodge and Kress (1988) as their analytical basis of multimodality, Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) argued that “where traditional linguistics had defined language as a system that worked through double articulation, where a message was an articulation as a form and as a meaning, we see multimodal texts as making meaning in multiple articulations” (p. 4). Kress and van Leeuwen outlined four domains of practices in which meanings are made. Kress and van Leeuwen termed these domains of practice as “strata” (highlighting their relation to Halliday’s work), which are discourse, design, production, and distribution.

Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) argued that “discourses can only be realised in semiotic modes which have developed the means for realising them” (p. 5). This perspective has important implications for how one views the complex relationships between the ever-developing new technological modes and the ensuing discourses, particularly in light of how market and profit-driven social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have helped to create “new registers, discourses, and texts of corporate multimediated ‘hypercapitalism’” (Luke, Luke, & Graham, 2007, p. 2). Indeed, as Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) pointed out, visual communication is “now steered by multinational corporations and software developers, rather than by state broadcasting and education systems” (p. 112). This corporate profit-driven infiltration, and subsequent reconfiguration and dominant control of public domains of social media, education, and public broadcasting raises an important question: How has visual communication been reshaped and managed by corporate agents in ways that might have been different from previous actors? As Kress and van Leeuwen argued, “discourse affects choice of design, but choice of design in turn affects discourse” (p. 128).

These choices of design affecting how various discourses operate have significant methodological implications for how we employ CDS. One such question to address would be to examine how various media through their hardware and software platforms, and their accompanying multimodal genres mutually interact and inform in their mediating and shaping our meaning-making processes in how we co-construct understandings and viewing our societies. For example, for those of us who are on Facebook, every time we post or update our status on that platform, and respond to another’s posting with a ‘like’, ‘love’, ‘angry’, and so on, this act supplies an endless stream of our personal data via algorithms to corporations that are developing our consumer profiles for individually tailored marketing. These engagements on social media in which we express our opinions and viewpoints in response to others’ arguments have been termed as “communicative capitalism” by Jodi Dean (2009). She argued that

contestations today rarely employ common terms, points of reference, or demarcated frontiers. In our highly mediated communications environments we confront instead a multiplication of resistances and assertions so extensive as to hinder the formation of strong counterhegemonies. The proliferation, distribution, acceleration, and intensification of communicative access and opportunity result in a deadlocked democracy incapable of serving as a form for progressive political and economic change. I refer to this democracy that talks without responding as communicative capitalism.

(p. 22)

Moreover, in communicative capitalism, “expansion in networked communications media reinforce the hegemony of democratic rhetoric. Far from de-democratized, the contemporary ideological formation of communicative capitalism fetishizes speech, opinion, and participation” (Dean, 2009, p. 17). Thus, this aspect of fetishized, seemingly critical engagement on social media is an important methodological avenue for CDS researchers to explore.
Design, the second domain of practice, is defined by Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) as the “means to realise discourses in the context of a given communication,” and also “realise the communication situation which changes socially constructed knowledge into social interaction” (p. 5). How design shapes and informs the contours of discourse in their presentation, multimodal appearance, and delivery should also be a methodological consideration in conducting CDS. The third domain, which is production, refers to “the organisation of the expression, to the actual material articulation of the semiotic event or the actual material production of the semiotic artefact” (p. 6). The fourth domain of practice, distribution, has produced enormous gains in accessibility – first of the printed word, later also of pictorial art, music, and drama, all of which we can now buy and take home in the form of reproductions and recordings, or have transmitted to our homes.

These now include images, videos, movies, and music files downloaded from the Internet, and the availability (for those who can afford subscriptions) of viewing television shows and films on various websites such as Netflix. These distributive relocations of cultural artifacts lead to a loss of context in which the original artifact might have been intended to be viewed or heard according to Kress and van Leeuwen. This leads us to at least two questions relevant for CDS methodologies: What different contexts emerge that are produced by these relocations of multimodal texts in their new distribution channels? How do these new contexts reshape the reception and consumption of the relocated texts?

Lastly, Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) cited two methodological principles of a multimodal CDS. The first principle is to ask where the signs come from. This is crucial to ask because we constantly ‘import’ signs from other contexts . . . into the context in which we are now making a new sign, in order to signify ideas and values which are associated with that other context by those who import the sign.

This has significant implications for how we might consider the ways in which various semiotic intertextualities construct and convey ideological discourses with something ‘borrowed’ into something ‘new’. Their second principle is “experiential meaning potential,” which is defined as “the idea that signifiers have a meaning potential deriving from what it is we do when we produce them, and from our ability to turn action into knowledge” (p. 10). It is this action or doing that requires our attention, because a multimodal CDS on its own is not sufficient to fully account for the dynamics of how our socially situated meaning-making are co-constructed through mediated dimensions (Iedema, 2003).

**Mediated discourse analysis**

Another interrelated methodological approach congruent with CDS is mediated discourse or nexus analysis (Scollon, 2001, 2008; Scollon & Scollon, 2003, 2004), which shares an interest with CDS in intertextuality. “It adds to this, however, the realization that texts are not just linked to other texts, but also linked to past actions and to material objects in the world as they cycle through different semiotic systems and their materialities” (Bhatia, Flowerdew, & Jones, 2008, p. 230). Sharing a focal concern of CDS, mediated discourse analysis views “the relationship of text to text, language to language, is not a direct relationship but is always mediated by the actions of social actors as well through material objects of the world” (Scollon, 2008, p. 233).
Inasmuch as various material objects would have different enabling impacts on how social actors disseminate and receive discourses, CDS would need to consider for example, how juxtaposing written texts in a newspaper article might differ from juxtaposing multimodal graphics in the same medium to convey the same ideological discourse. In addition, the focus on invested mediated actions of particular social actors through these material objects raises the familiar methodological quandary of linking the micro to the macro, the local to the global. Do ideological texts and discourses change as they move or travel from one site to another, and if so, how?

In contrast to some early CDS approaches (e.g., Fairclough, 1989, 1992a) that solely focused on texts without addressing how social actors actually took up and mediated those texts and discourses in specific contexts, mediated discourse analysis is rooted in an ethnographic approach. As Scollon (2001) proposed, mediated discourse analysis “takes it as one of its central tasks to explicate and understand how the broad discourses of our social life are engaged (or not) in the moment-by-moment social actions of social actors in real time activity” (p. 140). Furthermore, Scollon (2008) argued that it has become clear that much discourse which is of relevance to a moment of action is, in fact, displaced from that action, often at quite some distance and across a wide variety of times, places, people, media, and objects. As we have expanded the circumference . . . of our view of the moment of action we have come to consider these complex displacements to work across multiple moments in which the discourse is transformed semiotically.

(pp. 233–234)

Calling these “resemiotized displacements” “discourse itineraries” (p. 234) opens up an important methodological avenue to explore. Media technologies continue to develop new platforms and avenues through which texts and discourses are designed, produced, and instantly disseminated. As result of this development, Scollon addresses a vital methodological issue for CDS here: How are particular discourses resemiotized, and for what purposes? This concept of discourse itineraries is important for CDS because there should be an analytic focus on the ways in which discourses are designed and distributed, as well as a focus on the impacts these have on reception and reproduction on the everyday level and beyond.

However, although mediated discourse analysis is “closely linked in most cases to CDA” due to its critical approach to discourse, there is a key methodological “difference in focus” (Scollon, 2001, p. 145). This differential focus goes beyond (but of course including it) textual analysis in exploring “how to accomplish an analysis of a social-mediated-action” (p. 145). However, as Scollon and Scollon (2004) argued, since there are numerous socially mediated actions through which discourses are taken up and resemiotized, an important methodological undertaking is to identify the most significant ones for analysis. Thus, they propose what they term as a “nexus analysis” that views social action as a nexus of discourse aggregates – “the discourses in place,” some social arrangement by which people come together in social groups (a meeting, a conversation, a chance contact, a queue) – the interaction order, and the life experiences of the individual social actors – the historical body” (p. 19). This significantly expands the analytical focus of CDS in taking into ethnographic account of everyday people who take up hegemonic and common-sense discourses in social circulation (Chun, 2017).

Issues, questions, and critiques of CDS methodologies

There have been numerous critiques of CDS methodology, and these will be briefly outlined in this section. One methodological issue is the seemingly sole emphasis on linguistic bias
(Blommaert, 2005) that “restricts the space of analysis to textually organized and (explicitly) linguistically encoded discourse, not to where it comes from and goes to” (Blommaert, 2005, p. 35). This has been addressed in the aforementioned methodology of mediated discourse analysis in the extension of its analytic focus on the multiple pathways of discourse itineraries, and the interaction order between and among the historical bodies of the various social actors taking up and mediating these discourses (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, 2004). Seen from this perspective, the methodological focus of CDS on textual discourse and its ideological connections with and reproductions of (however measured and defined) existing power relations in society does not consider how everyday people actually understand and reproduce power-laden discourses helping to frame and make sense of their everyday lives and roles in society. Indeed, as Allan Luke (2002) pointed out, it is “a far more difficult task to trace, politically, which discourses have which material and discursive effects and consequences for communities, cultures, and human subjects” (p. 103). In this related vein, he also argued that for CDS approaches,

[the] challenge . . . is to move beyond a focus on ideology critique and to document ‘other’ forms of text and discourse – subaltern, diasporic, emancipatory, local, minority . . . that may mark the productive use of power in the face of economic and cultural globalization. (p. 98)

This raises another issue with CDS. To what extent is any discourse ever truly representative of its intended meanings? In his discussion of the implications of the work of Fairclough and James Paul Gee, Luke (2002) highlighted two significant points concerning the dangers in “fetishizing the power of the text, preempting its local uptake, and presupposing the systematicity and consequences of its discourse” (p. 103). In referencing the critique of Michel Foucault on discourse, Luke asks how do we know if discourses are not “acting arbitrarily, randomly, and idiosyncratically . . . autonomous from its historical authors, conditions of production” (p. 104)? The second point from a Derridean view is that how does CDS address “the unsaid and the unspeakable, that which is not present in visible linguistic traces” (p. 104), which has often escaped the attention of analysts.

Another critique has been questioning the privileged position any CDS analyst occupies in the assumption of sole explanatory power, which has clear implications for the very power relationships that CDS attempts to critique (Slembrouck, 2001). Blommaert (2005) pointed out that “the process of analysis is necessarily dialogical, and so is the interpretation eventually effected by the analyst” (p. 33). However, by privileging this position through the sole explanatory phase of the analysis, “the participant is pushed out of the analysis, so to speak . . . the dialogical process is closed and the analyst becomes the ultimate arbiter of meanings” (p. 33). This has important methodological implications for CDS inasmuch as the very project of critiquing those who attempt to present themselves as the ultimate authority on how we make sense of society – e.g., politicians, press, and pundits – is compromised by this very act of being an ultimate arbiter of what the exact meaning is. Thus, a more ethnographic approach is called for, in which dialogues can emerge from the researcher/analyst and those who are reading or viewing the same text.

An interesting issue is highlighted by Breeze (2011) in her discussion of the various critiques of CDS. She references Verschueren (2001) in summarizing his argument that CDS has the “tendency to leave out important aspects of the text that do not fit with the interpretive framework” (p. 505). She writes that this inclination “leads Verschueren to conclude that many of the supposed findings are ‘the product of conviction rather than the result of a careful
step-by-step analysis that reflexively questions its own observations and conclusions’” (Ververschueren, 2001, p. 65 as cited by Breeze, 2011). This points to an important methodological aspect to address in one’s analysis – that is, in acknowledging the contradictions, or the conflicting dimensions in any data being analyzed within one’s interpretative framework, an analyst can avoid a totalizing presentation of what is going on. In addition, reflexivity is needed in furthering discussion and debate on one’s own analysis, rather than attempting to present it as the ‘final word’ on the matter.

**Future direction for CDS**

Machin and Mayr (2012) noted the methodological framework of CDS is based on the premise “that language and society are deeply intertwined. They are not to be thought of as separate entities. Linguistic activity is social practice. Language use should be treated as part of social processes” (p. 35). How we make and convey meanings with one another through language (and of course other semiotic means such as visual cues, body language) is indeed a socialized and socializing practice shaped by historical, cultural, and material embodied dynamics. These multimodal embodied performativities include but are not limited to social class (e.g., Rampton, 2006), race (e.g., Delfino, 2016; Heath, 1983; Labov, 1972), gender and sexuality (e.g., Bucholtz & Hall, 2004), and the mutually interanimating elements thereof (e.g., Preece, 2016). These complex and shifting social processes and practices are in continuous meaning-making tandem with language use in all its forms, be they language varieties, standardizations, policies, literacies, or discourse.

However, this leads to a methodological question pertaining to future CDS research. Since linguistic activities are indeed social practices, whose social practices are being addressed, valued, or challenged at any given selected contextual moment? As Machin and Mayr (2012) astutely argue, “what can be most difficult in carrying out CDA is the critical analysis of texts that we agree with, which are in accord with our own ideological viewpoint” (p. 47). For example, in the current political climate in the U.S., the Black Lives Matter movement that emerged from the numerous killings of innocent Black men, women, and children by the police prompted a predictable backlash among some racist Whites. Those who felt threatened by the movement’s name came up with their counter-slogan ‘All Lives Matter!’ – perhaps due to their hearing in their mind an ‘Only’ at the beginning of Black Lives? For those of us who identify with and support the Black Lives Matter movement, what would be possible CDS approaches with which we could bring participants into a joint analysis of the mutual socially mediated action? For example, in advocating the focal sociopolitical use of “Black Lives”, would an initial response to “All Lives” be, “Yes, I agree, all lives matter!” After this mutual agreement, this could then be followed up with, “So since we both agree all lives matter, that also includes Black lives, yes?” This might open up pathways with participants to address how the dialogical contextual response of “All Lives” is reactionary and dismissive of the movement’s politically discursive aims.

This leads us to another methodological question regarding the ways in which CDS is used for specific purposes, as in the aforementioned example: What makes any analysis of discourse ‘critical’? Again, as Machin and Mayr (2012) note, “does being ‘critical’ simply mean attacking ideas, attitudes and values we do not agree with? And does it mean arbitrarily choosing texts that fit our analysis?” (p. 208). It is thus important for discourse analysts who use a CDS approach to first define what they mean by being ‘critical’. Is it to critique any current power relations, structures, and their accompanying discourses in society to justify, conceal, and/or promote these hierarchical relations facilitating economic and social inequities? However, one
may argue that being critical of existing societal relations without offering alternative concrete visions may be in vain (van Heertum, 2009). Would proposing an alternative vision in CDS be viewed as ideological ‘propaganda’ by some, or could it serve a larger project in addressing beyond the immediate audience of academic readers (fellow scholars and students) – that is, to mobilize and help organize the general public to overturn economic and social injustices and inequities?

Analysts using CDS need to continue to outline why and how their analyses should be considered critical, including specifically what aspects of their methodology constitute as such. CDS analysts should also illustrate how their critical analysis differentiates itself from other and indeed opposite political viewpoints that also identify their stances as being critical of society (e.g., certain social media and blogs posted by people identifying with the alt-right that oppose gender and sexual equality, support White supremacy, deride affirmative action, and so on). In terms of choosing which texts to critique that fits one’s analysis, it is also imperative to clarify to the readers why a particular text warrants a critique from one’s own ideological viewpoint. There is the risk when analysts using CDS presuppose their ideological views are identical, or at least align with the political views of their audience including fellow scholars, researchers, students, and importantly, the general public that may have access to their publications – some of whom may hold significantly different ideological views.

If CDS does indeed ignore or disregard “for the most part . . . real readers and listeners” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 208), which I am interpreting here as the general public, then what are the implications for developing and furthering methodological approaches to facilitating and raising critical awareness amongst the public at large on how language and discourse are used in our society? This question regards the uses both by everyday people in how they make sense of their daily lived experiences and those in power who frame these experiences to suit their continued control in manufacturing consent (Chun, 2017). I believe this is the most crucial question for CDS in these times of hyper-nationalist demagoguery, which has led to right-wing populist revolts in numerous countries that have been enabled by specific factions of the power elite seeking perpetual diversions from capitalism’s periodic crises and collapses. As Verschueren (2001) astutely argued, “the study of discourse, therefore, is serious business, involving a responsibility to contribute to collaborative knowledge-gathering for the benefit of society, a responsibility to do so critically and a responsibility to engage in public debate” (p. 59). Indeed, “without the power to convince others, any specialist understanding remains unproductive” (Verschueren, 2001, p. 60).

References


