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The Discourse-Historical Approach

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1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), which has developed over the last 30 years as a main version of Critical Discourse Studies – first in Vienna, then also in Lancaster, Loughborough, Bern, Örebro and elsewhere. Section 2 starts with the history of the approach. Section 3 continues with a general description of the theoretical and methodological framework of the DHA. It explains basic characteristics and research interests and sketches the influences of sociolinguistics, pragmatics and text linguistics on the one hand, and of Critical Theory, history, argumentation theory and politolinguistics on the other hand. This section is divided into four subsections: the first covers central features and claims of the DHA and compares them with other discourse-analytical approaches, including approaches to Critical Discourse Studies; the following subsections explain the crucial concepts of critique, discourse and context. In section 4, the chapter outlines heuristic steps of a research practice designed for this specific approach, and remarks on future challenges conclude the chapter in section 5.

2. The history of the Discourse-Historical Approach

In English-speaking countries, the label “Discourse-Historical Approach” and its acronym “DHA” stand for one of the most prominent critical approaches to the study of discourse. The label stresses the strong historical research interest of the approach, and this designation has to be taken as a synecdochic self-description that names a part – a very important one – for the whole. Not all analyses carried out within the theoretical and methodical framework of the DHA show a clear historical orientation. The range of interests transcends the historical alignment by far. Throughout the past three decades, the exponents of the approach have continuously elaborated their theory, methodology and methods, again and again stimulated by new topics of research, by valuable comments and critique of the scientific peer group, and by many inspiring insights in various social sciences. A short history, segmented into four stages, helps to illustrate the multiplicity of relevant subjects and interests.¹

Phase 1 – Viennese Critical Discourse Analysis ante litteram (1987–1993): The study for which the DHA was developed reconstructed the constitution of anti-Semitic stereotypes,
as they emerged in (semi)public discourses in the 1986 Austrian presidential campaign of Kurt Waldheim. The former UN general secretary had kept secret his National Socialist engagement (Wodak et al. 1990; Heer et al. 2008). Four features of the DHA crystallised from this project: its interdisciplinary and especially historical alignment; teamwork; triangulation of data, theories, as well as methods; and the attempt to practically apply the findings. The pioneering discourse-analytical research combined sociolinguistics and studies on narration, stylistics, rhetoric and argumentation with historical and sociological research when analysing linguistic manifestations of anti-Semitic prejudice in their historical context. The data included both oral and written genres: historical expert reports, national as well as international newspapers, statements of politicians, daily news broadcasts and TV news, interviews, TV discussions, hearings, documentaries and a vigil commemorating Austrian resistance (see also Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 91–143). An exhibition about the issue was prepared in order to satisfy the aims of practical critique and public enlightenment.

A further research project focussed on the discourse about the Austrian Year of commemoration in 1988, the year in which the 50th anniversary of Austria’s integration into the Third Reich in 1938 was commemorated. The study, entitled “Languages of the Past” (Wodak et al. 1994), analysed (1) media debates about the expert report published by an international commission of historians on Waldheim’s Nazi past in February 1988; (2) the political commemoration of the Austrian Anschluss in March 1938; (3) the unveiling of a “memorial against war and fascism” by the sculptor Alfred Hrdlicka, as well as the controversial discussions that preceded it; (4) the premiere of the play Heldenplatz by Thomas Bernhard, which deals with Austrian anti-Semitism and its terrifying long-term impact on surviving Jewish victims; and (5) the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the November pogrom (9 November 1938). The empirical data included a range of media genres as well as statements and speeches of Austrian politicians. The linguists and historians examined the conflicting representations of the Austrian history and related controversial claims, such as the claim of “Austria as the first victim of the Nazi politics of dictatorship and territorial expansionism”.

In the second half of the 1980s, additional DHA research was published, examining doctor-patient communication, the comprehensibility of laws and news broadcasts and guidelines for non-sexist language use in administrative texts (see Wodak 1996; Lalouschek, Menz and Wodak 1990; Lutz and Wodak 1987; Kargl et al. 1997). This research shows a critical and practical engagement for the improvement of communication in various social institutions, but does not specifically focus on the historical dimension of discourses.

Phase 2 – The DHA becomes institutionalised in Vienna (1993–1997): In the 1990s, the Discourse-Historical Approach was increasingly acknowledged as one of the main approaches to Critical Discourse Analysis. It was further developed in a number of studies, for example, a study on racist discrimination against migrants from Romania and a study on the discourse about the nation and national identity in Austria (Matouschek, Wodak and Januschek 1995; Wodak et al. 1998, 2009 [1999]). The latter book is the most influential of all DHA studies thus far; first published in 1999, an extended second edition was published in 2009. The study analyses the relationships between the discursive construction of national sameness and difference, which leads to political and social exclusion of specific out-groups. This study focussed on political speeches, focus groups, interviews, political campaigns and the press as empirical data. The empirical data refer to political and media events relating to 1995, particularly to political commemoration, in Austria. It offers a general theoretical and methodical framework that can be applied for the analysis of the discursive construction of national identities in various contexts and national states. From 1994 to 1996, a sociological
as well as discourse-analytical project also dealt with the “language of diplomacy”, a by-product of which was the comparative study on “methods of text analysis” (Titscher et al. 1998).

**Phase 3 – The Research Centre “Discourse, Politics, Identity (DPI)” (1997–2003):** The third phase comprises the years of the Research Centre “Discourse, Politics, Identity” in Vienna. Ruth Wodak founded the centre with her Wittgenstein Prize awarded in 1996. The prize allowed her to fund research projects analysing a wide range of subjects, and to support a large research team of postgraduate and postdoctoral colleagues. The topics and social issues investigated between 1997 and 2003 were:

1. overt and covert forms of racism in political discourses in national parliaments of six EU member states, especially in debates on asylum and migration (Wodak and van Dijk 2000);
2. internal communication in organisations of the European Union and discourses on un/employment in EU committees, especially in European Commission agencies and expert committees (Muntigl, Weiss and Wodak 2000);
3. the discursive construction of European identities in German, British and French speeches of politicians (e.g., Wodak and Weiss 2005);
4. the Austrian discourse on the enlargement of the European Union (Galasinska and Krzyżanowski 2008);
5. controversial debates on the issue of “permanent Austrian neutrality”, which was legally institutionalised in October 1945 (Bischof, Pelinka and Wodak 2001; Kovács and Wodak 2003);
6. the controversial discourse on the role of the German Wehrmacht during World War II and on the two exhibitions about the “Crimes of the Wehrmacht”, organised by the Institute for Social Research in Hamburg (Heer et al. 2003, 2008).

The six research projects were united by an interest in the relationships between discourse, politics/policy and identity, as well as by a focus on transnational and global phenomena. Thus, the emphasis increasingly shifted from the Austrian to the European level, and this transnational focus was maintained and elaborated in the fourth phase.

**Phase 4 – The further internationalisation of the DHA (2004–present):** Two research projects mark the transition from the third to the fourth phase: The first analysed the print-mediated discourse on the Constitution of the European Union (Oberhuber et al. 2005; Krzyżanowski and Oberhuber 2007; Krzyżanowski 2010), and the second focussed on discourses of integration, discrimination and migration in the European Union (Krzyżanowski and Wodak 2008). In 2004, when Lancaster University offered a personal chair to Ruth Wodak, Lancaster became a second centre of the DHA. In the following decade, the DHA was also established at the universities of Loughborough, Bern and Örebro.³

In Vienna, former research interests remain relevant, e.g., doctor-patient interaction, feminist critical discourse analysis, and political commemoration. Among other things, the Viennese researchers pay attention to representations and narrations of pain and illness experience (Menz et al. 2010) and to questions of comprehension and interpreting in intercultural interactions between doctors and patients with limited proficiency in the first language of the doctors (Reisigl 2011b; Menz 2013). Furthermore, they analysed the commemorative rhetoric in 2005, a multiple year of Austrian commemoration (de Cillia and Wodak 2009), and the commemorative rhetoric in 2015, another salient year of political
The Discourse-Historical Approach

commemoration in Austria. By taking into consideration the period 1995–2015, in a still ongoing research project, they extended the first ground-breaking research on the discursive construction of national identity to a comparative long-term study on political commemoration. In addition, the importance of metatheoretical and methodological reflections on discourse studies grew during the last decade – both in Vienna and Lancaster (e.g., Wodak and Krzyżanowski 2008).

From 2004 onwards, Wodak’s team in Lancaster continued research on identity politics, migration and discrimination, as well as on the relationships between discourse and politics. The research projects carried out at Lancaster University concentrated, among other topics, on discourses about refugees and asylum seekers in the British press from 1996–2006 (e.g., Delanty, Wodak and Jones 2011 [2008]), on the discursive construction of the Scots language (Unger 2013), on (multilingual) language policies in the European Union (e.g., Krzyżanowski and Wodak 2010; Unger, Krzyżanowski and Wodak 2015) as well as on media ethics and the development of a media-related European public sphere from the 1950s until 2004 (Tria- dafyllidou, Wodak and Krzyżanowski 2009). Furthermore, Ruth Wodak and her research team continued to investigate the daily routines of professional politicians and mass-mediated representations of politicians’ everyday life in TV series (Muntigl, Weiss and Wodak 2000; Wodak 2011 [2009]). This practice-based research, interested in the internal perspectives of discourse participants, exemplifies the trend of incorporating ethnographic methodology in the DHA. The ethnographic research on everyday practices in political institutions is also a crucial topic for Michal Krzyżanowski (2011, also this volume).

Among the many research areas which have recently earned critical attention by discourse-historical analysts are right-wing populism and fascist discourses in Europe, as well as discourses on environment and climate change. Various case studies embracing different genres, including genres with a strong emphasis on visual communication such as political posters, leaflets, comics, documentaries, etc., have been carried out with respect to these research fields during the last years. Among the studies on right-wing populism are Reisigl (2007b), (2012a), (2014a); Richardson and Wodak (2009); Wodak, KhosraviNik and Mral (2013); Januscheck and Reisigl (2014); Wodak and Forchtner (2014); and Wodak (2015). Wodak (2015) compares European populists with members of the “tea-party” with respect to rhetoric (including argumentation) and performance. She traces back how various persuasive images and posters have been recontextualised and glocalised across populist parties in Europe. Wodak (2015), as well as Reisigl (2012a, 2014a), look at the close relationship between the “logics of media” and the “logics of populism”. Multimedia discourses of European (particularly British, but also Austrian, Italian, etc.) fascism in the 20th century and especially in the British post-war period are analysed with respect to their multi-modal realisations in text and talk, visual communication and music in Wodak and Richardson (2013) and Copsey and Richardson (2015). A systematic comparison between fascist and right-wing populist rhetoric is to be found in Reisigl (2012b). Various facets of discourses on environment and climate change are subjects of investigation in Reisigl and Wodak (2009, 2016), Sedlaczek (2012, 2014), Forchtner (2015) and Krzyżanowski (2015).

This condensed historical overview shows that the Discourse-Historical Approach is a flexible and productive variety of CDS that always opts for a problem-oriented perspective. Such a perspective demonstrates a clear preference for interdisciplinary research, since the selected discourse-related social problems are multidimensional. Despite its interdisciplinary character, however, the Discourse-Historical Approach has strong roots in linguistics.
3. General characteristics and research interests of the Discourse-Historical Approach

The Discourse-Historical Approach does not just look at the historical dimension of discourses, but is – more extensively – concerned with the following areas of discourse studies:

- discourse and discrimination (e.g., racism, ethnicism, nationalism, xenophobia, islamophobia, sexism);
- language barriers in various social institutions (such as hospitals, court rooms, authorities, academic language, media);
- discourse and politics/policy/polity (e.g., politics of the past/political commemoration, nation-building, European Union, migration, asylum, multilingualism, language policy, populism);
- discourse and identity (e.g., national and supranational/European identity, linguistic identity);
- discourse and history (e.g., National Socialism, fascism, commemoration, history of discourse studies);
- discourse in the media (both classical print media and new social media);
- organisational communication (e.g., in institutions of the European Union);
- discourse and ecology (climate change).

The Discourse-Historical Approach considers discourse analysis not just to be a method of language analysis, but a multidimensional project incorporating theory, methods, methodology and empirically based research practices that yield concrete social applications. The sociolinguistic background is informed by the work of Basil Bernstein and Aaron Cicourel as well as by interactional and ethnographic sociolinguistics relying on Erving Goffman’s sociology of everyday life. Pragmatic influences relevant for the Discourse-Historical Approach are speech act theory, cognitive pragmatics, Gesprächsanalyse (as the unorthodox German and Austrian version of conversation analysis), and Functional Pragmatics (coined by Ehlich, Rehbein, Redder, Hoffmann, etc.). The textlinguistic and text semiotic framework is strongly influenced by Wolfgang Dressler. Sometimes, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SLF) turns out to be a helpful linguistic toolbox for the DHA. The interest in rhetoric is strongly developed, particularly with respect to tropes, genre theory (e.g., regarding political speeches), and persuasion (including argumentation). The philosophical semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce forms a basis both for a sign-related and an epistemological foundation of the DHA. As a consequence, the Discourse-Historical Approach embraces a weak realism or moderate constructivism as its epistemological starting point. Two further philosophical points of reference are Ludwig Wittgenstein with his “Philosophical Investigations”, and Critical Theory, particularly the models of communicative action, discourse ethics and deliberative democracy proposed by Jürgen Habermas. In addition, Pierre Bourdieu’s critical sociological thinking is of importance, especially his concepts of field and habitus (see also Forchtner, this volume). As far as the historical dimension is concerned, the conceptual history proposed by Reinhart Koselleck and Hayden White’s metahistorical approach are partly integrated into the analytical framework. The theories, methods, models and principles of argumentation advanced by Stephen Toulmin, Jürgen Habermas, Josef Kopperschmidt, Manfred Kienpointner, Martin Wengeler and the proponents of Pragma-Dialectics (i.e., Frans van Eemeren, Rob Grootendorst, Francisca Snoeck Henkemans, Peter Houtlosser) serve as a basis for argumentation analysis (Reisigl 2014b).
If political communication becomes the central object of research, German politolinguists (e.g., Burkhardt, Hermanns, Klein, Niehr, Wengeler) represent a vital source of theoretical and methodical inspiration. However, the commitment to an allegedly “engaged neutrality” (Burkhardt 1996) is refused, because critical discourse analysts call into question the idea of a neutral and value-free science. In this sense, the project of a critical politolinguistics is pursued within the DHA framework (Reisigl 2008).

3.1 Positioning the approach within the field of discourse studies

Locating the Discourse-Historical Approach within the broad field of discourse studies, we can observe that it takes its place within the area of Critical Discourse Studies. This means that the proponents of the approach are politically engaged and often application-oriented. They make practical claims of emancipation and criticise discursively constituted power abuse, injustice and social discrimination, and they make epistemic claims of revelation or enlightenment. Similar to other critical discourse analysts, they put emphasis on the practice-related quality of discourses, the context dependence of discourses, and the constructed as well as constructive character of discourses. Like their CDA fellows, they prefer to focus on problem-related “authentic” data and to employ multiple methods of analysis. They share with other CDA scholars that they reject a purely formalist and context-abstract view on language. They pay attention to multi-modal macro- as well as micro-phenomena, to intertextual and interdiscursive relationships, as well as to social, historical, political, economic, psychological and other factors relating to the verbal and non-verbal phenomena of communication.

Despite all these commonalities, there are a series of distinctive features. First, the DHA puts weight on historical subjects and on the historical anchoring, change and echo of specific discourses more than other CDA approaches. Second, in extensive research projects it follows the principle of triangulation more systematically than other CDA approaches do. Third, team research usually plays a greater role. Fourth, the practical application of the analytical insights, i.e., practical critique, is occasionally a more important objective. For instance, DHA activists may put forward guidelines on non-discriminatory language use. Fifth, the concept of rhetoric is more comprehensive than the one suggested by other CDA protagonists (e.g., Fairclough and van Dijk), and it is not pejorative. In the DHA, “rhetoric” includes argumentation as a central area. Sixth, the argumentation analysis is more important than in other CDA approaches, except for the approach propagated by Isabela and Norman Fairclough, and it is more concerned with the analysis of the content of argumentation schemes. Seventh, the semiotic perspective is more clearly connected with the wide-ranging model of Charles Sanders Peirce, whereas the social-semiotic approach of Theo van Leeuwen and Gunther Kress stands in the tradition of Saussure and its followers (Fairclough’s work includes a reference to Peirce’s concept of “semiosis” too, but Fairclough does not align himself with Peircean philosophy). Eighth, in contrast to the mono-perspectival concept of discourse propagated by Fairclough and van Leeuwen (i.e., a discourse relates to one perspective on social reality), the DHA opts for a multiperspectival concept of discourse (i.e., a discourse including various perspectives on social reality). Ninth, reference to Functional Pragmatics is a distinguishing feature of the Discourse-Historical Approach. Tenth, the reference to poststructuralist theories is less pronounced than in other CDA approaches (e.g., the Duisburg Group), whereas Habermas and Critical Theory play a more significant role. Despite these distinctions, DHA protagonists are repeatedly establishing seminal cooperations with proponents of the other CDA approaches.
3.2 The concept of critique

The term “critical discourse analysis” was introduced in the 1980s in order to mark a difference from an allegedly descriptive discourse analysis. What Fairclough, van Dijk and others had in mind when they stood up for “Critical Discourse Analysis” initially was particularly the political meaning of social critique. Political critique means to judge the status quo, e.g., a specific discourse or (dis)order of discourse, against the background of an alternative (ideal) state and preferred values, norms, standards or criteria with respect to shortcomings or contradictions.

At least three theoretical sources are relevant for the understanding of “critique”, as it prevails in the Discourse-Historical Approach: (1) Critical Theory of the first generation (Adorno, Horkheimer, Benjamin) inspires the DHA where it comes to criticising oppressive, discriminatory and exploitative ideologies, power abuse as well as the culture industry. Here, ideologies are suspected of justifying particular interests and social inequalities under the guise of common public interests. (2) The relationship to Foucault can be characterised as a relationship of strong interest with various reservations. Foucault’s understanding of critique as an attitude and “the art of not being governed in this specific way and at this specific price” (Foucault 1990: 12) is taken up. This critique challenges the naturalisation of social relationships. (3) Further central points of reference are the later Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas, his discourse ethics and his theory of deliberative democracy (see Forchtner 2010, 2011).

The four validity claims originally distinguished by Habermas serve as criteria for a differentiated concept of critique in the DHA: (theoretical) truth, (expressive) truthfulness, normative rightness and comprehensibility. The validity claim of comprehensibility forms the basic claim for every communication. Particularly, the question of comprehensibility is in the centre of research on language barriers in various social institutions (e.g., in doctor-patient interactions in hospitals; see Wodak, Menz and Lalouschek 1989). The question of truthfulness becomes especially crucial in studies on political or rhetorical manipulation and in studies of lying. However, the suspicion that a discourse participant could be lying involves not just the validity claim of truthfulness, but also the validity claim of truth. A person who tells a lie infringes both claims simultaneously. The two validity claims of (theoretical) truth and normative rightness are central in almost all discourse-historical studies. Truth will often be at stake in political discourses about the past, in discourses about national identities (e.g., referring to national stereotypes) and in discourses about the causes and consequences of climate change. Questions of normative rightness are salient in political discourses justifying or criticising human actions in the past, in deliberative discourses evolving around the question of what should be done or shouldn’t be done, in discourses involving discrimination, in discourse on climate change, etc.

The Discourse-Historical Approach proposes a science that includes critique in all of its stages, i.e., in the context of discovery, of justification and of application. Three forms of critique distinguished in the Discourse-Historical Approach are the text or discourse immanent critique, the socio-diagnostic critique and the prospective critique (see Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 32–35).
for constructive arguing, i.e., the freedom of arguing, the obligation to give reasons, the correct reference to the previous discourse by the antagonist, the obligation to matter-of-factness, the correct reference to implicit premises, the acceptance of shared starting points, the use of plausible schemes of argumentation, logical validity, the acceptance of the discussion’s results and the clarity of expression and correct interpretation (see van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992; van Eemeren, Garssen and Meuffels 2009).

2 **Socio-diagnostic critique** is both epistemic and deontic. It aims at exposing manipulation in and by discourse, at revealing ethically problematic aspects of discursive practices. This form of critique focusses on discrepancies between discursive and other social practices and functions as a form of social control. It relies on social, historical and political background knowledge. This critique includes the critique of ideology, the critique of the ethos of social actors, pragmatic critique, political critique and “social critique” (relating, for instance, to social recognition).

3 **Prospective critique** is strongly application-oriented. It is practical, aimed at reducing dysfunctional communication and language barriers, at improving communication within public institutions by elaborating proposals and guidelines on the basis of careful fieldwork. The philosophical model of deliberative democracy can serve as a normative point of reference for this form of critique. If the model is systematically linked to argumentation theory, it can serve as a valuable theoretical and methodical criterion that allows for the possibility to assess and organise important areas of public political decision-making. Such a model should keep loyalty to at least three things:

   (i) to principles of rationality, e.g., the pragma-dialectical rules of sound argumentation;
   (ii) to principles of justice (a) with respect to equality of political (basic democratic) and human rights, (b) with respect to distribution, (c) with respect to compensation and (d) with respect to performance; and
   (iii) to the awareness of suffering and to the empathy as well as solidarity with victims of discrimination and disadvantaged fellow human beings.

3.3 **The concept of discourse**

At least ten features characterise the concept of discourse, as it is proposed by the Discourse-Historical Approach:

1 Discourse is a socially constituted as well as constitutive semiotic practice. In order to grasp the practical character of discourses, functionally oriented pragmatics is central. In order to understand the semiotic character, Peircean semiotics and social semiotics are highly relevant.

2 With respect to its socially constitutive character, discourse represents, creates, reproduces and changes social reality.

3 With respect to its semiotic and pragmatic character, a discourse is a communicative and interactional macro-unit that transcends the unit of a single text or conversation.

4 A discourse is composed of specific groups of actual texts, conversations, interactions and other semiotic events as well as action units. These concrete semiotic units are tokens, i.e., singular signs (in Peirce’s terms, sinsigns). They serve specific purposes in social contexts, and are produced by somebody, distributed by somebody and received by somebody.

5 These actual discursive units relate to specific genres and other semiotic action patterns, i.e., to types (in Peirce’s terms, legisigns).
The discursive units belonging to a specific discourse are intertextually linked by a macro-topic that diversifies into various discourse topics, subtopics, content-related argumentation schemes (topoi), etc.

Discourses are situated within (political, economic, etc.) fields of action. The discursive units are functionally connected within these fields of action. Fields of action form the frames of discourses.

Within these functional frames, discourses become parts of dispositifs and contribute to the constitution of social order. Dispositifs are goal-oriented complexes or networks of discourse, knowledge, power and subject constitution. As parts of dispositifs, discourses help to organise, (re)produce and transform social relationships (including power relations) and social positions, institutions, knowledge and ideologies, identities and subjects, etc.

Discourses develop around social problems. The problems become starting points of argumentation. Argumentation is both a verbal (partly also visual) and cognitive pattern of problem-solving (see Kopperschmidt 2000: 32, 45, 59f.; Reisigl 2014b: 70). These patterns surround claims of truth and/or claims of normative rightness. The claims are dealt with from different perspectives. Thus, a discourse involves multiple perspectives.

Discourse undergoes historical change relating to social change. Historical change deserves special attention in the DHA.

In order to approach various discursive features and strategies, discourse-historical analyses systematically go through five simple questions:

These questions are analytically answered by qualitative research on a variety of data (genres), and partly also by corpus-based quantitative research. The discourse-analytical categories are

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions to approach discursive features</th>
<th>Discursive strategies</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How are persons, objects, phenomena, events, processes and actions named and referred to linguistically in the discourse in question?</td>
<td>nomination</td>
<td>discursive construction of social actors, discursive construction of objects, phenomena, events, discursive construction of processes and actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What characteristics or qualities are attributed to social actors, objects, phenomena, events, processes and actions mentioned in the discourse?</td>
<td>predication</td>
<td>discursive characterization of social actors, objects, phenomena, events, processes and actions (e.g., positively or negatively)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What arguments are employed in discourse?</td>
<td>argumentation</td>
<td>persuading addressees of the validity of specific claims of truth and normative rightness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From what perspective are these nominations, attributions, arguments expressed?</td>
<td>perspectivisation</td>
<td>positioning the speaker’s or writer’s point of view and expressing involvement or distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the respective utterances articulated overtly, are they intensified or mitigated?</td>
<td>mitigation and intensification</td>
<td>modifying the illocutionary force of utterances in respect to their epistemic or deontic status</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
not completely fixed, but have, at least partially, to be modified, adapted and newly developed for each research object. There is no space to elaborate on the particular discourse-analytical categories and their specific analytical application in the DHA. Thus, I just want to selectively refer the readers to Reisigl and Wodak (2001: 31–90); Reisigl and Wodak (2009, 2016); Wodak et al. (2009 [1999]: 30–47) for more information and details.

3.4 The concept of context

Context is a key notion of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS). It has become a defining moment of discourse, because (critical) discourse analysts frequently conceive of discourse as “text in context”. CDS pay special attention to the social, political, historical and cognitive context.

Context can be broken down into a macro-, meso- and micro-dimension. The Discourse-Historical Approach distinguishes among four dimensions of “context”:

1. The immediate, language internal co-text and co-discourse regards thematic and syntactic coherences, lexical solidarities, collocations, connotations, implications, presuppositions and local interactive processes.
2. The intertextual and interdiscursive relationship between utterances, texts, genres and discourses (e.g., with respect to discourse representation, allusions, evocations) is a further contextual research dimension.
3. Social factors and institutional frames of a specific context of situation include: degree of formality, place, time, occasion, addressees, interactive and political roles, political and ideological orientation, gender, age, profession, level of education, ethnic, regional, national, religious identities, etc.
4. On a meso- and macro-level, the broader sociopolitical and historical context is integrated into the analysis. At this point, fields of action and the history of the discursive event as well as of discourse topics are looked at.

The Discourse-Historical Approach pays special attention to the fourth dimension, the historical context. Three ways of doing a discourse-historical analysis can be distinguished:

1. A discourse fragment or utterance is taken as a starting point, and its prehistory is reconstructed by relating the present to the past. To give an example: At the first glance, an utterance such as “We take care of your Carinthia” produced by three Austrian politicians of the right-wing populist party BZÖ in a regional election campaign in 2009 may seem to be “harmless”. The seemingly “innocent” character gets lost if a discourse-historical analysis – interested in recontextualisation – a crucial concept for the analysis of the historical dimension of discourses – detects that the sentence “Take care of my Carinthia” has both been uttered in 1991 by Jörg Haider and in 1945 by Friedrich Rainer, the National Socialist Gauleiter of Carinthia, when he had to resign at the end of World War II (Reisigl 2013: 82–84).

2. A diachronic series or sequence of thematically or/and functionally connected discourse fragments or utterances is taken as a starting point, and their historical interrelationships are reconstructed within a specific period. This way, specific discourse elements can be related to each within a particular period of the past, e.g., a period of some months, years, decades, etc.
3 A third way consists in the critical analysis of how different social actors, e.g., politicians in contrast to historians, talk, write, sing, etc. about the past, and in the comparison of the different semiotic representations with respect to claims of truth, normative rightness and truthfulness.

The three ways can be combined, for instance, if a comparative long-term study is carried out on political commemoration in Austria in the years 1995, 2005 and 2015.

When analysing the historical dimension of discourses, we are faced with two challenges:

1 Time-relatedness of the internal perspective and the perspective of discourse analysts: In order to do justice to the historical situatedness of discourses, discourse analysts should try to understand the perspectives of the historical discourse participants. On the other hand, every discourse-historical analysis is itself time-related, connected to the perspective of a present. This tension can adequately be dealt with, if we keep in mind that our discourse-historical analysis is not just an analysis of the past, but also of the present.

2 Discrepancies between asserted and lived continuities or discontinuities: On the one hand, a discourse-historical analysis has sometimes to focus on the discrepancy between the assertion of a continuity and factual discontinuities in the area of the res gestae. Such a discrepancy can be detected in national rhetorics, where historical breaks are tropologically done away by temporal synecdoches for reasons of positive national self-presentation. To give an example: In some Austrian commemorative speeches from 2008, there is talk of a 90-year-existence of the Austrian Republic, although this republic did not exist between 1934 and 1945 (see Reisigl 2009). On the other hand, a discourse-historical analysis may focus on the discrepancy between the assertion of a discontinuity and the factual continuity until present times. Here, we may think of the echo of fascism and National Socialism after 1945, or of the proximity of right-wing populism and right-wing extremism.

4. Research practice

Of course, the research practice varies from research project to research project, depending on a series of pragmatic reasons (e.g., resources of time, money and researchers) and on the claim that good science should always be open to unexpected findings that get researchers to modify their research plan. A simplified and idealised sequence of eight stages and steps in research practice is explained in Reisigl (2008: 101–117) and Reisigl and Wodak (2009: 96–120 and 2016: 34–56). This sequence can be summarised as follows:

1 activation and consultation of preceding theoretical knowledge, i.e., recollection, reading and discussion of previous research;

2 systematic collection of data and context information with respect to discourses and discursive events, social fields as well as actors, semiotic media, genres, texts, conversations, linguistic action patterns, etc.;

3 selection and preparation of data for the specific analyses, i.e., selection and downsizing of data according to transparent criteria, transcription of tape recordings, etc.;

4 specification of research question and formulation of assumptions on the basis of a literature review and a first skimming of the data;

5 qualitative pilot analysis that allows testing categories and assumptions as well as the further specification of assumptions (this stage includes a linguistic macro-, meso- and micro-analysis as well as a context analysis);
The Discourse-Historical Approach

6. Conclusion

Change is a basic historical category. At present, we are confronted with a series of far-reaching social, political, economic and ecological changes. These changes occur at local, regional, national, supranational and global levels. Discourse is highly relevant for all of these changes. Thus, the Discourse-Historical Approach finds a vast field of research activity also in the coming years. New topics relating to new problems and known topics relating to the aggravation of already existing social problems urgently require the critical attention of DHA proponents. Changing discourses on migration and asylum, discourses on changing national and supranational identities, discourses on climate change, discourses on new media, and – not least – discourses on the various political pasts are only a selection of subjects that will remain important research objects. In order to do justice to its empirical objects, the DHA will have to look at new relationships between discourse and discrimination, and it will have to advance its theoretical and methodological development, also with respect to the question of what it means to analyse the historical dimension of discourses. Within this context, the DHA will have to pay attention to the interdiscursive links of the discourse on asylum and refugees and the discourse on climate change, just to mention two imperative challenges. Discourse and discrimination and language barriers in crucial social institutions will also remain two important objects of research and practical critique. The respective research belongs to the core area of the DHA, though the historical dimension of discourses is not at the centre of this research. The success of prospective criticisms strongly depends on the question whether the interdisciplinary cooperation among linguistics, historical research, sociology, political science, philosophy and climatology can further be improved, in order to lead to an even more integrative DHA framework.

Notes

1. For the history of the approach, see also Reisigl (2011a: 462–473).
2. The politics of identity and exclusion was further investigated in a series of case studies on Austria and led to research on supranational identities (see Reisigl 2007a; de Cillia and Wodak 2009).
3. Quite soon after the publication of “Discourse and Discrimination” (Reisigl and Wodak 2001), John E. Richardson also started to become involved in discourse-historical research (Richardson 2004).
4. Veronica Koller moved to Lancaster in 2004 as well, independently of Wodak. Synergetic cooperations developed soon. Koller combines the socio-cognitive approach of CDS and metaphor analysis with the Discourse-Historical Approach (e.g., Koller 2008, 2009).
5. The focus on content-related topoi has partly been misunderstood. For a clarification, see Reisigl (2014b).

Further reading

The authors study general and specific discursive strategies and linguistic devices employed to construct national identities. The book pays particular attention to Austria, but many theoretical, methodical and empirical findings are also relevant for various other cases of discursive nation building.


This is a study of how racism, antisemitism and ethnicism are (re)produced and reflected in discourse. The authors first survey five established discourse-analytical approaches before providing their own model of the Discourse-Historical Approach and three case studies (on right-wing populist “xenophobia”, on everyday antisemitism and on bureaucratistic racism).


The chapter introduces the politolingual analysis of political communication from a DHA perspective. It explains how political communication can be studied with respect to its rhetorical and argumentative structure. Eight steps of a specific research practice are spelled out in a qualitative pilot analysis of a right-wing populist discourse fragment.


The chapter offers an overview of the basic characteristics of the Discourse-Historical Approach. It explains key concepts such as critique, ideology, power, discourse, genre, text, context, recontextualisation, intertextuality and interdiscursivity. Further, it explicates important principles and analytical tools of this critical approach to discourse. Finally, the pilot analysis of online news reporting on climate change illustrates the research practice of the DHA.

**References**


