

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

SUMBER :

<http://www.bera.ac.uk/critical-discourse-analysis/>

An analytic framework for educational research

The purpose of this resource is to introduce an approach to the analysis of language use in social context, namely Critical Discourse Analysis. It will consider the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of this approach and look at practical ways in which this approach can be applied to linguistic data.

The resource includes:

- [Introduction](#)
- [What is Critical Discourse Analysis?](#)
- [Influences within Critical Discourse Analysis](#)
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Introduction

The information on which people interpret the world around them comes from a wide range of sources. It comes from personal interactions with others, from their knowledge and experience, cultural conventions and precedents in their social world; it comes from their exposure to institutional and non-institutional learning environments, as well as from subsequent reflection, theorising and practice based on these environments; and it comes from the public media – television, radio, newspapers and magazines, the Internet and so on. At various times and in various contexts, each of these sources carries with it differential values in terms of status and so the information received from these sources can be interpreted as having different degrees of validity. The main mode through which most of these sources provides information is language, though recent advances in multimodal analysis [Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001), Jewitt, C. and Kress, G. (2003), Norris, S. (2004), Taylor (2006)] have crucially indicated that other modes of meaning making, including gesture, intonation, image and gaze among the multimodal signs, also play a crucial role and should be taken into account.

Despite these recent advances this resource will argue that a key, and arguably the main way in which people make sense of the world, is through language – it is a discursive process. This view seeks to challenge the view that language and social reality are unrelated. It challenges a view that language is a neutral reflection of society and social reality. Rather it argues that language, instead of drawing meanings passively from pre-existing knowledge of the world, plays an active role in classifying

the phenomena and experiences through which individuals construct, understand and represent reality. The way in which people make sense of the world is therefore discursively mediated.

Such a view would suggest that the relationship between the linguistic forms used to describe the world and the 'reality' or ideational content intended to be encapsulated within these forms is not arbitrary or conventional. The relationship is part of a process which is ideologically loaded and the meanings implied by this synthesis of forms and content can be related to the social structures and processes of the origins of texts and discourses. Language then needs to be viewed as more than a representative process of communication but part of a wider ideological process of the representation and construction of meanings. It is active rather than passive in the process of representing the world. It is a process of performance rather than a process of quiescent and neutral mirroring.

It is the intention of this resource, as well as outlining the theoretical and conceptual bases of CDA, to provide a practical analytical tool. This resource draws from Hyatt (2006) a set of criteria that will allow researchers, learners and teachers to look at elements of the text at both a 'micro' lexico-grammatical level, as well as to consider the impact of such choices at more 'macro' semantic and societal levels. This approach is informed by key work in systemics (Hunston and Thompson 2000, Martin 2000), in the field of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 1995) and Critical Literacy (Luke and Freebody 1997).

Orientation questions for frame application

- Is this a typical text of its type?
- Who produced this?
- Who will read it?
- Will everyone understand this text in the same way?
- Why was it produced?
- In what other ways could it have been written?
- What is missing from this text?
- How does this text reflect the wider society?
- What could we do about this text if we disagree with it?

CDA needs to be understood as both a theory and a method (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 16), in that it offers 'not only a description and interpretation of discourses in social context but also offers an explanation of why and how discourses work' (Rogers 2004:2). Before beginning to address the issue of this theoretical approach, it is important to be clear about what we mean by the concepts of critical, discourse, and analysis, and these are terms that have been interpreted in differing and contested ways.

In CDA, the notion of 'critical' is primarily applied to the engagement with power relations associated with the Frankfurt School of critical theory. In this, it argues against a realist, neutral and rationalist view of the world. Instead the role is to uncloak the hidden power relations, largely constructed through language, and to demonstrate and challenge social inequities reinforced and reproduced.

Discourse is a contested and contestable term. Perhaps the most useful way of handling this contestation comes from the work of James Gee (1990). Gee uses the term discourse (with a small 'd' to talk about language in use, or the way language is used in a social context to 'enact' activities and identities. This is the way that applied linguists such as McCarthy (1994) have used the term to discuss language beyond the sentence level – an analytical advance that allows us to consider some of the things that are happening in the language that are only observable if we look beyond single sentence examples e.g. the word 'This' can be used at the start of a discussion to foreground the topic under discussion and identify it as important to the speaker, whereas the word 'That' could be used to background or marginalise a topic and place it in a subordinate position, from the speaker's point of view.

But Gee notes that language does not occur in isolation, but in specific social contexts. It occurs between people, in particular places; in particular sets of circumstances, at particular times, accompanied by particular semiotic signs (such as gesture, dress and symbols) and is influenced by a range of values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions and ideologies. It is this non-language 'stuff' that Gee terms as Discourse (with a big 'D'). So discourse occurs within Discourses. For Gee,

“Discourses are characteristic (socially and culturally formed, but historically changing) ways of talking and writing about, as well as acting with and toward, people and things. These ways are circulated and sustained within various texts, artefacts, images, social practices, and institutions, as well as in moment-to-moment social interactions. In turn, they cause certain perspectives and states of affairs to come to seem or be taken as 'normal' or 'natural' and others to seem or be taken as 'deviant' or 'marginal' (e.g., what counts as a “normal” prisoner, hospital patient, or student, or a “normal” prison, hospital, or school, at a given time and place)” .

(Gee: 2000: <http://www.readingonline.org/articles/handbook/gee/>)

Gee's work has been influenced by the thought of Michel Foucault (1972) who uses discourse as an authoritative way of describing. Discourses are spread by specific institutions and divide up the world in specific ways. For example, we can talk of medical, legal, and media discourses. Discourse is used to describe the way that language (and beyond!) operates to produce meanings, that is the range of forms of representation, codes, conventions and habits of language that produce specific fields of culturally and historically located meanings. In Foucault's description, these discourses are hierarchically arranged and so have differing degrees of power and influence. The dominant discourses are understood by existing systems of law, education and the media, and are in turn reinforced and reproduced, and less powerful discourses marginalised, misunderstood and ignored. It is this conception of Discourse that Critical Discourse analysts operate with. A concise, readable and informative discussion of the theoretical assumptions underlying notions of discourse can be found in Mills (1997).

In terms of analysis, CDA takes the view that texts need to be considered in terms of what they include but also what they omit – alternative ways of constructing and defining the world. The critical discourse analyst's job is not to simply read political and social ideologies onto a text but to consider the myriad ways in which a text could have been written and what these alternatives imply for ways of representing the

world, understanding the world and the social actions that are determined by these ways of thinking and being. A fuller discussion of these aspects of CDA can be found in Rogers 2004: 3-8.

It is worth reflecting upon what one might mean by being critical. This might include being:

- Reflective: thinking deeply about what is said and the context of its production, including time, circumstances, policy context etc.
- Reflexive: considering how one's positionality impacts upon what one does and how one interprets things. For more information on positionality and reflexivity, it might be useful to refer to this resource [[HYPERLINK to AERS_positionality_6.1](#)]
- Questioning: not taking anything for granted and exploring what the language presupposes.
- Dialogic: collaboratively constructing understandings
- Comparative: comparing articles on the same topic, with attention to their similarities, differences, and the implications of these

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) refers to an approach to the study of language use and textual practices that focuses closely on the inter-relationship between language and power. It draws on a range of theoretical resources derived from numerous disciplinary fields. It has developed historically from differing conceptions of Linguistics and from a range of post-structural and neo-Marxist influences.

- [Linguistic influences](#)

Critical Linguistics is a branch of linguistic analysis concerned with analysing texts in their socio-political contexts. The remit of this approach, and its successors such as Critical Language Awareness and Critical Discourse Analysis, is wider than media discourse alone, but has had such a central influence that it is appropriate to critically consider such approaches and their implications at this stage. Advocates of Critical Linguistics would argue that language is central to the way in which individuals are constructed as social subjects and that linguistic choices reflect ideological processes. As a result of this the systematic analysis of texts is viewed as a key way in which to examine the operations by which people are kept under control by dominant forces. The system of analysis operated by critical linguists is based on systemic-functional linguistic theory (Halliday 1985), which has also been integrated with the theory of discourse of social theorists such as Foucault and Bourdieu. It arose partly in reaction to the tendency of discourse analysts (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975, Brown and Yule 1983) to view texts as products and, on occasion, simply to allocate acts or moves to set categories. Such an approach, argues Fairclough (1992a:15), pays 'insufficient attention to interpretation' due to an 'absence of a fully developed social orientation to discourse'. The criticism centres on the discourse analysts' tendency to ignore the fact that different participants in a discourse will have different interests and perspectives and therefore may interpret the discourse in different ways. For example, Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) analysis of classroom language was largely centred on the powerful figure in the context, the teacher. The student voices tended to be marginalised.

Critical Linguistics is, and perhaps would wish to be, not without its critics. In its earliest conceptions (Fowler et al. 1979), it tended to focus on the production of texts and ignore the ways in which audiences interpret these texts, which has been a growing concern within media studies and cultural studies. Critical Linguistics tended to view the media as rather monolithic, in the over-structural way of Althusser's (1971) ISAs, and ignore the diversity within the media, its institutions, practices and discourse. Linguistically, emphasis was on the ideational more than the interpersonal and this tended to marginalise issues of social identity. The focus tended to be on the micro-level of the lexicon-grammar and tended to downplay issues relating to genre, discourse and intertextuality. It was basically text analysis. Debates emerged around these limitations and attempts began to be made to address them through more of an emphasis on an intertextual approach to textual analysis, which, as we shall see, is central to CDA.

- [Influences from Critical Social Theory](#)

Drawing on the work of Foucault, critical discourse analysis takes the position that language/discourse are not neutral media for describing the world – they construct and regulate social relations and knowledge. This entails that discourse have a disciplining effect in that they limit the boundaries of field and enquiry and determine what is acceptable in terms of beliefs and actions within those field and how these beliefs can be expressed. Institutions are therefore defined and understood through discourses in terms of their make-up, at both an institutional and an individual level – what it means to be a ‘university’ or an ‘academic’, for example are discursive constructions which carry with them sets of values and ideologies. Foucault (1980) argued that this implies ‘technologies of power’ and ‘technologies of the self’ – policing mechanisms that enforce limits on social practices and understandings of identities of members of the institution, through the authority of the institution and thorough the individuals’ internal understanding of their identity within the institution.

Another key analytical concept relating to this is Bourdieu's notion of ‘habitus’ or ‘a set of deeply interiorized master-patterns... (which) may govern and regulate mental processes without being consciously apprehended or controlled’ (1971: 192-3). It is, then, a cultural framework within which and by which habitual thought and social action occur. The habitus allows individuals to recognize some possibilities but not others, to generate practices and perceptions, but also to limit them. Bourdieu argues that the power of the dominant groups in society ensures that it is their habitus that is dominant over others, and gives the example of how education is a process whereby the power of a dominant group will legitimate the outcomes that are considered valuable and also construct features of the habitus of subordinate groups as examples of failure. Bourdieu's complementary notion of ‘doxa’ is also useful in describing the interaction between habitus and a field to which it is attuned (in our context, education). This interaction produces a set of accepted assumptions in that field, which come to be seen as ‘natural’, ‘normal’ and remain uncontested. Doxa, therefore, acts to distinguish what is ‘thinkable’ from what is ‘unthinkable’. This entails that particular social actions and beliefs become unthinkable or inarticulable, particularly those that challenge established and dominant norms.

CDA also draws on neo-Marxist theorisations of power and control. Language is socially determined. It is a reflection of unequal distribution in society, and one of the means by which those in power hold on to it. It is significantly influenced by Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemony.

Antonio Gramsci was an Italian Marxist political theorist and activist whose seminal work, published as *Selections from a Prison Notebook*, was produced during his incarceration in the late 1920s and early 1930s. It is in this work that he outlines his notion of hegemony, widely considered to be his most significant contribution to political philosophy. Gramsci conceived the term hegemony in two ways: negatively to describe the mechanisms of power that operated the control of society in capitalist and fascist societies such as Italy at the time and; more positively as a more socially equitable alternative to such political and economic domination. The first conception of hegemony described the way in which the political system maintained power through consensual and ideological means. This was viewed as an alternative, though parallel and ultimately more effective, mode of control to the coercive apparatus of the state, comprising the army, the police and the judiciary. This coercive apparatus maintained the power of the ruling classes through force, which Gramsci labelled 'domination'. The alternative was grounded in the institutions of society such as the church, the education system and, of more immediate relevance to this thesis, the media and political groupings. These institutions were the means by which dominant groups obtained and organised the spontaneous adherence of the population to their rule. The consensual nature of hegemony was by the promotion of shared ideals, values, beliefs, meanings and knowledge. For Gramsci this was class-based in that such shared beliefs were those of the dominant classes, and he gave examples of this as the Church in Italy and Fordism in the USA. Such institutions promoted the intrinsic value of certain beliefs and modes of conduct over others. The Church emphasised the notions of a divine masterplan, and that suffering on earth will be compensated for in an afterlife, as well as a loyalty to itself and the state it legitimated. Fordism encouraged a work ethic, and convinced workers of the validity of a capitalist approach to economics and, hence, the adoption of bourgeois aspirations. Gramsci claimed that the economies afforded by large scale production permitted higher wages and lowered the costs of products, yet these conditions made it...

“relatively easy to rationalise production and labour by a skilful combination of force (destruction of working-class trade unionism on a territorial basis) and persuasion (high wages, various social benefits, extremely subtle ideological and political propaganda) and thus succeed in making the whole life of the nation revolve around production. Hegemony here is born in the factory and requires for its exercise only a minute quantity of professional political and ideological intermediaries.”
(Gramsci 1971: 285)

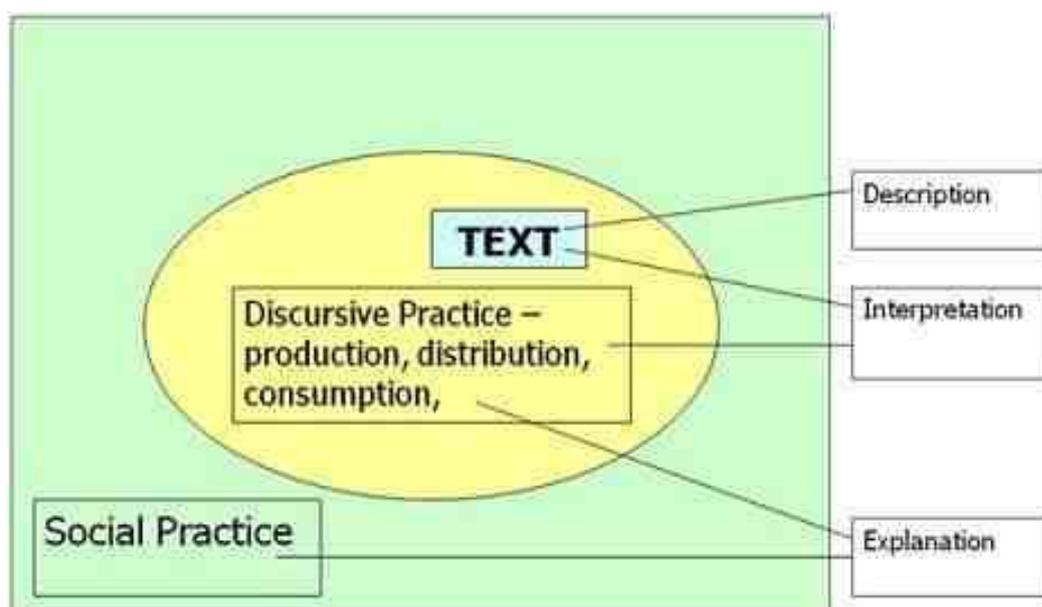
Such an understanding of the way dominant classes had engineered consent was evident for Gramsci in the success of liberal democracies, such as the USA, Britain and France, in the face of the economic crises that arose in the decade after the First World War, and the failure of the German revolution of 1919, as well as other political uprisings, such as the British General Strike of 1926.

Gramsci's second conception of hegemony afforded a more positive outlook. He claimed that hegemony does not simply occur spontaneously – it has to be organised and, as such, affords opportunities for it to be resisted. This led Gramsci to his second and more positive view of producing an alternative hegemony, an educative and cultural task, in which the population, led by the Party, develops a new, more egalitarian set of values and beliefs, as well as the political will to bring about such changes in society. Showing a debt to his Marxist origins, Gramsci claimed that such change would need an economic dimension, though the crux of the task would be the political organisation of institutions, including schools, through which the Party would offer an alternative society.

More recently, CDA has been influenced by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985)'s reworking of Gramscian notions of hegemony in terms of a discourse approach, in which the hegemonic struggle is seen as a contention over particular visions of the world which are claimed to have a universal status (e.g. the neo-liberal version of globalisation, often termed 'globalism' in which this phenomenon is represented as inevitable, beneficial, without anyone in charge of it, about liberalization of economies and congruent with the spread of democracy and a war on terror). Such a contentious view of the world is clearly constructed and represented discursively.

Critical Discourse Analysis argues that language helps to construct a negative hegemony by presenting the dominant groups thinking as common sense, inevitable, the way things are, etc. Fairclough (1992) uses the term 'naturalisation' for this phenomena.

CDA views text as artefacts that do not occur in isolation – socio-political, socio-historic contexts contribute to production and interpretation of text and are crucial aspects of the analysis. It operates on three levels of analysis – engaging with the text, the discursive practices (processes of production / reception / interpretation); and the wider socio-political and socio-historic context.



Fairclough (1992) offers five theoretical propositions that frame his approach to CDA.

- Discourse (language use) shapes and is shaped by society
This is viewed as a two way, dialectic relationship: language changes according to the context; situations are altered according to language used, for example, advertising and news can affect attitudes, behaviour, etc.
- Discourse helps to constitute (and change) knowledge, social relations and social identity
The way language is used affects the way the world is represented: for example, nationalism, us and them. An appeal to 'Back to Basics' sounds like a good thing, but in many ways masquerades many of the implications of such a move and the underlying philosophy. The terming of themselves as 'pro-life' by anti-Abortionists implies that their opponents are 'anti-life'.
- Discourse is shaped by relations of power and invested with ideologies
An example of this is the way certain languages, accents or dialects are valued or devalued.
- The shaping of discourse is a stake in power struggles
If the previous tenet is correct then language is a powerful mechanism for social control and therefore is contested and contestable.
- CDA aims to show how society and discourse shape each other.
Language use is not a neutral phenomenon: it is concerned with developing consciousness of the issue, it is a precondition for developing new practices and conventions, and thus contributes to social emancipation and social justice.

More recently Fairclough and Wodak (1997: 271-280) offered eight foundational principles for CDA. These are:

1. CDA addresses social problems
2. Power relations are discursive
3. Discourse constitutes society and culture, and is constituted by them
4. Discourse does ideological work: representing and constructing society by reproducing unequal relations of power.
5. Discourse is historical and is connected to previous, contemporary and subsequent discourses.
6. Relations between text and society are mediated, and a socio-cognitive approach is needed to understand these links.
7. Discourse analysis is interpretive and explanatory and implies a systematic methodology and an investigation of context
8. Discourse is a form of social action.

In summary, then, CDA can be seen as a 'highly context-sensitive, democratic approach which takes an ethical stance on social issues with the aim of transforming society – an approach or attitude rather than a step by step method' (Huckin 1997:1). CDA is founded on the idea that there is unequal access to linguistic and social resources, resources that are controlled institutionally. It is therefore primarily concerned with institutional discourses – media, policy, gender, labelling etc. A key concept is that of the 'Naturalization' of particular representations as 'common sense' (Fairclough 1989). Something comes to be seen as 'common sense' when it, and its implicit assumptions, are no longer seen as questionable, as a simple matter of fact.

When a discourse becomes so dominant that alternative interpretations are entirely suppressed or ignored, then it ceases to be arbitrary or as merely one position and comes to be viewed as natural, and has legitimacy, simply because that is 'the way things are'. Thus a naturalised discourse loses its ideological character and appears as neutral – it represents its 'story' as the 'truth' and implies that the learning of this discourse requires only the learning of a set of skills or techniques.

CDA acknowledges the crucial value of an interdisciplinary study of texts. By accepting a Hallidayan perspective, we reject the view of language as an entity to be studied in experimental isolation. Other disciplines come to bear: social theory and sociology, semiotics, philosophy, political theory, media studies, multi-modality studies, cognitive processing studies amongst many others. This has led to Van Dijk (2004) arguing that a more appropriate name would be Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), as this focuses more on the interdisciplinary nature and the implied social action rather than simply the act of analysis. The emphasis on interdisciplinarity recognises the diversity, depth, and history of scholarship that advance critical understandings of discursive phenomena, and so Van Dijk argues that no particular theoretical, disciplinary, or methodological paradigms should be privileged over others.

CDA has a concern with representations of societal issues, hidden agendas, texts that impact on people's lives – it claims therefore to take an ethical stance in addressing power imbalances, inequities, social justice agenda to spur readers into resistant and 'corrective' social action.

The post-structuralist approach to discourse therefore implies a social constructionist view of discourse. Reality is not fixed but constructed through interactions; it is mediated by language and other semiotic systems, and is therefore open to change (for the better?). If language is constructed, it can therefore be deconstructed and reconstructed. It offers a discourse of possibility – 'Any situation in which some individuals prevent others from engaging in the process of enquiry is one of violence'. (Freire 1972: 66)

Maley (1994) has criticised the work of the Critical Discourse Analysts on the basis that their work is centred on a struggle against hegemony (that is, the structures and practices by which social groups accept their own repression consensually, as opposed to through coercion, through a process of 'naturalisation'). The notion of hegemony was developed from Gramsci's (1971) work. Maley argues that there is a logical problem inherent in challenging any argument based on a notion of hegemony, as to do so opens oneself to charges of being a victim of 'false consciousness'. Also, whilst Gramsci did not intend hegemony to imply the existence of a single dominant ideology, this is how it has been interpreted by some neo-Marxists (e.g. Althusser 1971), and therefore fails to account for the multiple identities and relations within society. Similarly, this approach fails to recognise the dynamic, adaptable nature of the powerful (for example, capitalism today does not comprise the industrial mill owners depicted by Marx and Engels but is more easily recognisable as the globalised 'turbo-capitalism').

Critical approaches can sometimes be interpreted as 'anti-teacher' in their portrayal of agents of hegemony. This view, however, is premised on a conception of teachers as

an homogeneous group, a position widely refuted in the research literature. Attempts to understand teachers' actions and perspectives as they are created and modified through multiple interactions in complex organisational contexts is not a 'blanket condemnation of teachers as a group' (Gillborn 1998:42), but an attempt to address the problem of where educational practices and policies reinforce hegemonic relations. An apolitical stance can result in no action being taken, which in turn might reproduce assumptions which shape existing inequalities.

In the English Language Teaching (ELT) context, Widdowson (1995) has offered some of the most damning critiques of such a position, including the claim that the arguments of Critical Discourse Analysts are often reductive, as their arguments are themselves partial. He claims that Critical Discourse Analysts rarely acknowledge that texts can be interpreted in different ways by different audiences, and that they regularly imply that a 'single interpretation is uniquely validated by the textual facts' (1995: 169). The committed critical discourse analyst may interpret a text in keeping with their own ideological standpoint and, as such, could be charged with producing an intellectual and interpretive hegemony as oppressive as the one critical discourse analysts seek to challenge. Such a commitment to a particular preferred reading of a text denies the essential understanding that texts do not contain meaning, but that meanings are pragmatically interpreted from texts. Fish (1981) has warned of the dangers of such 'interpretive positivism', whereby linguistic data is used as a way of confirming decisions and interpretation already arrived at concerning the meaning of a text.

Fairclough (1996) counter-argues that such a position is somewhat naïve in assuming that individuals are free to interpret neutrally and, in doing so, denies the social construction of interpretation, implies the neutrality of the social context and the participants, and effectively positions them outside the construction of the discourse. Whilst these positions both merit consideration, the key concern is not that texts are interpreted in one particular ideological manner, but that the purposes and intentions of texts are themselves questioned. It is the critical questioning of texts and discourses, rather than the arrival at a pre-determined ideological interpretation, that is central here and requires consideration of notions of positionality and the complex relationship between analysis and interpretation.

A final criticism levelled at critical approaches to textual analysis is that they are generally, and explicitly, partial and political. Critiques are always levelled against the powerful groups in society, particularly from a left-of-centre perspective. We see critiques of the discourse of Thatcherism (Fairclough 1989), the reporting of the nuclear arms race (Chilton 1985) and the discourse of racism (Van Dijk 1991). This raises the need for the analyst to locate their work within an understanding of notions of reflectivity and reflexivity, whereby the author does not only subject their understandings to (self) critical scrutiny but is also aware that their previous experiences will affect the way they interpret the present.

Indeed CDA advocates are not embarrassed by charges of partiality – they revel in it!

As Wodak and Meyer note:

“...critical discourse analysis research combines what perhaps somewhat pompously used to be called ‘solidarity with the oppressed’ with an attitude of opposition and dissent against those who abuse text and talk in order to establish, confirm or legitimate their abuse of power. Unlike much other scholarship, CDA does not deny but explicitly defines and defends its own socio-political position, That is CDA is biased – and proud of it.” (2001:96)

The criteria for the Frame, to be applied to texts, genres and discourses are outlined in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1: Critical Literacy Frame Criteria

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Criterion 1: | Pronouns - Participant Choices |
| Criterion 2: | Passive / Active Forms - Transitivity Choices |
| Criterion 3: | Time - Tense and Aspect |
| Criterion 4: | Adjectives, Adverbs, Nouns, Verbal Processes - Evaluation and Semantic Prosody |
| Criterion 5: | Metaphor |
| Criterion 6: | Presupposition / Implication |
| Criterion 7: | Medium |
| Criterion 8: | Audience |
| Criterion 9: | Visual Images |
| Criterion 10: | Age, Class, Disability, Gender, Race - Equity, Ethnicity and Sexuality Issues |
| Criterion 11: | Reference to other texts, genres, discourses and individuals |

The criteria have been ordered for pedagogical purposes and to allow analysts to move from the more micro elements of lexico grammar, through discourse semantics, register and genre. This allows the mapping of texts onto the notions of language, and the extra-linguistic levels of context and ideology. Figure 2 (below) diagrammatically represents the ways that these criteria relate to linguistic and extra linguistic elements of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) theory (Eggins 1994).

Figure 2: Mapping the Critical Literacy Frame to its SFL context

| | | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|--------------|---|
| Ideology | | | (10) Less-valued social groups (11) Intertextuality/ Interdiscursivity |
| Context | Genre | | |
| | Register | | (3) Temporal Context |
| Language | Discourse Semantics | | (6) Presupposition (5) Metaphor (literal and grammatical) |
| | Lexico-Grammar | Field | (1) Pronouns - Participant Choices (3) Tense and Aspect |
| | | Tenor | (4) Evaluation (8) Audience |
| | | Mode | (2) Passive/ Active (7) Medium (9) Visual |

Analysts could and should supplement these criteria according to their contexts, the context of the text(s) under examination and the needs of the research project.

(1) Pronouns – Participant Choices

This aspect of the Frame considers the way in which pronouns may be used in the text, whether they are inclusive (our, us, we, etc.) or exclusive (they, their, them, he, she, it, you, your etc.). It also considers how the reader and other participants are positioned as allies or in-group members with the author, thus assuming shared knowledge, beliefs and values, or how readers and other participants are marginalised as ‘outsiders’ with different beliefs and agendas. Pronouns are central to the way individuals and groups are named and so are always political in the way they inscribe power relations.

(2) Activisation / Passivisation

Transformations of active constructions into passive forms can be motivated by the desire to elide agency and therefore systematically background responsibility for actions in some instances or to foreground responsibility in others. The manipulation of agency transparency serves to construct a world of various responsibilities, and power, e.g. ‘The present perfect is used to ...’. By removing the agent, the use of a particular grammatical form is given an unquestionable, universal function, in spite of

its context of use and the political dimensions raised here. Such an analysis is almost always absent from textbooks and grammar reference books using such definitions.

It is important to note that to assume that such a basic transitivity shift as passivisation or activisation would lead to a complete shift in the understanding of the reader would be an over-simplification and patronising to the reader. However, as noted earlier, the construction is effected through a layering of strata of representations and the claim for relevance of this aspect of the Frame is as one of these myriad strata.

(3) Time – Tense and Aspect

This relates to the way in which tense and aspect are used to construct ‘understanding’ about events. For example, the use of the present simple tense constructs an event as reality or fact; the use of the present perfect simple constructs a past event as being of relevance at the moment; the past simple tense can represent a past event as no longer being important or relevant. The effect of tense choices can be demonstrated by converting the past simple tenses to present perfect and vice versa and noting the different semantic effects.

It is therefore important to understand that choices made in terms of tense and aspect are not merely concerned with the time frame of an action or process but also impact clearly on the representation of that action or process as true, relevant or significant.

(4) Adjectives/Adverbs/Nouns/Verbal Processes

The use of loaded, dramatic, and stereotyping adjectives, adverbs and nouns are central to the construction of an event or a person, whether or not that construction is evaluating its object positively or negatively. Also the use of non-hedged adverbs, such as surely, obviously, clearly and so on, position a contention as being incontrovertible ‘fact’. The use here of overgeneralisation and overstatement is worthy of note. All-inclusive expressions (all, every, none, no-one, always never etc.) are rarely accurate, but can be used to construct a generalising, stereotyping or over-simplifying evaluation. Other comment adjuncts expressing the authors attitude to the whole proposition, such as ‘constantly’, ‘totally’, ‘entirely’, ‘absolutely’, ‘wholly’, ‘utterly’, etc. fulfil the same purpose.

The concept of evaluation is useful here. Hunston and Thompson (2000: 5) define evaluation as ‘the broad cover term for the expression of the speaker or writer’s attitude or stance towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about the entities or propositions that he or she is talking about’. Evaluation can further be divided into two main categories, inscribed and evoked (Martin 2000). In the inscribed category the evaluation is carried by a specific lexical item, overtly displaying the attitudinal judgement of the text producer e.g. excellent, terrible, etc.

In addition to inscribed evaluation, it is also important to consider what Martin terms evoked evaluation. This type of evaluation uses superficially neutral ideational choices but which have the potential to evoke judgmental responses, in those who share a particular set of ideological values. These evoked evaluations, in themselves do not denote the text producer’s attitude to the content overtly, but leave the value judgement to the reader/listener. However, they are mechanisms through which

evaluation is covertly constructed. For example in tourism texts (Cunha de Freitas 2000) the terms natural and sunny operate at a experiential level yet do help to construct a positive image and in food promotional text terms such as natural, and organic operate in a similar way. Negative evaluation can also be constructed by terms such as suspected asylum seeker. Such mechanisms can be seen as powerful devices in a hegemonic view of language construction in the role they play in projecting a notion of 'common sense'.

(5) Metaphor – literal and grammatical

Metaphor is more than just a literary device – it plays a fundamental part in the way people represent social reality. The use of metaphor is central in the way it positions what is described and the reader's relationship to this. This is starkly seen in the description of individuals or the personification of entities, e.g. Saddam Hussein is a 'monster', Margaret Thatcher was the 'Iron Lady' etc. It is also significant to realise that the metaphor and its alternative congruent or literal form do not express exactly the same meaning – indeed the purpose of metaphor is functional in that it serves to construe a differently foregrounded meaning than its alternatives. Metaphors are neither better nor worse than their congruent counterparts – they are simply performing different functions.

It is significant to note that metaphors need not only be lexical but can be grammatical as well (Halliday 1985: 319-345), whereby the meaning is expressed 'through a lexico-grammatical form which originally evolved to express a different kind of meaning.' (Thompson 1996: 165).

One clear example of grammatical metaphor is nominalization, or presenting as a noun or noun phrase something that could be presented with other parts of speech, e.g. her understanding as opposed to what she understood. This has the effect of making a text more 'lexically dense', a feature commonly noted with 'written' texts. Characteristic of this are more 'packed' texts, texts that are more information heavy, can make these texts appear more prestigious, academic, and serious. It can construct an argument as significant and well thought through. Ivani č (1997: 267) notes that through the process of nominalisation '...writers identify themselves with those who engage in such knowledge compacting, objectifying and capturing practices' and so can represent themselves as 'intellectual' or those who use 'reasoned thought'.

(6) Presupposition / Implication

Presuppositions help to represent constructions as convincing realities and there are a number of lexico-grammatical means by which this can be achieved:

- the use of negative questions and tags which presuppose a certain answer – isn't it the case that...?, wouldn't it be fair to say that...?, you're in even more trouble, aren't you?;
- the use of factive verbs, adjectives and adverbs, verbs that presuppose their grammatical complements, adjectives and adverbs that describe entities and processes they presuppose, and therefore represent them as facts – we now know..., we realize..., we discovered that..., you forget that... I believe that..., as you will be aware..., odd..., obvious..., previously... and so on.

Factive verbs have been noted in Hoey (2000) as a form of embedded evaluation;

- the use of change of state verbs which presuppose the factuality of a previous state – when did you stop beating your wife?, their policy on Europe has changed..., this school has improved...; transform, turn into, become, and so on;
- the use of invalid causal links presupposing that if one fact is true then the next is also true – ‘90% of my class passed FCE this year, 80% of my class passed last year, therefore my teaching is getting better...’;
- rhetorical questions, which pre-suppose the answer implied by the questioner in open questions – Is it not reasonable to ask the PM such questions? – or in the case of closed (wh-) questions provide the questioner with the opportunity to answer their own question, the question they have framed and therefore presuppose the self-response as ‘true’ – What did they do to British manufacturing industry? They destroyed it, that’s what.

(7) Medium

The conversationalising of a text is a form of interdiscursivity, which goes beyond the ways in which texts borrow from, steal from and interpenetrate each other, to the ways in which genres and discourses do this. Examples of interdiscursivity can be seen in the way in which the discourse of business has penetrated the discourse of higher education (Fairclough 1993), with the perception of students being addressed more explicitly as customers and the attendant implications of this managerialist discourse – value for money and accountability being positively associated with this change, and the changing perception of teachers as being in need of scrutiny (Smyth 1995, Hargreaves 1994) being the negative aspect. In the same way the presentation of advertising copy in a conversational style serves to imply a close social relationship between the copywriter and the reader, which does not exist. This ‘masquerade’ (Hyatt 1994) of friendship, a shared communication with a trusted confidant, an individual projected as someone you can believe in, who wouldn’t lie to you, who has your best interests at heart, can predispose the text receiver to believe what the text producer is communicating.

(8) Audience

Central to the notion of language as a social semiotic is the idea that language is utilized for some form of communication, and therefore a party or parties at whom communication is aimed, in other words, the audience. Any analysis would therefore be inadequate if it did not focus some attention on who is perceived as being the audience, and how they are projected in terms of social distance – relationship to and familiarity with the text producer – and status. In light of the fact that there is no way that the author can know exactly who the audience is, the notion of audience can be read as an idealised, projected construction. In this idealisation and projection, clues can be found as to the ideological presuppositions of the text producers.

(9) Visual Images

Significant recent work in these visual and multi-modal areas has been conducted by Kress and van Leeuwen (2001: 4), particularly looking at “the four domains of practice in which meanings are dominantly made”.

” We call these strata to show a relation to Hallidayan functional linguistics, for reasons of the potential compatibility of description of different modes. We do not however see strata as being hierarchically ordered...Our four strata are discourse, design, production and distribution.”

In this theory of multimodal communication, discourses are seen as socially constructed knowledges of reality, designs are the uses of semiotic resources to realise discourses, production refers to the ‘organisation of the expression, to the actual material articulation of the semiotic event’ (2001: 6) and distribution as the facilitation of the pragmatic functions of preservation and distribution.

Historically, the association of the camera recording ‘a set image’ and as such being associated with ‘truth’ and ‘objectivity’, has impacted on the way visual images are read. Despite the potential for the manipulation of images, and the potential for displaying an image with a constructed impression of its contextual setting, visual images do play a powerful role in the construction of truth and reality. In this respect there are clear relationships with notions of hegemony in presenting a picture of ‘this is how it is’. As Fairclough notes (1995b:7) images have primacy over words.

(10) Age, Class, Disability, Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Sexuality Issues

Within a text it can be revealing to note any comment regarding individuals who may be projected as less socially valued, as a result of these issues, in order to legitimize the assertions of those who hold power, or to identify any pejorative or stereotyping presentation or labelling of such people as being a ‘normal’, naturalised and commonly-shared viewpoint.

Cole (2001) has noted the impact that labelling has had in the area of educational inclusion, noting Ballard’s (1995) argument that the language of Special Educational Needs and in particular the term ‘special’ ensures continuing segregation, and well as Corbett’s (1996) use of the term ‘bad mouthing’ to represent the type of labelling which lays the blame for barriers to inclusion on individual ‘deficit’ rather than systemic failures, such as the cultures, practices and policies of educational institutions.

(11) Reference to other texts, genres, discourses and individuals.

One consistent way in which texts from all genres seek to establish the legitimacy of their claims, their common-sense assumptions and their world views is through reference to other texts, genres, discourses and individuals. Fairclough (1992) offers the terms interdiscursivity (or constitutive intertextuality) for the wider appropriation of styles, genres and the ideological assumptions underpinning discursive practice. Interdiscursivity operates on a more macro level than intertextuality and refers to the diverse ways in which genres and discourses interpenetrate each other, as exemplified previously with the examples of the co-penetration of the discourses of advertising, science and medicine, and the discourses of academia and consumerism (Fairclough

1993). Intertextuality is perhaps better viewed as the identifiable (either clearly or more indistinctly) borrowings from other texts. Quotation from, citation of and reference to other texts are lucid examples, whereas the use of phrasing, style and metaphor originating in other texts may be more opaque, yet equally revealing.

The impact of intertextuality, where used as a technique for particular construction, representation and projection of preferred meanings, can be to support reinforce and legitimize the argument of the writer. Careful selection and editing of 'borrowed' texts, and the utilization of other genres and discourses can achieve required evaluation, yet reference to other texts, directly through quotation or indirectly, retains projected links to 'reality' and, hence, claims for the truth-value of the assertion. Key figures are often used as their status is used to imply a legitimising respectability and again support the claim to the truth content of the writer's assertions. (c.f. the way academic writing uses quotation and citation of key research literature.)

Farahmandpur & McLaren (2001), along with others working in differing disciplines (Gee 1990, Street 1999, Barton & Hamilton 1998), have noted that notions of literacy, and a critical conception of literacy in particular, as argued for by proponents of CDA, are changing and developing from simple notions of reading and writing to new conceptions incorporating a potential for social action aimed at enhancing social justice. They note:

“Captivated by new forms of media technology and popular culture, students are faced with the daunting task of becoming multi-literate. In addition to becoming literate in the traditional sense of displaying verbal and written communication, students are engaged (often with the help of their teachers) in decoding and analyzing the meanings and messages generated by advertising, commercial and film industries. In other words students realize even before many professional educators that the media are excellent teachers; they serve society as forms of “perpetual pedagogy” or pedagogy in constant motion. ” (2001:3)

This resource has focused on the role of CDA in encouraging awareness, through the investigation of powerful discourses, of the ways in which systems of power affect people by the meanings they construct and represent. CDA attempts to investigate and elucidate the ways in which textual practices should be seen as social practices, taking place within social, historical, and political contexts. The analysis seeks to suggest ways in which questions can be raised regarding textual practices and the issues of power that underlie them, and how such question-raising can be related to concerns for critical thinking, a commitment to social justice and an orientation to social action to achieve this.

As Farahmandpur & McLaren go on to assert:

“Preparing students for critical citizenship through critical literacy deepens the roots of democracy by encouraging students to actively participate in public discourses and debates over social economic and political issues that affect everyday life in their own and neighbouring communities. In this way, students can acquire the civic courage and moral responsibility to participate in democratic life as critical social agents, becoming authors of their own history rather than being written off by history.” (2001:3)

CDA therefore represents one step along such a pathway to encouraging the critical decoding and analysis of powerful texts and discourses that can facilitate such critical social agency, and as such augment notions of critical pedagogy.

For those interested in this area, follow-up reading is available in these two on-line articles:

McGregor S (2003) 'Critical Discourse Analysis: a primer'
<http://kon.org/archives/forum/15-1/mcgregorcda.html>

Threadgold T. (2003) 'Cultural Studies, Critical Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis: histories, remembering and futures'. http://www.linguistik-online.de/14_03/threadgold.pdf

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<http://www.readingonline.org/articles/handbook/gee/>
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