



Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis

Between Theory, Method, and Politics: Positioning of the Approaches to CDA

Contributors: Michael Meyer

Edited by: Ruth Wodak & Michael Meyer

Book Title: Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis

Chapter Title: "Between Theory, Method, and Politics: Positioning of the Approaches to CDA"

Pub. Date: 2001

Access Date: June 26, 2019

Publishing Company: SAGE Publications Ltd

City: London

Print ISBN: 9780761961543

Online ISBN: 9780857028020

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9780857028020.n2>

Print pages: 14-31

© 2001 SAGE Publications Ltd All Rights Reserved.

This PDF has been generated from SAGE Knowledge. Please note that the pagination of the online version will vary from the pagination of the print book.

Between Theory, Method, and Politics: Positioning of the Approaches to CDA

Michael Meyer

Contents

- [CDA as a Difference that Makes a Difference 14](#)
- [Methodology of CDA 17](#)
- [Theoretical Grounding and Objectives 18](#)
- [Methodology in Data Collection 23](#)
- [Methodology in Operationalization and Analysis 25](#)
- [Criteria for Assessing Quality 29](#)
- [Conclusion: CDA Sitting on the Fence 30](#)

CDA as a Difference that Makes a Difference

Approaches to social research are not isolated in space. In simplified terms they can be understood as a certain set of explicitly or implicitly defined theoretical assumptions which are specifically linked with empirical data, permit specific ways of interpretation and thus reconnect the empirical with the theoretical field. Normally approaches obtain and maintain their identities by distinguishing themselves from other approaches.¹ It is generally agreed that CDA must not be understood as a single method but rather as an approach, which constitutes itself at different levels – and at each level a number of selections have to be made.

Firstly, at a programmatic level, a selection is made of (a) the phenomena under observation, (b) some explanation of the theoretical assumptions, and (c) the methods used to link theory and observation. Within this triangle, the methodical aspect often becomes the distinguishing feature, because research is regularly legitimized as scientific by means of intelligible methods. The term method² normally denotes research pathways: from the researcher's own standpoint or from point A (theoretical assumptions) another point B (observation) is reached by choosing a pathway that permits observations and facilitates the collection of experiences. If one proceeds systematically wrong turnings are avoidable. 'Methodical procedure can, like Ariadne's thread, guarantee the researcher a safe route back' (Titscher et al., 2000: 5). It can also help both the addressees of research findings to reconstruct the researchers' argumentation and other researchers to see the starting point differently, and even to decide not to go back, but to find other more interesting starting points. Methodical procedure will make it easier to record findings and to compile reports of experience. Secondly, at a social level, a specific peer group is formed as a distinctive part of a scientific community, and thirdly, at a historical level, each approach to social research is subject to fashions and expiry dates.

The differences between CDA and other sociolinguistic approaches may be most clearly established with regard to the general principles of CDA. First of all the nature of the problems with which CDA is concerned is different in principle from all those methods which do not determine their interest in advance. In general CDA asks different research questions. CDA scholars play an advocacy role for groups who suffer from social discrimination. If we look at the CDA contributions collected in this reader it becomes evident that the line drawn between social scientific research, which ought to be intelligible, and political argumentation is sometimes crossed. Whatever the case, in respect of the object of investigation, it is a fact that CDA follows a different and a critical approach to problems, since it endeavours to make explicit power relationships which are frequently hidden, and thereby to derive results which are of practical relevance.

One important characteristic arises from the assumption of CDA that all discourses are historical and can therefore only be understood with reference to their context. In accordance with this CDA refers to such extralinguistic factors as culture, society, and ideology. In any case, the notion of context is crucial for CDA,

since this explicitly includes social-psychological, political and ideological components and thereby postulates an interdisciplinary procedure.

Beyond this, CDA, using the concepts of intertextuality and interdiscursivity, analyses relationships with other texts, and this is not pursued in other methods. From its basic understanding of the notion of discourse it may be concluded that CDA is open to the broadest range of factors that exert an influence on texts.

From the notion of context a further difference emerges concerning the assumption about the relationship between language and society. CDA does not take this relationship to be simply deterministic but invokes an idea of mediation. There is a difference between the various approaches to discourse. Norman Fairclough defines the relationship in accordance with Halliday's multifunctional linguistic theory and the concept of orders of discourse according to Foucault, while Ruth Wodak, like Teun van Dijk, introduces a sociocognitive level. This kind of mediation between language and society is absent from many other linguistic approaches, such as, for example, conversation analysis.

A further distinguishing feature of CDA is the specific incorporation of linguistic categories into its analyses. CDA in no way includes a very broad range of linguistic categories: one might therefore get the impression that only a small range of linguistic devices are central for CDA studies. For instance many CDA scholars regularly use actor analyses as a means of focusing upon pronouns, attributes and the verbal mode, time and tense.

In principle we may assume that categories such as deixis and pronouns can be analysed in any linguistic method, but that they are crucial for CDA. Explicitly or implicitly CDA makes use of a concept of the so-called linguistic surface. For instance Fairclough speaks of form and texture at the textual level, and Wodak of forms of linguistic realization.

As for the methods and procedures used for the analysis of discourses, CDA generally sees its procedure as a hermeneutic process, although this characteristic is not completely evident in the position taken by the various authors. Compared to the (causal) explanations of the natural sciences, hermeneutics can be understood as the method of grasping and producing meaning relations. The hermeneutic circle – which implies that the meaning of one part can only be understood in the context of the whole, but that this in turn is only accessible from its component parts – indicates the problem of intelligibility of hermeneutic interpretation. Therefore hermeneutic interpretation in particular urgently requires detailed documentation. Actually the specifics of the hermeneutic interpretation process are not made completely transparent by many CDA-orientated studies.³ If a crude distinction has to be made between 'text-extending' and 'text-reducing' methods of analysis, then CDA, on account of its concentration on very clear formal properties and the associated compression of texts during analysis, may be characterized as 'text-reducing'. These findings disagree with the mainly hermeneutic impetus of most CDA approaches.

A further characteristic of CDA is its interdisciplinary claim and its description of the object of investigation from widely differing perspectives, as well as its continuous feedback between analysis and data collection. Compared with other linguistic methods of text analysis, CDA seems to be closest to sociological and socio-psychological perspectives, although these interfaces are not well defined everywhere.

Criticism of CDA comes from conversation analysis – the 'reverse side' of the debate between conversation analysis (Schegloff, 1998) and CDA. Schegloff argues that CDA, even though it has different goals and interests than the local construction of interaction, should deal seriously with its material: 'If, however, they mean the issues of power, domination and the like to connect up with discursive material, it should be a serious rendering of that material'. This means it should at least be compatible with what is demonstrably relevant for the behaviour of participants in an interaction. Only when such categories as the gender of participants are made relevant – for instance by an explicit mention ('ladies last') – are they important for an analysis. If CDA is understood in this way it would not, in Schegloff's opinion, be an alternative to conversation analysis, but

would require a conversation analysis to be carried out first, 'otherwise the critical analysis will not "bind" to the data, and risks ending up merely ideological'.

Alongside this general debate about the whole enterprise of CDA, a more specific discussion has developed between Norman Fairclough and Henry Widdowson. Widdowson criticizes the fact that the term discourse is as vague as it is fashionable: 'discourse is something everybody is talking about but without knowing with any certainty just what it is: in vogue and vague' (Widdowson, 1995: 158). He also criticizes the lack of a clear demarcation between text and discourse. Furthermore – and here his criticism approaches that of Schegloff – CDA is an ideological interpretation and therefore not an analysis. The term critical discourse analysis is a contradiction in terms. Widdowson believes that CDA is, in a dual sense, a biased interpretation: in the first place it is prejudiced on the basis of some ideological commitment, and then it selects for analysis such texts as will support the preferred interpretation (Widdowson, 1995: 169). Analysis ought to mean the examination of several interpretations, and in the case of CDA this is not possible because of prior judgements. Fairclough (1996), in reply to this criticism, draws attention to the open-endedness of results required in the principles of CDA. He also points out that CDA, unlike most other approaches, is always explicit about its own position and commitment.

Actually these controversies concretize two irreconcilable positions within the methodological debate in social research: is it possible to perform any research free of a priori value judgements⁴ and is it possible to gain insight from purely empirical data without using any preframed categories of experience? As for the first question, CDA agrees even with dogmatic positivistic methodology which permits value judgements in the process of the selection of objects and questions under investigation ('context of discovery'), but forbids them in the 'context of justification'. As for the second question, the CDA position fits well with most epistemology in Kant's tradition which denies the possibility of 'pure' cognition.

Methodology of CDA

CDA in all of its various forms understands itself to be strongly based in theory. To which theories do the different methods refer? Here we find a wide variety of theories, ranging from microsociological perspectives (Ron Scollon) to theories on society and power in Michel Foucault's tradition (Siegfried Jäger, Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak), theories of social cognition (Teun van Dijk) and grammar, as well as individual concepts that are borrowed from larger theoretical traditions. As a first step, this section aims to systematize these different theoretical influences.

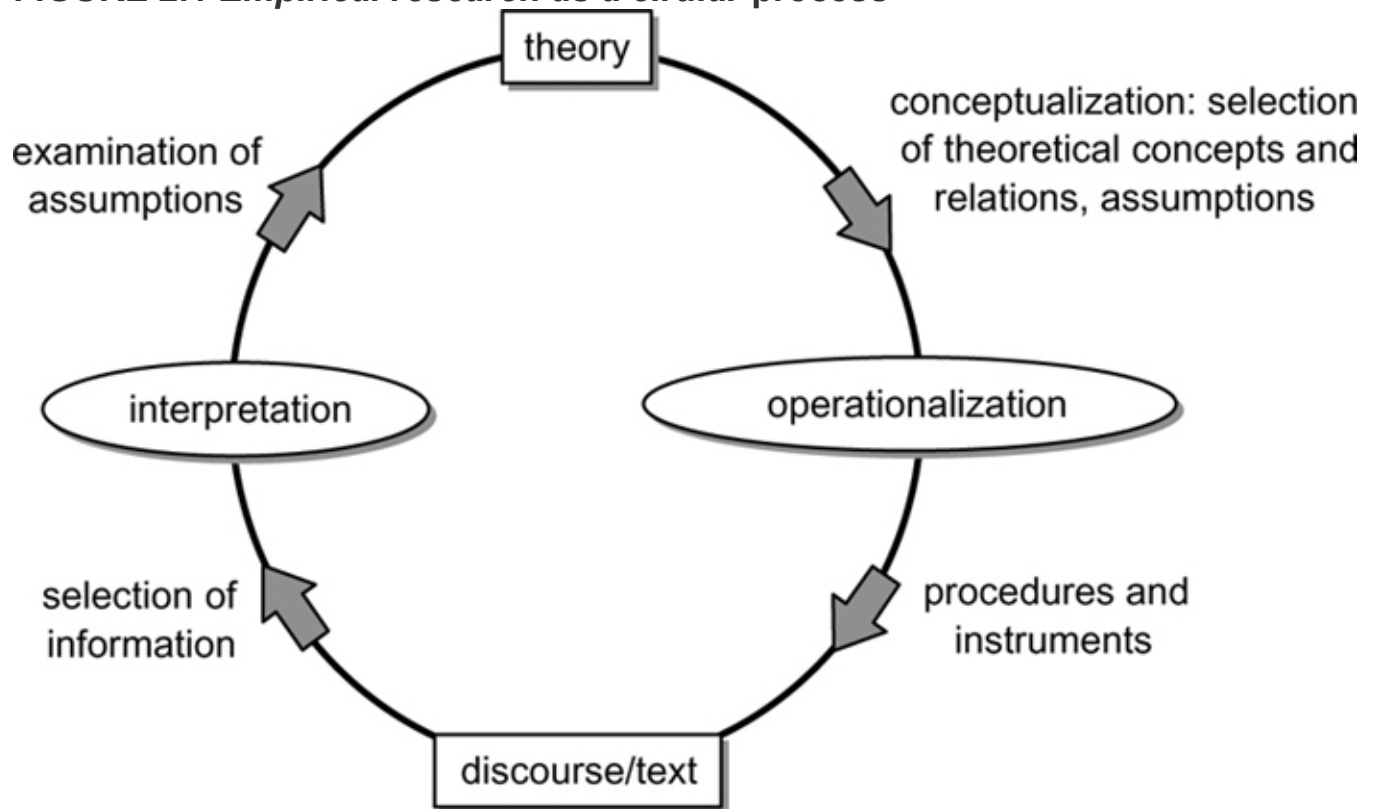
A second step relates to the problem of operationalizing theoretical concepts. The primary issue here is how the various methods of CDA are able to translate their theoretical claims into instruments and methods of analysis. In particular, the emphasis is on the mediation between grand theories as applied to society at large and concrete instances of social interaction, the foci of analysis for CDA. As far as methodology is concerned, there are several perspectives within CDA: in addition to those which can be described primarily as variations from hermeneutics, one finds interpretative perspectives with various emphases, among them even quantitative procedures.

In empirical social research a distinction can be made between elicitation and evaluation methods: between ways of collecting data (in the laboratory or by fieldwork) and procedures that have been developed for the analysis of collected data. Methodical procedures for the collection of data organize observation, while evaluation methods regulate the transformation of data into information and further restrict the opportunities for inference and interpretation. The distinction between these two tasks of data collection and analysis does not necessarily mean that there are two separate steps: CDA sees itself more in the tradition of Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), where data collection is not a phase that must be finished before analysis starts but might be a permanently ongoing procedure.

Particularly worthy of discussion is the way in which sampling is conducted in CDA. Most studies analyse 'typical texts'. The possibilities and limits with regard to the units of analysis chosen will be illuminated within the context of the issue of theoretical sampling. Some of the authors explicitly refer to the ethnographic tradition of field research (Scollon, Wodak).

This connection between theory and discourse can be described in terms of the model for theoretical and methodological research procedures that is illustrated in [Figure 2.1](#).

FIGURE 2.1 *Empirical research as a circular process*



Theoretical Grounding and Objectives

Among the different positions within CDA presented in this book, theoretical components of very different origins have been adopted. Moreover there is no guiding theoretical viewpoint that is used consistently within CDA, nor do the CDA protagonists proceed consistently from the area of theory to the field of discourse and then back to theory.

Within the CDA approaches presented here the reader may find all the theoretical levels of sociological and socio-psychological theory (the concept of different theoretical levels is in the tradition of Merton, 1967: 39-72; see also Ruth Wodak's contribution):

- 1 Epistemology covers theories which provide models of the conditions, contingencies and limits of human perception in general and scientific perception in particular.
- 2 General social theories, often called 'grand theories', try to conceptualize relations between social structure and social action and thus link micro- and macro-sociological phenomena. Within this level one can distinguish between the more structuralist and the

more individualist approaches. To put it very simply, the former provide top-down explanations (structure → action), whereas the latter prefer bottom-up explanations (action → structure). Many modern theories try to reconcile these positions and imply some kind of circularity between social action and social structure.

- 3 Middle-range theories focus either upon specific social phenomena (such as conflict, cognition, social networks), or on specific subsystems of society (for example, economy, politics, religion).
- 4 Micro-sociological theories try to explain social interaction, for example the resolution of the double contingency problem (Parsons and Shils, 1951: 3-29) or the reconstruction of everyday procedures which members of a society use to create their own social order, which is the objective of ethnomethodology.
- 5 Socio-psychological theories concentrate upon the social conditions of emotion and cognition and, compared to micro-sociology, prefer causal explanations to hermeneutic understanding of meaning.
- 6 Discourse theories aim at the conceptualization of discourse as a social phenomenon and try to explain its genesis and its structure.
- 7 Linguistic theories, for example, theories of argumentation, of grammar, of rhetoric, try to describe and explain the pattern specific to language systems and verbal communication.

All these theoretical levels can be found in CDA. At first glance it seems that the unifying parentheses of CDA are rather the specifics of research questions than the theoretical positioning. In the following we want give a short outline of the theoretical positions and methodological objectives of CDA approaches.

Among the contributors to this book, Siegfried Jäger is closest to the origin of the notion of discourse, that is to Michel Foucault's structuralist explanations of discursive phenomena. Jäger detects a blind spot in Foucault's theory, namely the mediation between subject and object, between discursive and non-discursive practices (activities) on the one hand and manifestations (objects) on the other. Here he strategically inserts Aleksej Leontjew's (for example, 1982) activity theory. The mediation between the triangle's corners is performed by work, activity and non-discursive practices. Thus the social acting subject becomes the link between discourse and reality, a theoretical movement which moderates the severeness of the Foucaultian structuralism. Jäger's epistemological position is based upon Ernesto Laclau's social constructivism, which denies any societal reality that is determined outside the discursive: 'If the discourse changes, the object not only changes its meaning, but it becomes a different object, it loses its previous identity' (Jäger, p. 43). That way Jäger introduces a dualism of discourse on reality, where the role of social actors is strongly reminiscent of Umberto Eco's (1985) *Lector in fabula*.

Jäger applies Jürgen Link's notion of 'discourse as a consolidated concept of speech' which determines and consolidates action and exercises power. He tries to reposition Foucault's definition of discourse which is too strongly caught up in the verbal. For this reason he reinvents Foucault's concept of the 'dispositive' as a shell which envelops both discursive and non-discursive practices and materializations. Jäger's method explicitly aims at the analysis of discourses and dispositives. Yet he admits difficulties with the determination of the dispositive which are connected to the lack of determination of the links between the triangle's corners.

Whereas Siegfried Jäger refers mainly to general social theories, Teun van Dijk is rather on the socio-psychological side of the CDA field. He sees theory not as the classical relationship of causal hypotheses but rather as a framework systematizing phenomena of social reality. His focal triad is construed between discourse, cognition and society. He defines discourse as a communicative event, including conversational interaction, written text, as well as associated gestures, facework, typographical layout, images and any other 'semiotic' or multimedia dimension of signification. Van Dijk relies on socio-cognitive theory splints and understands linguistics in a broad 'structural-functional' sense. He argues that CDA should be based on a sound theory of

context. Within this he claims that the theory of social representations plays a main part.

Social actors involved in discourse do not exclusively make use of their individual experiences and strategies; they mainly rely upon collective frames of perceptions, called social representations. These socially shared perceptions form the link between social system and the individual cognitive system and perform the translation, homogenization and co-ordination between external requirements and subjective experience. This assumption is not new. Already in the first half of the nineteenth century Emile Durkheim (1933, for example) pointed out the significance of collective ideas which help societies to consciousness and reification of social norms. Serge Moscovici (1981) coined the notion of social representations as a bulk of concepts, opinions, attitudes, evaluations, images and explanations which result from daily life and are sustained by communication. Social representations are shared amongst members of a social group.⁵ Thus they form a core element of the individual's social identity (Wagner, 1994: 132). Social representations are bound to specific social groups and not spanning society as a whole. They are dynamic constructs and subject to permanent change. Together they constitute a hierarchical order of mutual dependency (Duveen and Lloyd, 1990).

Van Dijk, however, does not explicitly refer to this tradition but rather to socio-psychological research: in line with current theorizing in cognitive psychology, such mental constructs have the form of a specific kind of mental model, as stored in episodic memory – the part of long-term memory in which people store their personal experiences (van Dijk, p. 112). He introduces the concept of context models, which are understood as mental representations of the structures of the communicative situation that are discursively relevant for a participant. These context models control the 'pragmatic' part of discourse, whereas event models do so with the 'semantic' part. Van Dijk names three forms of social representations relevant to the understanding of discourse: firstly knowledge (personal, group, cultural), secondly attitudes (not in the socio-psychological understanding), and thirdly ideologies. Discourses take place within society, and can only be understood in the interplay of social situation, action, actor and societal structures. Thus, unlike Jäger, he conceptualizes the influence of social structure via social representations.

Perhaps Ruth Wodak is the most linguistically orientated of the CDA scholars selected here. Unlike the others she, together with Martin Reisigl (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001), explicitly tries to establish a theory of discourse. They understand discourse as 'a complex bundle of simultaneous and sequential interrelated linguistic acts, which manifest themselves within and across the social fields of action as thematically interrelated semiotic, oral or written tokens, very often as "texts", that belong to specific semiotic types, i.e. genres' (Wodak, p. 66). In the discourse-historical approach the connection between fields of action (Girnth, 1996), genres, discourses and texts is described and modelled. Although the discourse-historical approach is indebted to critical theory, general social theory plays a negligible part compared with the discourse model mentioned above and historical analysis: context is understood mainly historically. To this extent Wodak agrees with Mouzelis's (1995) severe diagnosis of social research. She consistently follows his recommendations: not to exhaust oneself in theoretical labyrinths, not to invest too much in the operationalization of unoperationalizable 'grand theories', but rather to develop conceptual tools relevant for specific social problems. The discourse-historical approach finds its focal point in the field of politics, where it tries to develop conceptual frameworks for political discourse. Wodak tries to fit linguistic theories into her model of discourse, and in the example presented below she makes extensive use of argumentation theory (list of topoi). This does not necessarily mean that the concepts resulting from argumentation theory fit well with other research questions. Wodak seems strongly committed to a pragmatic approach.

Although this is not expressed explicitly, Norman Fairclough takes a specific middle-range theory position: he focuses upon social conflict in the Marxist tradition and tries to detect its linguistic manifestations in discourses, in particular elements of dominance, difference and resistance. According to Fairclough, every social practice has a semiotic element. Productive activity, the means of production, social relations, social identities, cultural values, consciousness, and semiosis are dialectically related elements of social practice. He

understands CDA as the analysis of the dialectical relationships between semiosis (including language) and other elements of social practices. These semiotic aspects of social practice are responsible for the constitution of genres and styles. The semiotic aspect of social order is called the order of discourse. His approach to CDA oscillates between a focus on structure and a focus on action. Both strategies ought to be problem based: by all means CDA should pursue emancipatory objectives, and should be focused upon the problems confronting what can loosely be referred to as the 'losers' within particular forms of social life.

Fairclough draws upon a particular linguistic theory, systemic functional linguistics (Halliday, 1985), which analyses language as shaped (even in its grammar) by the social functions it has come to serve.

Ron Scollon can be seen as the micro-sociologist within the field of discourse analysis. He calls his approach mediated discourse analysis (MDA), which shares the goals of CDA but 'strategizes to reformulate the object of study from a focus on the discourses of social issues to a focus on the social actions through which social actors produce the histories and habitus of their daily lives which is the ground in which society is produced and reproduced' (Scollon, p. 140). MDA aims to establish the links between discourses and social actions where the focus of analysis overtly is upon action. Scollon emphasizes that all social actions are mediated by cultural tools or mediational means, whereby the most salient and perhaps most common of these mediational means is language or, to use the term Scollon prefers, discourse. Although this is only one of the mediational means in MDA, there remains a central interest in discourse mainly on empirical grounds.

Scollon theoretically links the micro level of action with the macro level of communities by means of six concepts:

- 1 mediated action;
- 2 site of engagement;
- 3 mediational means;
- 4 practices;
- 5 the nexus of practice;
- 6 the community of practice.

Using the concept of mediation and mediational means (cultural tools) Scollon not only explains the formation of practices out of singular actions but also builds his micro-macro link, meticulously avoiding the notion of social structure.

The methodical objective of MDA is

to provide a set of heuristics by which the researcher can narrow the scope of what must be analysed to achieve an understanding of mediated actions even knowing that mediated actions occur in real time, are unique and unrepeatable and therefore must be 'caught' in action to be analysed. In a real sense it is a matter of structuring the research activities to be in the right place at the right time. (Ron Scollon, p. 152)

The more general goal of MDA is to explicate the link between broad social issues and the everyday talk and writing, and to arrive at a richer understanding of the history of the practice within the habitus of the participants in a particular social action.

Methodology in Data Collection

The conclusion made above that CDA does not constitute a well-defined empirical method but rather a cluster

of approaches with a similar theoretical base and similar research questions becomes most obvious here: there is no typical CDA way of collecting data. Some authors do not even mention data collection methods and others rely strongly on traditions based outside the sociolinguistic field.⁶ In any case, in a way similar to grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), data collection is not considered to be a specific phase that must be completed before analysis begins: after the first collection exercise it is a matter of carrying out the first analyses, finding indicators for particular concepts, expanding concepts into categories and, on the basis of these results, collecting further data (theoretical sampling). In this mode of procedure, data collection is never completely excluded, and new questions always arise which can only be dealt with if new data are collected or earlier data are re-examined (Strauss, 1987: 56).

Whereas Siegfried Jäger at least suggests a concentration on texts extracted from television and press reports, no evidence can be found concerning data collection requirements in the contributions of Teun van Dijk and Norman Fairclough. Yet the text examples selected by these authors might indicate that they also prefer mass media coverage. This focus embodies specific strengths, in particular it provides non-reactive data (Webb, 1966), and certain weaknesses, for restrictions concerning the research questions have to be accommodated. Ruth Wodak postulates that CDA studies always incorporate fieldwork and ethnography in order to explore the object under investigation as a precondition for any further analysis and theorizing.

The most detailed discussion of this methodical step is provided by Ron Scollon. He argues that, at the least, participant observation is the primary research tool for eliciting the data needed for an MDA. This argument is in a strong ethnographic tradition. Even though observational methods play an important role in MDA, this does not mean that Scollon excludes the residual diversity of structured and unstructured methods:

- 1 To identify participants and mediational means relevant for the research question he even proposes surveys.
 - a Scene surveys should narrow down the scope of the research to a few highly salient places or scenes, in which the actions we are interested in are taking place.
 - b Event and action surveys aim to identify the specific social actions taking place within the scenes we have identified which are of relevance to the study of mediated action.
- 2 Focus groups should be identified and thoroughly analysed. The purpose of such groups at this stage is twofold:
 - a 'The researcher wants to know to what extent the identification of specific scenes, media, and actions have reliability and validity for members of the group under study', and
 - b 'the researcher wants to understand how important or salient the categories which have been identified are for the population being studied' (Scollon, p. 158).

These methods need not necessarily be applied stepwise but also simultaneously. Even media analysis has its place in Scollon's methodology, although 'media content surveys' and 'what's in the news' surveys do not play the crucial part that mass media coverage plays in other CDA approaches.

In a nutshell we might conclude that, with the exception of Ron Scollon's MDA, there is little discussion about statistical or theoretical representativeness of the material analysed.⁷ Although there are no explicit statements about this issue, one might assume that many CDA studies (perhaps with the exception of Teun van Dijk and Ruth Wodak) mostly deal with only small corpora which are usually regarded as being typical of certain discourses.

Methodology in Operationalization and Analysis

As mentioned above CDA places its methodology rather in the hermeneutic than in the analytical-deductive tradition. As a consequence no clear line between data collection and analysis can be drawn. However, the linguistic character of CDA becomes evident in this section, because in contrast to other approaches to text and discourse analysis (for example, content analysis, grounded theory, conversation analysis; see Titscher et al., 2000) CDA strongly relies on linguistic categories. This does not mean that topics and contents play no role at all, but that the core operationalizations depend on linguistic concepts such as actors, mode, time, tense, argumentation, and so on. Nevertheless a definitive list of the linguistic devices relevant for CDA cannot be given, since their selection mainly depends on the specific research questions.

Siegfried Jäger distinguishes between firstly a more content oriented step of structure analysis and secondly a more language oriented step of fine analysis. Within structure analysis a characterization of the media and the general themes has to be made. Within the fine analysis he focuses upon context, text surface and rhetorical means. Examples of linguistic instruments are figurativeness, vocabulary and argumentation types. He takes into account both qualitative and quantitative aspects of these features: Jäger analyses

- the kind and form of argumentation;
- certain argumentation strategies;
- the intrinsic logic and composition of texts;
- implications and insinuations that are implicit in some way;
- the collective symbolism or 'figurativeness', symbolism, metaphor-ism, and so on both in language and in graphic contexts (statistics, photographs, pictures, caricatures and so on);
- idioms, sayings, clichés, vocabulary and style;
- actors (persons, pronominal structure);
- references, for example to (the) science(s);
- particulars on the sources of knowledge, and so on.

Teun van Dijk generally argues, that 'a complete discourse analysis of a large corpus of text or talk, as we often have in CDA research, is therefore totally out of the question' (van Dijk, p. 99). If the focus of research is on the ways in which some speakers or writers exercise power in or by their discourse, the focus of study will in practice be on those properties that can vary as a function of social power. Van Dijk therefore suggests that the analysis should concentrate upon the following linguistic markers:

- stress and intonation;
- word order;
- lexical style;
- coherence;
- local semantic moves such as disclaimers;
- topic choice;
- speech acts;
- schematic organization;
- rhetorical figures;
- syntactic structures;
- propositional structures;
- turn takings;
- repairs;
- hesitation.

He supposes that most of these are examples of forms of interaction which are in principle susceptible to speaker control, but less consciously controlled or controllable by the speakers. Other structures, such as

the form of words and many sentence structures are grammatically obligatory and contextually invariant, and hence usually not subject to speaker control and social power. He further suggests six steps in an analysis:

- 1 analysis of semantic macrostructures: topics and macropropositions;
- 2 analysis of local meanings, where the many forms of implicit or indirect meanings, such as implications, presuppositions, allusions, vagueness, omissions and polarizations are especially interesting;
- 3 analysis of 'subtle' formal structures: here most of the linguistic markers mentioned are analysed;
- 4 analysis of global and local discourse forms or formats;
- 5 analysis of specific linguistic realizations, for example, hyperbolas, litotes;
- 6 analysis of context.

In their studies of racist and discriminatory discourse Ruth Wodak and Martin Reisigl (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001) developed a four-step strategy of analysis: after firstly having established the specific contents or topics of a specific discourse with racist, anti-semitic, nationalist or ethnicist ingredients, secondly, the discursive strategies (including argumentation strategies) were investigated. Then thirdly, the linguistic means (as types) and finally the specific, context-dependent linguistic realizations (as tokens) of the discriminatory stereotypes were examined.

In these studies the discourse-historical approach concentrates upon the following discursive strategies:

- referential strategy or strategy of nomination, where the linguistic devices of interest are membership categorization (Sacks, 1992; Bakker, 1997), metaphors and metonymies and synecdoches;
- strategies of predication which appear in stereotypical, evaluative attributions of positive or negative traits and implicit or explicit predicates;
- strategies of argumentation which are reflected in certain topoi used to justify political inclusion or exclusion;
- strategies of perspectivation, framing or discourse representation use means of reporting, description, narration or quotation of events and utterances;
- strategies of intensification and mitigation try to intensify or mitigate the illocutionary force of utterances (Ng and Bradac, 1993).

This methodology aims to be abductive and pragmatic, because the categories of analysis are first developed in line with the research questions, and a constant movement back and forth between theory and empirical data is suggested. The historical context is always analysed and integrated into the interpretation, although there exists no stringent procedure for this task.

In his MDA approach Ron Scollon focuses on four main types of data:

- 1 members' generalizations;
- 2 neutral ('objective') observations;
- 3 individual member's experience;
- 4 observer's interactions with members (participant observation).

Within the approaches selected, Scollon provides the most detailed and generalized analytical scheme, which is tightly linked to his theoretical frame. Thus he analyses firstly actions, secondly practices, thirdly mediational means, fourthly nexus of practice and finally community of practice:

- 1 Action: what is the action? What chain or chains of mediated actions are relevant? What

- is the 'funnel of commitment'? What narrative and anticipatory discourses provide a metadiscursive or reflective structure?
- 2 Practice: what are the practices which intersect to produce this site of engagement? What histories in habitus do these practices have, that is what is their ontogenesis? In what other actions are these practices formative?
 - 3 Mediational means: what mediational means are used in this action? What specific forms of analysis should be used in analysing the mediational means? How and when were those mediational means appropriated within practice/habitus? How are those mediational means used in this action? In what way are the semiotic characteristics of those mediational means constraints on action or affordances for action? To answer these question Scollon suggests methods of conversation analysis, rhetorical analysis and visual holophrastic discourse analysis.
 - 4 Nexus of practice: what linkages among practices form a nexus of practice? How might the nexus of practice be recognized? To what extent is there a useful distinction between nexus of practice as group, as situation, and as genre?
 - 5 Community of practice: to what extent has a nexus of practice become 'technologized'? What are the identities (both internal and external) which are produced by community of practice membership?

As outlined above, Scollon formulates a number of questions concerning each of these analytical levels, but – consistently with the ethnographic tradition – he does not provide any operationalizations or linguistic exponents which should be analysed.

Norman Fairclough suggests a stepwise procedure in preparation to analysis. Like Ruth Wodak he prefers a pragmatic, problem oriented approach, where the first step is to identify and describe the social problem to be analysed. His propositions are as follows:

- 1 focus upon a specific social problem which has a semiotic aspect; go outside the text and describe the problem and identify its semiotic aspect;
- 2 identify the dominant styles, genres, discourses constituting this semiotic aspect;
- 3 consider the range of difference and diversity in styles, genres, discourses within this aspect;
- 4 identify the resistance against the colonialization processes executed by the dominant styles, genres and discourses.

After these preparatory steps, which also help to select the material, he suggests first of all structural analysis of the context, and then secondly interactional analysis, which focuses on linguistic features such as:

- agents;
- time;
- tense;
- modality;
- syntax;

and finally analysis of interdiscursivity, which seeks to compare the dominant and resistant strands of discourse.

It was the goal of the preceding sections to give a brief outline of the core procedures applied in the different approaches to CDA. Finally it should be pointed out that, although there is no consistent CDA methodology, some features are common to most CDA approaches: firstly they are problem oriented and not focused on

specific linguistic items. Yet linguistic expertise is obligatory for the selection of the items relevant to specific research objectives. Secondly theory as well as methodology is eclectic: both are integrated as far as it is helpful to understand the social problems under investigation.

Criteria for Assessing Quality

It seems to be beyond controversy now that qualitative social research also needs concepts and criteria to assess the quality of its findings. It is also indisputable that the classical concepts of validity and reliability used in quantitative research cannot be applied without modification. 'The real issue is how our research can be both intellectually challenging and rigorous and critical' (Silverman, 1993: 144; there he also provides a detailed discussion of these concepts and a reformulation for qualitative research). What about the criteria suggested and listed by CDA scholars?

Siegfried Jäger names the classical criteria of representativeness, reliability and validity. Beyond it he suggests 'completeness' as a criterion suited to CDA: the results of a study will be 'complete' if new data and the analysis of new linguistic devices reveal no new findings. Teun van Dijk suggests accessibility as a criterion which takes into account the practical targets of CDA: findings should at be least accessible and readable for the social groups under investigation.

Both Ruth Wodak and Ron Scollon suggest triangulation procedures to ensure validity – 'which is appropriate whatever one's theoretical orientation or use of quantitative or qualitative data' (Silverman, 1993: 156).⁸ Wodak's triangulatory approach can be characterized as theoretical and is based on the concept of context which takes into account four levels:

- 1 the immediate language- or text-internal co-text;
- 2 the intertextual and interdiscursive relationship between utterances, texts, genres and discourses;
- 3 the extralinguistic (social) level which is called the 'context of situation' and explained by middle-range theories;
- 4 the broader socio-political and historical contexts.

Permanent switching between these levels and evaluation of the findings from these different perspectives should minimize the risk of being biased. Beyond this Wodak suggests methodical triangulation by using multimethodical designs on the basis of a variety of empirical data as well as background information.

Ron Scollon, too, is an advocate of triangulation: 'Because of the involvement of the researcher as a participant-observer, clear triangulation procedures are essential in drawing inferences about observations and in producing interpretations' (Scollon, p. 181).

Triangulation among different types of data, participants' definition of significance and issue based analysis to establish the significance of the sites of engagement and mediated actions under study, are suited to bringing the analyses back to participants in order to get their reactions and interpretations: to uncover divergences and contradictions between one's own analysis of the mediated actions one is studying and those of participants. Scollon claims that no study should rely on just one or two of these types of data for its interpretation.

Nevertheless strict 'objectivity' cannot be achieved by means of discourse analysis, for each 'technology' of research must itself be examined as potentially embedding the beliefs and ideologies of the analysts and therefore prejudicing the analysis toward the analysts' preconceptions.

Conclusion: CDA Sitting on the Fence

The goal of this brief chapter was to provide a short summary of CDA approaches, their similarities and differences. As the title of Teun van Dijk's article suggests, one of CDA's volitional characteristics is its diversity. Nevertheless a few landmarks should be pointed out within this diversity:

- concerning its theoretical background, CDA works eclectically in many respects; the whole range from grand theories to linguistic theories is touched, although each individual approach emphasizes different levels;
- there is no accepted canon of data collection;
- operationalization and analysis is problem oriented and implies linguistic expertise.

The similarity most evident is a shared interest in social processes of power, hierarchy building, exclusion and subordination. In the tradition of critical theory, CDA aims to make transparent the discursive aspects of societal disparities and inequalities. CDA in the majority of cases takes the part of the underprivileged and tries to show up the linguistic means used by the privileged to stabilize or even to intensify iniquities in society. Therefore critics like Widdowson (1995) object that CDA constantly sits on the fence between social research and political argumentation.

Notes

1 In her introductory contribution Ruth Wodak describes the social history of the process which has drawn the distinction between critical linguistics, CDA and traditional linguistic research.

2 See the criticism of this use of the term in Kriz and Lisch (1988: 176). They find 'model' a more appropriate term, since conventional methods actually depict information structures.

3 The question whether it is possible to make hermeneutic processes transparent and intelligible at all remains undecided, although Oevermann et al. (1979) developed a hermeneutically oriented method with well defined procedures and rules.

4 These conflict positions can be traced back to the 'Werturteilsstreit' (dispute on value judgements) in German sociology (see Albert, 1971).

5 Once again a reference to Emile Durkheim: 'The ideas of man or animal are not personal and are not restricted to me; I share them, to a large degree, with all the men who belong to the same social group that I do. Because they are held in common, concepts are the supreme instrument of all intellectual exchange' (Bellah, 1973: 52; excerpt from 'The dualism of human nature and its social conditions').

6 A general survey on sampling and the selection of texts is given by Titscher et al. (2000). The advantages and disadvantages of different methods of data collection are discussed from the point of view of the qualitative tradition by Silverman (1997), especially by Atkinson and Coffey (1997); Miller and Glassner (1997); Potter (1997) and Peräkylä (1997).

7 For discussion about the representativeness of qualitative data see again Titscher et al. (2000, 31ff.), Firestone (1993) and the articles in Ragin and Becker (1992).

8 An early proponent of the method of triangulation is Norman Denzin (1970). Further discussion of criteria for assessing interpretive validity in qualitative research is also provided by Altheide and Johnson (1994).

- conversation analysis
- linguistic theory
- social representations
- discourse
- discourse analysis
- triangulation
- discourse theory

<http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9780857028020.n2>