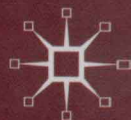




CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND COGNITIVE SCIENCE

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON IMMIGRATION DISCOURSE

CHRISTOPHER HART



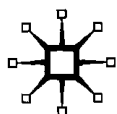
Critical Discourse Analysis and Cognitive Science

New Perspectives on
Immigration Discourse

Christopher Hart
University of Hertfordshire, UK



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For my parents

Preface

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) claims to be theoretically eclectic. However, its description of language use has largely been confined to sociolinguistic frameworks and its explanation for the impact of texts has been in terms of social theory. Missing from its theoretical and analytical frameworks are cognitive descriptions of language use and cognitive explanations for the effects of texts. This book advances a model for the analysis of manipulation and ideology in political discourse which draws upon Cognitive Linguistics and Evolutionary Psychology, alongside the standard tools of CDA. It is argued that CDA must account for the cognitive construction of meaning and further psychological processes involved in immigration discourse if it is to fully investigate the links between language use and social inequality. The model that is developed is related to the socio-cognitive approach and is applied in a critical exposé of immigration discourse in the UK press. Immigration remains a contentious issue in the UK and one which is largely fuelled by the media. As a measure, between 2000 and 2006 three major bills restricting immigration and asylum and regulating the residence of foreigners were passed before parliament. Immigration was at the heart of the 2005 general election campaign, especially for the political right. And once fringe parties on the extreme right of the political spectrum have recently enjoyed unprecedented success at the local, national and European level. It is now more important than ever for CDA to harness new tools to tackle old problems.

CHRISTOPHER HART
Hertfordshire 2010

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Books are not written in vacuums. They are dialogic. The views presented have been developed in discussion with various colleagues, though any errors are obviously the author's own responsibility. I hope I have not misrepresented the views of those colleagues who have been generous enough to share their ideas. Books also require the support and encouragement of people in our personal lives. It therefore behoves me to thank all of those individuals who have had an influence, in one way or another, in the writing of this book.

First and foremost I must thank my parents, to whom this book is dedicated. You have been both an inspiration and a motivation to see this project through. Secondly, I must thank Paul Chilton. Paul truly is the godfather of political linguistics and his influence on this work will be obvious. Thank you for your time and insight. I should also like to thank Veronika Koller, Piotr Cap and one anonymous reviewer for comments on various aspects of the book at its different stages. I am indebted to Juana Marín Arrese and others at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid for indulging me with so many informative conversations when this work was in its final stages of completion. I should also, of course, express thanks to all of my colleagues with whom I have been able to exchange ideas at various international conferences over the past four years. I currently enjoy a lectureship at the University of Hertfordshire. I am grateful to colleagues there for a great many practical reasons but in particular to Marjolein Groefsema for her enthusiasm towards life and linguistics. Last but certainly not least, I wish to thank Heather for her love, understanding, indulgence and especially her patience on those all too frequent occasions when the writing of this has had an inevitable impact on our lives. I crave your continued love and support.

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Part I

The Scope of CDA

Introduction

The label 'Critical Discourse Analysis' or CDA has come to refer to a particular branch of applied linguistics associated with researchers such as Roger Fowler, Norman Fairclough, Teun van Dijk and Ruth Wodak. However, critical discourse analysis in a broader sense can be traced back at least as far as the Aristotelian study of rhetoric. In contemporary philosophy, the Marxist-influenced *Critical Theory* of the Frankfurt school, associated with Adorno and Horkheimer, and later Habermas, as well as Foucault's post-structuralist discourse analysis, also count as critical discourse analysis in this broader sense. Indeed, the work of Habermas and Foucault in particular has provided important social theory for CDA.

CDA, as a field of applied linguistics, was inceptioned as Critical Linguistics, pioneered by researchers at the University of East Anglia and inaugurated with the publication of *Language and Control* (Fowler et al. 1979) and *Language as Ideology* (Kress and Hodge 1979). Critical Linguistics later became subsumed under CDA and is now considered a particular branch of CDA (Fairclough and Wodak 1997). CDA is not a single theory, then, but is multifarious (Weiss and Wodak 2003: 12). It is made up of several identifiable strands which differ methodologically but which share a common conceptual framework and critical perspective (van Dijk 2001: 353). With the exception of the socio-cognitive approach, however, the various faces of CDA have inherited, to lesser or greater degrees, the methods and practices associated with Critical Linguistics (Chilton 2005a: 21; Wodak 2001a: 8).

At first, Critical Linguistics applied Chomsky's transformational grammar. This was then replaced with Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (Fowler 1991). However, remnants of transformational theory remained in a model which combined key concepts – transformation

and representation – from two quite different traditions and tailored them to suit (Hodge and Kress 1993; Kress 1996). Transformations were in some sense a strange object of analysis for Critical Linguistics since they were treated by Chomsky as deriving formal equivalences. What Critical Linguists did, however, was press this formal device, transformational grammar, into functional service (Widdowson 2004: 97). Analysis was primarily concerned with representations in news texts which, it was claimed, ‘mystified’ responsibility for particular actions, thus encoding ideology. Critical Linguists reverse-engineered representations to reveal ‘a varied history of transformations’ (Hodge and Kress 1993: 21). Transformations were seen as necessarily ideological since they ‘always involve suppression and/or distortion’ (Hodge and Kress 1993: 35). Hodge and Kress regarded this reverse-engineering as ‘hypothetical reconstructions of psychologically real processes’ (*ibid.*). The crucial claim they made was that ‘commuters on the 8.05 from Brighton’ would not perform the same reconstructions (1993: 22). The transformational process performed by the writer in arriving at representations was said not to be reproduced by the reader. Thus, Critical Linguistics was required in order to demystify ideological dimensions of discourse. However, one of the criticisms levelled at CDA is that it takes for granted such a claim since it does not seriously address the role of the reader in interpretation-stage analysis (Fowler 1996; O’Halloran 2003; Widdowson 2004).

This book is an exercise in CDA. But it is largely an exercise in theoretical development, motivated by a dissatisfaction with the current state of the art. CDA claims to be theoretically eclectic and capable of analysing a wide range of linguistic phenomena (Weiss and Wodak 2003: 12). In practice, however, while CDA, since its development from Critical Linguistics, has been directed towards a great variety of text types in different domains, the linguistic theory that it has applied and the linguistic objects that it has analysed have been fairly limited in scope. As O’Halloran observes, ‘while CDA has absorbed Critical Linguistics – and thus its techniques for analysing how texts can mystify the responsibility for a particular event – there has been little development of these techniques since its absorption’ (2003: 15). CDA has therefore had a high mileage out of analysing transitivity and transformations (Fowler 1996: 5). CDA is still further limited in its use of these particular apparatuses. For example, Widdowson (2004: 97) notes that CDA ‘does not involve the systematic application of [Systemic Functional Grammar] taken as a whole, but the expedient picking and choosing of whatever aspect of it seems useful for its purposes’.

While CDA boasts about its theoretical eclecticism, limited though it may be in practice, this position is the object of outside criticism. Widdowson, for example, further lambasts CDA for borrowing from a varied assortment of ideas besides Systemic Functional Linguistics, questioning how these ideas can be 'related and integrated into a theoretically coherent model?' (2004: 97). Inside CDA, Fowler himself warned of the danger in using 'competing and uncontrolled methodologies drawn from a scatter of different models in the social sciences' (1996: 12). We might infer from comments such as these that theoretical eclecticism is acceptable so long as (i) theories are applied systematically rather than selecting certain aspects of them while conveniently ignoring others and (ii) theories are brought together in a coherent, integrated framework.

Worse criticisms abound for CDA. Chilton (2005a) questions whether there is even any point in CDA. He argues that people are perfectly able, in fact biologically equipped, to recognise ideological processes behind text-production, thus raising the issue of what exactly it is that critical discourse analysts can bring to the table. If people are innately endowed with a 'critical' potential, as Chilton argues, then CDA, to have any efficacy, needs to demonstrate beyond the ordinary person's power of detection that discourse is ideological. The only way that CDA can do this is through systematic and sophisticated linguistic analysis which Widdowson (2004: 97) suggests is left wanting in CDA.

Indeed, it appears to me as though CDA, since its divergence from Critical Linguistics, has lost its way as a field of applied linguistics. Some critical discourse analyses seem simply to involve repeating back stretches of text and pointing out, against some loose theoretical background, instances of ideology or argumentation which any ordinary language user would be capable of spotting. In this sense, I am in agreement with Fowler (1996: 12) who states that 'nowadays it seems that anything can count as discourse analysis'. As Halliday (1994: xvi–xvii) makes clear, however, any discourse analysis that is not based on a theory of language is not, in fact, a discourse analysis at all, but simply 'a running commentary on the text'.

It is surely the task of Critical Discourse Analysts, as experts, to identify manipulation and ideology in text that is 'below the threshold of notice' (Fowler 1991: 66). The role of the Critical Discourse Analyst, who, as linguist or psychologist, is equipped with the theoretical tools required to look behind language use, is to use their expertise to bring to the level of public consciousness instances of manipulation and ideology not immediately apparent to average readers, thus empowering them with a new critical awareness.¹

Despite some problems with transformational analysis (O'Halloran 2003; Widdowson 2004), it was Critical Linguistics which, to my mind, seemed to do this the most effectively and within a model more closely oriented to theories of language. The analytical claims of Critical Linguistics can be called into question. However, this should be possible, based on evidence, for any valid scientific model (Popper 1959). This is not always the case in CDA.

In the current CDA landscape, it is Critical Metaphor Analysis, a new and emerging model informed by a dedicated research programme in Cognitive Linguistics, which, in my view, now represents the most rigorous, linguistics-orientated approach to CDA and the one which is the most illuminatory. Like transformations, metaphors always involve suppression and distortion. And, moreover, readers are not normally aware of when they are processing metaphor, that is 'until some linguist or discourse analyst comes along' (Chilton 2005b: 24). But Critical Metaphor Analysis still only applies a single component of Cognitive Linguistics. There is much more to Cognitive Linguistics than metaphor research and, equally, much more to Cognitive Science than Cognitive Linguistics.

Cognitive Linguistics, then, like Generative Linguistics, is a discipline of Cognitive Science. However, the dominant approaches within CDA – recognised as the sociosemiotic approach and the discourse-historical approach (Titscher et al. 2000; Widdowson 2004) – although they make cursory glances towards cognitive psychology, rely almost exclusively on social science methodologies. Wodak (2006: 179) would have us believe otherwise when she claims that theories by George Lakoff have had a large influence on her work. However, I can see no real trace of Lakoff anywhere in the discourse-historical approach which she advocates. This is not at detriment to these particular approaches. They have their own, equally valid, theoretical backgrounds and methodologies. But it does highlight the need for a further, complementary, approach.

And there are good reasons why CDA requires an approach that takes serious stock of research in contemporary Cognitive Science, including Cognitive Linguistics, something which mainstream CDA does not currently seem to recognise (Chilton 2005a). Despite its rapid development, Critical Metaphor Analysis remains a marginalised, misunderstood and in some circles even maligned approach to CDA. Even more vilified is Evolutionary Psychology. However, it has recently been argued that Evolutionary Psychology can, alongside Cognitive Linguistics, inform CDA (Chilton 2005a; Hart 2005). This is the position we adopt in this book.