



People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

Abbes Laghrou University- Khenchela

Faculty of Letters and Languages

Department of English



Critical Discourse Analysis

Course

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Level: Master Two

Specialty: Language and Culture

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Required Bibliography:

Students are asked to skim through the following resources:

- Chouliaraki, L & Fairclough, N. (1999). *Discourse in late modernity: Rethinking critical discourse analysis*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Fairclough, N. (2013). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1998). *Ideology: A multidisciplinary approach*. London: SAGE.
- Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (2009). Critical discourse analysis: History, agenda, theory and methodology. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse analysis* (2nd ed., pp. 1–33). London: SAGE.

Course Description

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is interested in the analysis of spoken, written, sign or any other discourse beyond the descriptive level. It is an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary field of study that draws on and inspires other disciplines. Having an emancipatory character, CDA findings are of interest to different practitioners in different fields. In our context, Critical

Discourse Analysis Course is addressed to Master Two students, and aims at introducing them to the field of CDA. It tackles diverse topics including critical discourse analysis theoretical assumptions, principles, common ground, and main approaches. It suggests a variety of analytical tools, and directs students to check other ones. Taking Critical Discourse Analysis Course is an opportunity for students to check how power relations circulate in social practices, and how discourse, being ideological or non-ideological, constitutes and is constituted by the context. This would prepare them to try out different critical discourse analysis methods in future research.

Course Main Objectives

The main objectives of this course are:

- To acquaint students with critical discourse analysis methodology.
- To develop skills in critically analyzing different social practices.
- To prepare students to apply critical discourse analysis methods in their own research.
- To enhance students' understanding of the relationship between language, power, and ideology.
- To enable students recognize and interpret discursive strategies used in media, politics, and institutional discourse.
- To foster the ability to consider the social, cultural, and historical context in which discourse takes place.
- To increase awareness of the researcher's own ideological positioning and its influence on analysis.
- To direct students towards a variety of methods meant to collect, code, and analyze textual, visual, and multimodal data.
- To develop the capacity to critically evaluate different types of discourses, including issues of bias and representation.

- To raise interdisciplinary thinking by integrating insights from linguistics, sociology, psychology, discourse studies, and related fields.
- To prepare students for ethical engagement with social issues.
- To support students in producing critical, evidence-grounded analyses that links language in use to broader social systems.

Course Schedule

Month	Week	Contents
September	4	First contact with students
October	1	<p style="text-align: center; color: blue;">General Introduction to the Module</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General Introduction 2. Objectives of the Module 3. Conceptual Card 4. Pre-requisites
	2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Diagnostic Test 6. Evaluation <p style="text-align: center; color: blue;">I- A Historical Background to CDA</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Introduction</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Starting Point: Critical Linguistics 2. Systematic Functional Linguistics: The Nucleus of Change
	3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. SFL Main Assumptions 4. Critical Discourse Analysis: A New Paradigm

		<p>5. Critical Theory: Adding the Criticality Component</p> <p>6. Criticality: Enlightenment and Emancipation</p>
	<p>4</p>	<p>7. Addressing the Ideological Bias: Epistemic or Judgmental Relativism</p> <p>Discussion Questions</p> <p>II- Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis</p> <p>1. CDA Addresses Social Problems</p> <p>2. Power Relations are Discursive</p>
<p>November</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>3. Discourse Constitutes Society and Culture</p> <p>4. Discourse Does Ideological Work</p> <p>5. Discourse is Historical</p> <p>6. The Link Between Text and Society is Mediated</p>
	<p>2</p>	<p>7. Discourse Analysis is Interpretative and Explanatory</p> <p>8. Discourse is a Form of Social Action</p> <p>Discussion Questions</p> <p>Formative Test 1</p> <p>III- Common Ground: Discourse, Power, Ideology,</p>

		<p style="text-align: center;">Conflict</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Introduction</p> <p>1. Discourse: Seven Dimensions</p>
	3	<p>1.1 Naturally Occurring Language Use</p> <p>1.2 Larger Units</p> <p>1.3 Text, Action, and Interaction</p> <p>1.4 Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication</p>
	4	<p>1.5 Dynamicity</p> <p>1.6 Context of Language Use</p> <p>1.7 Varied Phenomena</p> <p>2. Power: Authoritative and Allocative Social Resources</p>
December	1	<p>3. Ideology: Social Group and Opposition</p> <p>3.1 Social Group</p> <p>3.2 Opposition</p> <p>4. Conflict</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Discussion Questions</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Formative Test 2</p>

	2	<p>IV- Three Main Approaches to Critical Discourse Analysis</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Approach (SCA) <p>Homework Assignment</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">2. Fairclough's Dialectical-Relational Approach (DRA)3. Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) <p>Discussion Questions</p> <p>V- Criticism to CDA</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Interpretation vs. Description2. Ideology Definition3. Fragmentary and Non-Representative Evidence4. Subjectivity and Analyst Bias5. Lack of Generalizability and Norm Comparison6. Strengths Despite Criticisms7. CDA's Transformative Potential <p>Discussion Questions</p> <p>General Conclusion</p> <p>First Semester Test</p>
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	3	Winter Holidays
	4	Winter Holidays
January	1	First Semester Exam

Further reading

The books listed above are useful resources for those who need further details.

Requirements

Doing different assignments is compulsory.

General Introduction to the Module

Objectives

- Clarify the sphere of investigation of Critical Discourse Analysis.
- Explain the importance of integrating Critical Discourse Studies in different fields and disciplines.
- Introduce students to the main tracks within the module.
- Clarify the objectives of the module.
- Supply students with important resources meant for both compulsory and extra readings.
- Discuss the pre-requisites students should have in order to get the maximum of the course.
- Check students' readiness to deal with the field of CDA.
- Clarify the evaluation procedure, grading process, types of questions, etc.

1. General Introduction

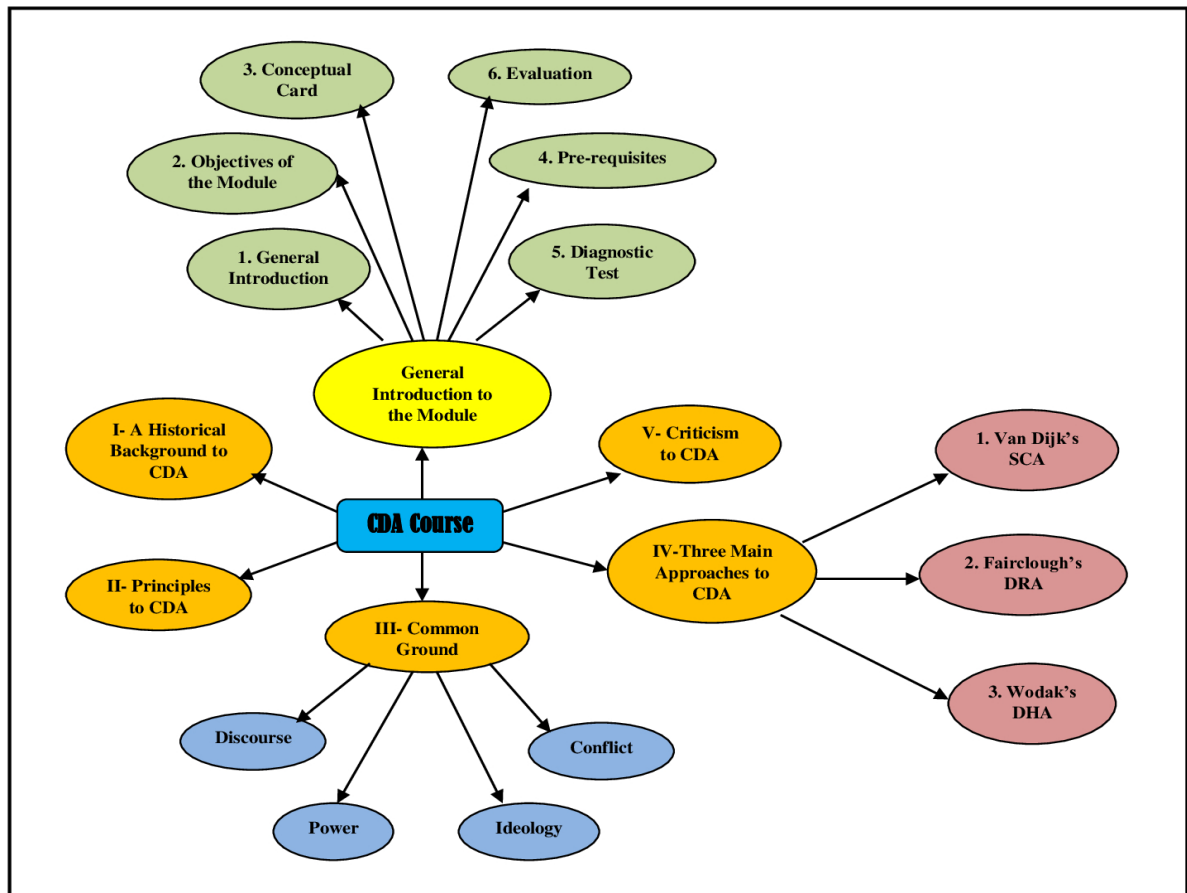
Critical Discourse Analysis is an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary field of study (Fairclough, 2001). As its name indicates, Critical Discourse Analysis is intended to analyse discourse and social practices *critically* (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Criticality in this sense is largely understood as uncovering the ideological non-said part of discourse. To clarify, CD analysts aim at explaining how social practices are invested to propagate a given ideology at the expense of another. In a word, CDA is an emancipatory approach that aims at addressing social wrongs such as: inequality, injustice, racism, oppression, etc. It is an

interesting methodology to different fields including: politics, forensic investigations, literature, language teaching, economics, business, etc. CDA findings would enable theorists and practitioners in different research areas to explain the wide range of linguistic and non-linguistic phenomena. Also, CDA importance lies especially in relating linguistic and non-linguistic choices to the broader socio-political context. Studying CDA is an opportunity for students to question a great deal of taken-for-granted assumptions about every day social practices. They would also understand how ideological meaning is communicated not only via words, but also via gestures, facial expressions, bodily movements, silence, action, etc. both consciously and unconsciously (Gee, 1999; van Dijk, 1998; Wodak & Meyer, 2001).

2. Objectives of the Module

- Define Critical Discourse Analysis and its major approaches.
- Identify steps to analyse discourse critically.
- Refer to examples of CDA studies.
- Explain key concepts in CDA.
- Compare main CDA approaches.

3. Conceptual Card



4. Pre-requisites

If students want to get the maximum of CDA course, they need to have some basic knowledge about:

- What critical discourse analysis is.
- What it studies.
- The main approaches and methods within critical discourse analysis.

5. Diagnostic Test

So as to make sure students have the minimum knowledge they need to tackle CDA course, they need to pass the diagnostic test. Below is an example of a diagnostic test with keys.

Diagnostic Test

1. What is the difference between DA and CDA?

2. What does the adjective 'critical' stand for in *critical* discourse analysis?

3. CD analysts claim that CDA is an emancipatory approach

Emancipatory means:

- Supporting new politicians to gain power.
- Addressing social wrongs
- Calling for freedom for colonized countries

4. Cross out the wrong word:

Ideology is a set of *basic/important* beliefs that are *created by/shared among* social group members. These beliefs *control/submit to* other beliefs, *human/linguistic* behavior and non-linguistic one.

5. Fill in the gaps with words from the list:

texts, opaque, relationships, hegemony, power, causality, practices, processes, relations,

CDA explores the

often relationships of and determination between (a) discursive practices, events, and, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, and; to investigate how such, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over; and to explore how the opacity of these between discourse and society is itself a factor in securing power and

(Fairclough, 2013, p. 93)

6. Underline the three main approaches to CDA:

- Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Approach (SCA)
- Social Actors Approach (SAA)
- Dispositive Analysis (DA)
- Dialectical-Relational Approach (DRA)
- Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)
- Corpus Linguistics Approach (CLA)

7. Social group and opposition are two key conditions for an ideology.

What does each term refer to?

8. A given stretch of discourse about feminism reflects:

- Ideological meaning
- Non-ideological meaning

➤ Both

9. Why do CD analysts and discourse analysts in general call individuals social actors?

10. Who is the founder of Dialectical-Relational Approach (DRA)?

Keys

1.

While DA studies discourse and social practices at a descriptive level, CDA studies them at an explanatory one.

2.

Criticality is understood within two main concepts: enlightenment and emancipation. Enlightenment refers to uncovering the opaque power relations that control and determine linguistic and non-linguistic choices. Emancipation refers to addressing different social wrongs (Fairclough, 2013) such as injustice, inequality, oppression, racism, etc. that are all communicated, usually implicitly, via words, structures, gestures, forms of interaction, etc.

3.

Emancipatory means:

➤ Addressing social wrongs

4.

Ideology is a set of *basic* beliefs that are *shared among* social group members. These beliefs *control* other beliefs, *linguistic* behavior and non-linguistic one.

5.

CDA explores the often **opaque** relationships of **causality** and determination between (a) discursive practices, events, and **texts**, and (b)

wider social and cultural structures, **relations** and **processes**; to investigate how such **practices**, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over **power**; and to explore how the opacity of these **relationships** between discourse and society is itself a factor in securing power and **hegemony**. (Fairclough, 2013, p. 93)

6.

- Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Approach (SCA)
- Social Actors Approach (SAA)
- Dispositive Analysis (DA)
- Dialectical-Relational Approach (DRA)
- Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)
- Corpus Linguistics Approach (CLA)

7.

Social group: refers to a given community that shares basic beliefs (ideology). The members of this community may or may not share the geographical space.

Opposition: Beliefs shared by this community exist in opposition with those of another community.

8. A given stretch of discourse about feminism reflects:

- Ideological meaning
- Non-ideological meaning

➤ Both ✓

9.

In a given social group, individuals are called social actors because they take part in socially constructing *meaning* encoded in different social practices.

10.

The founder of Dialectical-Relational Approach (DRA) is **Norman Fairclough**.

If students are not satisfied with the diagnostic test results, they are invited to skim through the following resources.

- Fairclough, N. (2013). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1998). *Ideology: A multidisciplinary approach*. London: SAGE.
- Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (2009). Critical discourse analysis: History, agenda, theory and methodology. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse analysis* (2nd ed., pp. 1–33). London: SAGE.

6. Evaluation

➤ Evaluation Criteria (Test)

Criteria	Attendance	Homework	Oral Test	Creativity	Written Test
Points	03	/	5	2	10

➤ Evaluation Criteria (Exam)

Criteria	Attendance	Homework	Oral Test	Creativity	Written Test
Points	/	/	/	/	20

I- A Historical Background to CDA

Introduction

Pursuing a detailed and comprehensive analysis of discourse has gradually led discourse analysts to move beyond the descriptive level of analysis to consider an additional, more intricate level of examination—one that accounts for the power relations embedded in and enacted through discourse. This shift marks a transition from focusing primarily on the “*what*” of discourse (its structure, vocabulary, and visible features) to interrogating the “*why*” of discourse (the ideology behind discourse). Such a transition has given rise to critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a distinct yet related paradigm within discourse studies.

CDA responds to the limitations recognized in traditional discourse analysis methodology, particularly the claim that it “is not sufficient in itself for analysis of the wider social practice, since the latter encompasses both discursive and non-discursive elements” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 69). Within this framework, language is no more viewed as a neutral medium of communication but rather as a form of discursive practice that both reflects and constructs social realities. In this sense, stretches of discourse are understood as sites where identities are negotiated and represented, often in relation to social categories such as social status, ethnicity, gender, generation, profession, political adherence, among others. These categories are not merely described through discourse; they are actively produced, reinforced, and sometimes challenged by it.

Adopting a critical perspective in discourse analysis allows researchers to go beyond overt meanings and engage with the implied, hidden, and taken-for-granted dimensions of discourse. This includes examining implicature, silence,

presuppositions, and ideological positioning that may not be directly articulated but nonetheless play a crucial role in shaping meaning (Elbah, 2019). By focusing on issues of power, dominance, inequality, hegemony, resistance, etc., CDA provides tools for uncovering how discourse contributes to the maintenance or change of social structures. It also accentuates the interconnectedness between language and broader socio-political contexts, thereby bridging the gap between textual analysis and societal structures.

However, despite the defining '*critical*' perspective of CDA, some scholars argue that criticality is an inherent feature of all discourse analysis. From this perspective, the act of analyzing any stretch of discourse unavoidably involves interpreting, evaluating, and questioning meanings, which are themselves critical practices. As Gee (2014, p. 10) states, "all discourse analysis is critical discourse analysis;" a statement that emphasizes the central role of criticality in discourse studies while questioning the boundaries drawn between CDA and DA.

1. The Starting Point: Critical Linguistics

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) dates back to the late 1970's when a group of linguists and literary theorists at the University of East Anglia (see, e.g., Fowler et al., 1979)

took the fundamental step of interpreting grammatical categories as potential traces of ideological mystification, and broke with a tradition in which different ways of saying the same thing were seen as mere stylistic variants, or as conventional and meaningless indicators of group membership categories such as class, professional role, and so on (van Leeuwen, 2009, p. 167).

This shift represented a crucial transition from purely formal approaches to language to approaches considering its functional aspects, emphasizing as such that linguistic choices are socially shaped and ideologically driven. In this sense,

language came to be understood not only as a means of communication but also as a form of social practice that both reflects and shapes power relations. By foregrounding issues of power, dominance, and ideology, these scholars sought to uncover the hidden mechanisms that govern discourse. Their work encouraged a more critical awareness towards questioning apparently neutral or taken-for-granted forms of expression. Joining the linguistic theory with critical analysis, these scholars founded what is known as Critical Linguistics, an approach that stresses the intimate relationship between linguistic forms and social structures.

This approach further criticized structuralist and generative models of language by insisting on the importance of historical and social context, as well as social standing in meaning-making processes. It also paved the way for later progresses in discourse analysis that integrate insights from various disciplines, including psychology, sociology, anthropology, media, etc. Moreover, Critical Linguistics highlighted how language can be used deliberately to legitimize certain beliefs while demoting others, thus reinforcing or challenging an existing social order. As a result, it contributed considerably to the development of more socially engaged forms of linguistic analysis.

Critical Linguistics (CL), the precursor of CDA, was based on Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Fowler as cited in Hart, 2011). Drawing on Halliday's work, critical linguists view discourse as simultaneously performing three meta-functions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions (Martin & Wodak, 2003). These meta-functions provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing how language operates in different contexts and for different purposes.

- The Ideational function: the use of language to represent experience and ideas. This roughly corresponds to the notion of 'propositional content'.

- The Interpersonal function: the use of language to encode interaction, allowing us to engage with others, to take on roles and to express and understand evaluations and feelings.
- The Textual function: the use of language to organize the text itself, coherently relating what is said to the world and to readers. (Halliday as cited in Hyland, 2005, p. 26)

Together, these three functions demonstrate that language simultaneously represents ideas, enacts social relations, and arranges meaning.

2. Systematic Functional Linguistics: The Nucleus of Change

Calling for a sociological account of language rather than a purely social one, Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) has sought to establish a linguistic theory "based on some theory of social structure and social change" (Halliday as cited in Meurer, 2004, p. 86). This perspective underlines the idea that language cannot be fully understood in isolation from the social context in which it functions. In other words, language must be studied in relation to the social structures and processes that shape human communication and interaction. By grounding linguistic theory in social theory, Halliday aimed to provide a more holistic account of how meaning is produced, negotiated, and changed across diverse contexts.

This orientation reflects a broader shift in linguistics toward functional approaches, which prioritize meaning and function over abstract formal structures. In this context, Rogers (2004) explains that

Although SFL accounts for the syntactic structure of language, it places the function of language as central (what language does, and how it does it), in preference to more structural approaches, which place the elements of language and their combinations as central. SFL starts at social context and looks at how language both acts on and is constrained by this social context. (p. 8)

This emphasis marks a clear departure from traditional structural approaches which tend to consider language as a self-sufficient system. Instead, SFL examines how language both shapes and is shaped by social context. This dual view highlights the reciprocal relationship between language and society, signifying that neither can be fully understood without reference to the other.

3. SFL Main Assumptions

SFL has established a set of assumptions that were adopted later by critical linguistics in their claim for a critical theory of language analysis. These assumptions can be clearly outlined as follows:

- First, unlike sociolinguistics that considers language and society to be divided, critical linguistics claim that “language is an integral part of social process” (Fowler et al., 1979, p. 189). This assumption stresses that language is not external to society but rooted within it, functioning as a constitutive element of social reality. This implies that linguistic analysis must account for social structures, relations, and practices as language actively shapes and gets shaped by them.

- Second, speakers whether consciously or not make “principled and systematic” (Fowler et al., 1979, p. 188) choices regarding vocabulary and grammar. These choices, which break with the traditional assumption of ‘language arbitrariness’, are ideologically based. As such, language is both a social act, as well as ideologically driven. This assumption highlights that linguistic forms are

motivated rather than random, and that they encrypt particular viewpoints, values, norms, and power relations. It also suggests that examining these choices can reveal hidden ideologies encoded in discourse.

- Third, SFL “sees meaning-making as a process through which language shapes, and is shaped by, the contexts in which it is used” (Schleppegrell, 2012, p. 21). This assumption underlines the reciprocal relationship between language and social context, emphasizing that meaning emerges constantly through negotiation between linguistic structures and social situations.

Referring to this last point, it seems apparent that SFL has traced the dialectical relation between form and function which would later crystallize in CDA assumption of language as *social practice* (see, e.g., Fairclough, 2013).

4. Critical Discourse Analysis: A New Paradigm

In 1980’s, Critical Discourse Analysis is established as a new paradigm that mediates between the *linguistic* and the *social* and draws on

a variety of scholars and paradigms including Aristotle and continental philosophers, as well as Althusser, Barthes, Gramsci, Foucault, Pecheux, Marxism, the Frankfurt school, neo-Marxism, the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (including Stuart Hall), deconstruction, and postmodernism (Pascale, 2007, p. 123).

This wide range of intellectual influences reflects the interdisciplinary nature of CDA, which draws on manifold theoretical traditions to analyze the intricate relationship between language, society, and power. It also shows that CDA is not limited to a single perspective but rather integrates various approaches that share a concern with discourse, ideology, and social change.

By incorporating these varied frameworks, CDA is able to address different levels of discourse, from its linguistic structures to its broader socio-political implications. This richness of impacts reinforces CDA's analytical scope and allows it to engage with different types of texts and social practices across various contexts. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of understanding discourse as a linguistic and a social phenomenon that is shaped by contextual, historical, and ideological forces.

In short, the basic principle of CDA whose pioneers were mainly Norman Fairclough, Teun A. van Dijk, and Ruth Wodak is to consider language as a social practice (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). According to Fairclough and Wodak (1997, p. 258), "Describing discourse as social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s) which frame it". This suggests that any meaningful analysis of discourse must take into account the broader institutional and societal contexts in which it takes place.

CDA highlights the dynamic nature of discourse as it is constantly determined by changing social conditions while simultaneously contributing to their maintenance or change. Finally, although the term CDA is largely established now, some scholars still use that of Critical Linguistics to refer to the same conceptualization i.e., CDA.

5. Critical Theory: Adding the Criticality Component

CDA has been characterized with adding the criticality component to the analysis process. Yet, being ‘critical’ should not be understood within a negative sense (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). That is, the aim of CDA is not to criticize what people say or do. Its aim is to uncover the underlying motives that control different social practices (Elbah, 2022). This perspective shifts the focus from surface-level interpretations of discourse to deeper analytical engagement with the socio-political structures that shape meaning. This highlights that criticality involves questioning taken-for-granted assumptions and revealing hidden dimensions that shape and control different social practices.

As such, criticality is not restricted to discourse only because social actors get involved in different social practices where they enact constantly changing social positionings; “all social practice is embedded in networks of power, or discursive practices” (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 24). This statement reinforces the idea that social practices are inseparable from power relations and that social actors continuously negotiate their identities within these networks. In sum, CDA extends beyond textual analysis to include the investigation of broader social practices and institutional contexts. It also emphasizes that power operates not only through explicit domination but also through indirect and often normalized discursive processes.

Yet, just like many other categories, ‘critical’ has not received a clear-cut definition among CDA analysts; neither is it tackled using the same methodology. This lack of a unified definition reflects the diversity of approaches within CDA and its openness to multiple theoretical perspectives. For Fairclough, for instance, “critical is making visible the interconnectedness of things” (2013, p. 39). This view underlines the importance of identifying links

between discourse, social structures, and power relations, and of demonstrating how apparently unrelated elements are in fact interconnected.

Pêcheux understands critical as “uncovering relations of power and ideology and their effects on social identities and relations” (as cited in Joseph & Roberts, 2004, p. 45). This definition states that criticality entails examining and uncovering the ways in which systems of power and ideological frames are interconnected, and how these dynamics shape, affect, and reinforce social identities, as well as the relationships between social actors and groups within society.

Martin and Wodak (2003) for their part understand critical within a four step process: “having distance from the data, embedding the data in the social, taking a political stance explicitly, and focusing on self-reflection as scholars doing research” (p. 6). This technical understanding of criticality stresses the role of the researcher and the importance of auto-reflexivity in the analytical process. It suggests that critical analysis is not neutral but requires a conscious engagement with social and political issues.

Together, these definitions of criticality demonstrate that it is a complex and multifaceted concept, including not only the use of analytical tools and techniques, but also a conscious commitment and a clear ethical orientation. It involves engaging with ideas at an abstract level while remaining attentive to the values and ideologies that guide the interpretation process.

6. Criticality: Enlightenment and Emancipation

In spite of being defined differently, criticality is understood, by all critical discourse analysts, within two main concepts or stages which are: enlightenment and emancipation. The first stage, that is, the enlightenment stage, refers to uncovering the opaque power relations that control and determine linguistic and

non-linguistic choices. This stage emphasizes that social practices are rarely neutral, as they often encode implicit norms, values, and ideologies that shape social practices, interactions, and institutional processes in general.

In other words, being a social group member, one takes, consciously or unconsciously, a certain ideological positioning that stands for a given *Self* against some given *Other*. Such positioning is reflected in language use, gestures, behaviors, habits, and different forms of linguistic and non-linguistic behaviors and reflects social group expectations. It is the task of CD analysts then to uncover the ideology, if any, that stands behind a given social practice.

By revealing the ideological underpinnings behind a stretch of discourse, analysts can reveal the underlying dynamics through which power, dominance, ideologies, and social norms are reproduced, maintained or contested, across different social contexts. This process involves a careful attention not only to explicit meaning but also to the implicit patterns of meaning embedded in linguistic and non-linguistic social practices. This demonstrates that ideologies often operate imperceptibly but very powerfully.

Unveiling such ideological standing would lead, whether intentionally or not, to emancipation via addressing different social wrongs (Fairclough, 2013), including: injustice, inequality, oppression, racism, etc., that are all communicated, usually implicitly, via words, structures, gestures, forms of interaction, and other discursive practices. Emancipation, in this sense, is both a desired outcome and a guiding principle of CDA.

Bringing to light the hidden power dynamics can foster moments of reflection, comprehension, acceptance, resistance, and social change. This stage highlights that CDA is not merely descriptive but also transformative in nature aiming to make visible the ways in which social life is structured, and offers the

possibility of intervention to challenge social wrongs and injustices. Rogers adds that “while critique is an important part of the “critical project” it is not the end goal. The end goal is to hope, to dream, and to create alternative realities that are based in equity, love, peace, and solidarity” (2011, p. 5).

CDA carries an ambitious and ethical dimension, placing the discipline as a tool not only for analysis but also for fostering societal frameworks where resources, rights, and opportunities are distributed in a balanced and equitable manner. By integrating enlightenment and emancipation, CDA emphasizes understanding power, reflecting on social practices, and standing against their negative effects. In a word, criticality in discourse analysis fosters dialogue, action, and eventually, the creation of alternative social realities that contest injustice and promote equal inclusion. In this way, CDA combines analytical rigor with a social commitment, demonstrating that the study of language is intrinsically linked to the pursuit of social justice.

7. Addressing the Ideological Bias: Epistemic or Judgmental Relativism

In their pursuit to uncover the ideology behind discourse, critical discourse analysts are calling for a relativist view of the ideological component (Fairclough, 2013). This approach acknowledges that discourse is always situated within particular social, cultural, and historical contexts, and that meaning is shaped by the positions of those producing and interpreting it. Yet, according to Fairclough (2013), relativism in this context should be understood within an epistemic conceptualization rather than a judgmental one. This distinction is crucial because it allows analysts to recognize the socially constructed nature of reality without implying that all perspectives are equally valid or acceptable.

Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999, p. 8) explain that “although epistemic relativism must be accepted – that all discourses are socially constructed relative to the social positions people are in – this does not entail accepting judgmental relativism – that all discourses are equally good”. By making this division, CDA establishes a framework that is both critically explicit and methodologically rigorous, stating that although all discourses are shaped by the social positions of those producing them, not all of them are equally legitimate. This highlights the analyst’ responsibility to examine discourse prudently, taking into account the social consequences of aligning with certain ideological positionings. It is for this reason that Fairclough calls for “a search for grounds for determining whether some representations constitute better knowledge of the world than others” (2013, p. 355).

All in all, CDA is not only descriptive but also critical and evaluative; seeking to assess how social practices reproduce, maintain, or challenge reality and social order. Consequently, relativism in CDA is understood as an insightful tool that balances recognition of social construction of reality with critical judgment, and a potential change. This approach ensures that CDA upholds a dual focus: analyzing language in its context of use while actively addressing social justice and ethical responsibilities.

Discussion Questions

- ✓ Why did some scholars claim that DA is not sufficient in itself for the analysis of social practices?
- ✓ What did the critical theory add to DA?
- ✓ Why was it necessary to shift from a social account of language to a sociological one?
- ✓ Why cannot we consider all ideologies at an equal footing?

- ✓ How does power influence the production and interpretation of discourse?
- ✓ In what ways do historical and cultural contexts shape discourse?
- ✓ How do CDA approaches differ in their treatment of cognition, society, and text?
- ✓ Why is it important for CDA analysts to explicitly acknowledge their ideological stance?
- ✓ How can methodological rigor be preserved despite the interpretive nature of CDA?
- ✓ What are the limitations of analyzing social practices without considering social and institutional structures?
- ✓ Can CDA findings be generalized?
- ✓ How do dominant and subordinate ideologies operate within discourse to reinforce or challenge social inequalities?

II- Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis

Fairclough and Wodak (as cited in Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 141) summarize the main principles of CDA as follows:

1. CDA Addresses Social Problems

As mentioned above, the main aim of CDA is to address social wrongs like injustice, inequality, racism, violence, prejudice, oppression, etc., that are signaled in different social practices. In other words, it is the role of critical discourse analysts to reveal how different social practices are ideologically biased towards serving a given social group at the expense of another (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). This principle situates CDA as an explicitly normative and transformative approach, rather than merely descriptive or interpretative. That is, examining language and social practices critically inherently requires a duty to recognize and confront inequalities.

By focusing on these social wrongs, CDA contributes to practical interferences in different social domains including: education, politics, media, economics, business, advertising, etc. In other words, CDA provides tools for both scholars and practitioners to raise awareness of hidden mechanisms of social control, helping social actors, social groups, activists, and policymakers identify and lessen the effects of embedded discrimination. For instance, analyzing political speeches can reveal biases that privilege dominant groups while relegating minorities, thus offering opportunities to reveal and correct institutional inequalities and unfair marginalization.

2. Power Relations are Discursive

Stating that power relations are discursive explains how they are constructed, negotiated, and reproduced among social actors through language

and interaction in and via different social practices. This takes place as CDA goes beyond the descriptive level of discourse towards an explanatory one that deals especially with two main categories: power and ideology. Evans (2002, p. 10) explains that “While concerned about social relations, a discourse analysis approach is likely to use language categories (such as woman and man) as a given rather than to examine how they circulate and who benefits.” CDA, in contrast, interrogates these categories, showing how they are socially constructed, distributed, and employed to advantage certain groups.

CDA examines the implicit ways in which discursive practices reproduce hierarchies and normalize privilege among social groups, as well as how they can be contested or resisted. For example, labeling practices in media can reinforce gender, racial, or class hierarchies, while alternative discourses may challenge these inequities. For example, labeling immigrants as “dangerous,” “illegal,” or “underprivileged” reinforces existing racial inequalities. By revealing that power is a dynamic and socially embedded force, CDA shows that meaning is actively negotiated through language, actions, and everyday practices

3. Discourse Constitutes Society and Culture

This principle states that every stretch of discourse takes place to reproduce and/or transform social and cultural patterns. In other words, discourse is a reflection or a rebellion against linguistic, social, political, religious, etc., status quos. According to Wodak and Meyer,

discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned - it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it. (2009, p. 6)

This dual role emphasizes that discourse both shapes and is shaped by society. That is, discourse reflects existing norms and simultaneously has the potential to reshape them. For example, debates around immigration, war in the middle east, climate change, or gender equality reflect dominant ideologies but can also generate alternative ways of thinking and acting. CDA investigates these processes, revealing how discourse helps construct social reality, (de)legitimizing beliefs, and shaping social practices. By showing how discourse constitutes social relationships and identities, CDA underlines the active role language has in both preserving and challenging societal norms and values.

4. Discourse Does Ideological Work

Discourse is used to communicate ideological meaning as well as non-ideological one (Elbah, 2019). It is the aim of CDA to reveal how a given stretch of discourse is exploited, whether intentionally or not, to pass and call for a certain ideology rather than another (van Dijk, 1993; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Ideology usually operates implicitly, often through choices that seem normal or neutral, such as word choice, hedges, and narrative structures.

By examining these elements, CDA reveals how discourse reinforces dominant views while marginalizing opposing ones. For instance, media reporting on crime may depict certain groups as inherently criminals while diminishing systemic factors, thereby naturalizing social hierarchy. CDA highlights the power of language in transmitting and fostering certain ideologies at the expense of other ones; hence, influencing attitudes and social interactions. In short, CDA aims at showing that what appears as “common sense” or “natural” is often a creation of discursive construction serving specific ideological interests.

5. Discourse is Historical

A given stretch of discourse takes place within a certain context of use that determines and explains how it is or should be interpreted. As such, analyzing discourse cannot take place without considering its social and cultural background. Also, being reproduced to fulfill social actors' needs at a given point of time, discourse is regarded as a dynamic phenomenon rather than a rigid one. Said another way, one of the aims of CDA is to trace how discourses evolve, adjust, and persist, reflecting alternations in society, ideology, and power relations. For example, being influenced by social, economic, and cultural events, political rhetoric about 'immigration,' 'freedom,' or 'war' can shift in meaning over decades. By situating discourse historically, CDA contextualizes discourse and social practices in their context of use, revealing their embeddedness in broader social systems.

6. The Link Between Text and Society is Mediated

CDA doesn't consider the relationship between discursive practices, events, and texts and their corresponding social and cultural context to be deterministic. Rather, it invokes the concept of 'mediation' which "involves the movement of meaning from one text to another, from one discourse to another, from one event to another... the constant transformation of meanings, both large scale and small, significant and insignificant" (Silverstone as cited in Fairclough, 2013, pp. 72-73).

Mediation highlights that meaning is not static or a one-to-one relation between discourse and society; it is continually circulated, reinterpreted, and challenged. This principle allows CDA to analyze intertextuality, the interactions between different discourses, and the ways in which meaning is reshaped across institutions, media, and everyday discourse. It also accounts for

how social actors actively negotiate meaning, contributing to the elasticity and malleability of social practices.

7. Discourse Analysis is Interpretative and Explanatory

CDA does not only interpret discourse but explain it as well via systematically exploring the

often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events, and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor in securing power and hegemony (Fairclough, 2013, p. 93).

This principle emphasizes CDA's dual aim which is uncovering meaning and explaining the larger social and cultural systems, relationships, and processes in which it is embedded. It highlights systematic analysis of how discourses shape and are shaped by social structures, revealing both direct and indirect mechanisms of influence. This approach provides a bridge between linguistic features and non-linguistic ones, making CDA a mainly explanatory framework that links discourse analysis to broader social phenomena.

8. Discourse is a Form of Social Action

One of the main changes brought by shifting to the term 'discourse' instead of that of 'language' is understanding discourse or language in use as a form of social action. That is, via discourse and other social practices, social actors are exerting different ideological and non-ideological acts or actions. Words, gestures, paintings, music, etc., are invested to carry out different social

actions that allow social, cultural, political, etc., patterns to be maintained, developed, or resisted.

Recognizing discourse as social action emphasizes its operative role: it does not only describe social reality but actively produces it. Through discourse, social actors negotiate power, reveal norms, contest authority, and construct social identities. Critical discourse analysis contributes to social change by revealing the ways power, ideology, and norms are reproduced and challenged. It raises public awareness of the hidden social structures and their effects on people's attitudes, decisions, and actions. CDA is a tool for understanding, evaluating, and shaping society.

Discussion Questions

- ✓ Claiming that discourse constitutes and is constituted by context, what are the factors that control this construction? And how does the influence between both parts really take place?
- ✓ What happens when the receiver does not recognize the embedded ideological meaning?
- ✓ How can CDA realize its emancipatory project on the ground?
- ✓ Give examples of social actions carried out by discourse. Explain.
- ✓ How do power relations shape what legitimate discourse in a given society?
- ✓ In what ways do word choices reinforce or challenge social hierarchies? Give examples.
- ✓ How can CDA account for differences in interpretation across diverse social groups?
- ✓ What is the role of non-linguistic features (e.g., images, gestures, facial expressions) in shaping ideological meaning?
- ✓ How can history alter current social practices? Illustrate.

- ✓ What challenges arise when trying to link micro-level language analysis to macro-level social systems?
- ✓ How does CDA distinguish between ideological and non-ideological meanings in a stretch of discourse?
- ✓ Can discourse ever be unbiased, or is all discourse inherently ideological?
- ✓ How do dominant and inferior groups use discourse to negotiate or contest social norms?
- ✓ What are the ethical responsibilities of a CDA analyst when revealing power injustice in discourse?
- ✓ How can CDA methods be applied in different domains, such as education, politics, media, etc.?

Formative Test 1

Task 1

Choose the correct answer.

a. The shift from traditional discourse analysis to CDA focuses mainly on:

- A. Grammar rules
- B. Linguistic features
- C. Power relations and ideology
- D. Phonology

b. Language in CDA is considered:

- A. Unbiased
- B. Individual
- C. A social practice
- D. Static

c. Critical Linguistics emerged in the:

- A. 1960s
- B. 1970s
- C. 1980s
- D. 2010s

d. Which is NOT a meta-function in SFL?

- A. Ideational
- B. Interpersonal
- C. Textual
- D. Pragmatic

e. The ideational function is concerned with:

- A. Organizing discourse
- B. Representing experience
- C. Textual patterns
- D. Social interaction

f. In CDA, power is:

- A. Random
- B. Discursively constructed
- C. Irrelevant
- D. Purely psychological

Task 2

State whether the following statements are true or false.

- A. CDA sees language as neutral.
- B. Discourse can reproduce and transform society.
- C. According to CDA, all ideologies are equally valid.

Task 3

Fill in the Gaps

- A. CDA analyzes both _____ and non-discursive elements.
- B. Critical Discourse Analysis developed in the late _____.
- C. The _____ function organizes discourse.

Task 4

Match the following

Concept	Description
Discourse	Socially shared basic beliefs
Dominance	Language use
Status Quo	Control
Ideology	Revealing hidden power
Enlightenment	Social order

Task 5

Answer the following questions

- A. Why is discourse analysis insufficient for analyzing social practices?

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.....
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.....

B. What is meant by “language as social practice”?

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C. Why are social identities considered as constructed? Give one example.

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D. What is meant by “word choices are ideologically motivated”?

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Task 6

Give brief definitions to the following terms using your own words:

Criticality

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Discursivity

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Social Wrongs

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Task 7

Correct the false statements.

A. CDA focuses only on linguistic structure.

→

B. Discourse analysis does not consider history.

→

C. Language in CDA is considered a social construct.

→

D. In SFL, meaning is rigid and does not depend on context.

→

E. Power exists outside social practices and is not expressed through them.

→

F. Discourse only reflects society; it does not shape it.

→

G. All ideologies are equally valid according to CDA.

→

Task 8

Compare Critical Linguistics and CDA (Give 2 similarities and 2 differences).

Similarities	Differences
1.	1.
2.	2.

Task 9

What is the difference between epistemic relativism and judgmental one?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Keys

Task 1

Choose the correct answer.

a. The shift from traditional discourse analysis to CDA focuses mainly on:

- A. Grammar rules
- B. Linguistic features
- C. Power relations and ideology ✓
- D. Phonology

b. Language in CDA is considered:

- A. Unbiased
- B. Individual
- C. A social practice ✓
- D. Static

c. Critical Linguistics emerged in the:

- A. 1960s
- B. 1970s ✓
- C. 1980s
- D. 2010s

d. Which is NOT a meta-function in SFL?

- A. Ideational
- B. Interpersonal
- C. Textual
- D. Pragmatic ✓

e. The ideational function is concerned with:

- A. Organizing discourse
- B. Representing experience ✓
- C. Textual patterns
- D. Social interaction

f. In CDA, power is:

- A. Random
- B. Discursively constructed ✓
- C. Irrelevant
- D. Purely psychological

Task 2

State whether the following statements are true or false.

- A. CDA sees language as neutral. **False**
- B. Discourse can reproduce and transform society. **True**
- C. According to CDA, all ideologies are equally valid. **False**

Task 3

Fill in the Gaps

- A. CDA analyzes both **discursive** and non-discursive elements.
- B. Critical Discourse Analysis developed in the late **1980's**.
- C. The **textual** function organizes discourse.

Task 4

Match the following

Concept	Description
Discourse	Socially shared basic beliefs
Dominance	Language use
Status Quo	Control
Ideology	Revealing hidden power
Enlightenment	Social order

Task 5

Answer the following questions

- A. Why is discourse analysis insufficient for analyzing social practices?

Discourse analysis focuses on the structure and patterns of language at the descriptive level. It examines grammar, syntax, and meaning within the text itself, often without addressing the underlying mechanisms behind the use of certain linguistic or non-linguistic choices. In contrast, critical discourse analysis explores the implicit power relations and ideologies embedded in discourse. It pays particular attention to the ways in which power relations, dominance, and ideology are reproduced, reinforced, or contested in discourse and social practices.

B. What is meant by “language as social practice”?

Language as a social practice refers to the idea that language is not a fixed system of rules, as claimed by structuralists, but a dynamic form of social interaction shaped by the context of use, as argued by postmodernists. In this view, meaning is contextual rather than predefined; it is produced, sustained, challenged, or transformed within each stretch of discourse.

C. Why are social identities considered as constructed? Give one example.

Social identities are considered constructed because they are not static features; rather, they are shaped in context and influenced by social, political, and relational factors. In other words, although they may be difficult to change, social identities—or ideologies—are, like any other form of

discourse, contextual and dynamic. This means that social identities can evolve over time and vary across different situations. Feminism, for example, has evolved in correspondence with changes in social understanding of women's familial, social, economic, and political roles.

D. What is meant by “word choices are ideologically motivated”?

Word choices reflect beliefs, values, and social attitudes, rather than being neutral. That is, the words or structures people use can reinforce or challenge power systems and ideologies. For instance, referring to a war criminal as a “freedom fighter” rather than a “terrorist” signals alignment with a particular ideological standing. In this way, discourse both expresses and endorses particular ideologies.

Task 6

Give brief definitions to the following terms using your own words:

Criticality

Criticality refers to analyzing discourse with an explicit focus on revealing power relations, ideological biases, and social inequities embedded in linguistic and non-linguistic elements. It is not about taking texts at face

value, but questioning whose interests are served, who is inferiorized, and how power relations are reflected in language in use.

Discursivity

Discursivity in CDA refers to the ways in which discourse and social practices are used to construct, maintain, and legitimize social inequalities. It is based on the notion that linguistic and non-linguistic choices are purposeful rather than neutral. Discursive practices are seen as ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggle over power, and they play a crucial role in maintaining power hierarchies.

Social Wrongs

Social wrongs refer to different forms of social injustice, inequality, or oppression that are propagated through discourse and social practices. For instance, labeling certain immigrants as “illegal” in news discourse is a form of discrimination that is meant to reinforce social exclusion. CDA aims to uncover and fight against these practices by analyzing textual features, structures, narratives, and ideologies that sustain them.

Task 7

Correct the false statements.

A. CDA focuses only on linguistic structure.

→ **CDA focuses on both linguistic and non-linguistic features.**

B. Discourse analysis does not consider history.

→ **Discourse analysis considers historical change.**

C. Language in CDA is considered a social construct.

→

D. In SFL, meaning is rigid and does not depend on context.

→ **In SFL, meaning is contextual.**

E. Power exists outside social practices and is not expressed through them.

→ **Power exists within social practices and is expressed through them.**

F. Discourse only reflects society; it does not shape it.

→ **Discourse shapes and is shaped by society.**

G. All ideologies are equally valid according to CDA.

→ **Ideologies are not equally valid according to CDA. There are good and bad ones.**

Task 8

Compare Critical Linguistics and CDA (Give 2 similarities and 2 differences).

Similarities	Differences
<p>1. Both are critical approaches that link language use to broader societal issues.</p> <p>2. Both analyze language to reveal hidden ideologies and power relations.</p>	<p>1. CL focuses mainly on grammatical and linguistic structures, while CDA examines language in its broader social, cultural, and historical context.</p> <p>2. CDA is interdisciplinary, drawing on different disciplines; CL is mainly linguistic in focus.</p>

Task 9

What is the difference between epistemic relativism and judgmental one?

Fairclough accepts epistemic relativism which states that that all discourses are socially constructed and rooted in particular social situations, meaning that what counts as ideology is relative to different social contexts. However, he rejects judgmental relativism, which holds that all ideologies are equally good or valid representations of reality. According to him, some ideologies can be judged as good; while others propagate for social wrongs.

III- Common Ground: Discourse, Power, Ideology, Conflict

Introduction

Like any other paradigm, CDA has its own terminology that is based on how critical discourse analysts understand language and reality in general. In this context, we refer to three fundamental concepts in CDA, the understanding of which would facilitate a good grasp of how CDA analyzes discourse and social practices. These include: discourse, power, and ideology. Each of these concepts carries specific analytical weight and serves as a lens through which texts, interactions, and social practices can be examined.

Discourse, for instance, is not limited to language in a narrow sense but covers all forms of communication, including visual, gestural, and multimodal texts, as well as institutional and day-to-day practices. Power is understood not simply as institutional authority but as relational and embedded in everyday practices, negotiated and preserved through discourse and social practices. Ideology refers to the systems of basic beliefs that shape and are shaped by social context, often in ways that naturalize dominance and control and marginalize alternative perspectives.

Yet, referring particularly to these three concepts does not make them the only important ones in CDA. There is still a wide list of terms that stand for CDA as a new paradigm for understanding and explaining reality. Terms such as Self, Other, conflict, opposition, hegemony, legitimation, intertextuality, and resistance all play an important role in the analytical toolkit of CDA.

1. Discourse: Seven Dimensions

Discourse analysis emerged prominently in the 1960s as scholars began to rethink the study of language beyond its traditional structural and formal

aspects. Before this period, linguistic research often focused on grammatical structures, syntax, and isolated sentences, defining language as a rigid system. However, linguists and practitioners in linguistics-related fields started to realize that this structural approach to language ignored the social, cultural, and political dimensions of language. The adoption of the term ‘discourse’ instead of ‘language’ was a necessary move that reflected this shift. Language was no longer seen as a fixed set of rules but as a dynamic, socially situated phenomenon where meaning is negotiated and constructed rather than pre-defined. This conceptual change was fundamental because it allowed scholars to study not just the abstract properties of language, but the ways in which language shapes and is shaped by social context.

Understanding language as language in use—or discourse—is a foundational principle in discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA), which explicitly examines the ways in which language maintains or contests power relations. Scholars such as Van Dijk (2007) and Wodak (2008) articulated this framework in terms of seven key dimensions of discourse. These dimensions offer a comprehensive toolkit for studying how language functions in real-world situations and how it connects to broader social, political, and cultural systems. These dimensions are distinct yet interconnected aspects of discourse, underscoring its complexity and richness.

1.1 Naturally Occurring Language Use

A central principle of discourse analysis is the focus on naturally occurring language use. Analysts are interested in language as it is spontaneously produced in real-life contexts, by real speakers, rather than in artificially constructed or laboratory-generated data. This is crucial because invented examples often fail to capture the intricacies of interaction, the nuances of power negotiation, or the implicit cultural conventions present in natural discourse.

Naturally occurring data can be drawn from a wide variety of sources, including everyday conversations, political speeches, classroom interactions, media shows, social media posts, and workplace communication. For instance, analyzing casual workplace interactions can reveal how hierarchies are subtly maintained through polite language, indirect requests, or interruptions, which might not be that evident in invented data.

1.2 Larger Units

Discourse analysis moves beyond the level of individual words or sentences to focus on larger units such as texts, conversations, or complete communicative events. This approach recognizes that meaning often emerges within a larger context, including topic development, turn-taking strategies, and intertextual references. For example, analyzing a political speech in isolation may highlight certain rhetorical devices, but examining the speech in relation to prior speeches, media commentaries, and public responses would reveal broader patterns of ideological standing.

1.3 Text, Action, and Interaction

Discourse analysis extends beyond textual analysis to consider language as action and interaction. Language is not only a system of signs but also a tool for performing social actions and negotiating relationships. Discourse analysts study three interrelated dimensions of discourse: discourse as text, discourse as action, and discourse as interaction among social actors.

Discourse as text refers to word choices, sentences, and structures in a communicative practice. Discourse as action considers how these choices accomplish social functions, such as persuading, threatening, requesting, consoling, (de)legitimizing, influencing public opinion, passing regulations and laws, etc. Discourse as interaction focuses on processes of turn-taking, social

roles, and power relations. For example, a courtroom exchange involves carefully structured interactions where judges, lawyers, and witnesses perform actions such as questioning, objecting, testifying, issuing a judgment, etc. with each utterance shaped by certain protocols that respond to the audience's expectations.

1.4 Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication

Discourse encompasses both verbal and non-verbal behaviors, recognizing that communication is multi-modal. Words alone rarely carry the full meaning; gestures, facial expressions, physical distance, tone, pauses, intonation, visual aids, and even silence contribute to the overall communicative effect. Non-verbal elements often reinforce, contradict, or change verbal messages. For instance, in political debates, a candidate's posture, hesitation, or eye contact can greatly influence the audience's perception of honesty, confidence, or competence, regardless of the words used. Similarly, in intercultural encounters, non-linguistic behavior may carry different meanings, highlighting the significance of examining all modes of expression when analysing discourse.

1.5 Dynamicity

Discourse is inherently dynamic, constantly shaped by the context in which it occurs. It is responsive to social, cultural, historical, and situational factors, and simultaneously contributes to shaping these factors. Meaning is never fixed but negotiated between emitters, receivers, and the broader social context. In other words, discourse reflects both a pre-existing reality—such as linguistic rules, cultural norms and values, institutional structures, and historical patterns—and an emerging reality that develops in social interaction (Elbah, 2022).

1.6 Context of Language Use

Context is central to discourse analysis. Unlike structuralist approaches that treat language as an abstract system, discourse analysts recognize that meaning is inseparable from the context of use. Context includes linguistic factors (language code, co-text, textual features, etc.) and historical background, social and cultural models, institutional regulations, political conditions, etc. For instance, the word “freedom” can have different meanings depending on context of use; it might refer to legal rights in a constitution, personal independence in an everyday communication, national identity in a political discourse, etc. CDA particularly highlights how discourse and social practices operate within and sustain social power structures, making contextual analysis vital for understanding how language reproduces, negotiates, or resists power.

1.7 Varied Phenomena

Recognizing discourse as a complex system of linguistic and non-linguistic behaviors allows analysts to study a wide range of phenomena. These include cohesion, coherence, macrostructures, interactional features (including turn-taking, adjacency pairs, and politeness strategies), body posture, gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, tone of voice, pauses, silence, etc. For example, investigating how a news report presents information, highlights certain incidents, foreground issues and background others can reveal hidden ideological positions. Similarly, in classroom discourse, patterns of teacher-student interaction, feedback mechanisms, and classroom management can shed light on pedagogical conventions and power relations.

2. Power: Authoritative and Allocative Social Resources

The emergence of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as an offshoot of Discourse Analysis (DA) is primarily rooted in the need to address the complex

dynamics of power relations in discourse and social practices. While DA focuses on how social practices function at the descriptive level, CDA extends this inquiry to include the social and political mechanisms that govern them; it investigates how these latter are invested towards maintaining, negotiating, or challenging power relations and institutional structures.

The critical perspective of CDA is driven by the belief that language and social practices are never neutral; they are a tool through which social inequalities are reproduced, contested, or transformed. Ideological groups, whether political parties, religious groups, social classes, etc., are engaged in constant struggle over power. In van Dijk's words, power "means having preferential access to and control over scarce *social resources*" (van Dijk, 2005, p. 2). These social resources are tangible and intangible assets that allow certain social groups to control others by determining social behavior and decide about the distribution of wealth and opportunities.

Social resources can be categorized into two main types: authoritative and allocative. As Allan (2007, p. 390) notes, "Authoritative resources are made up of such things as techniques or technologies of management, organizational position, and expert knowledge. Allocative resources come from the control of material goods or the material world." Authoritative resources are inherently relational, and power is grounded in social recognition, valued expertise, and institutional roles. Allocative resources, in contrast, are more material; they include wealth, territory, technology, or other tangible resources that allow one or few social groups to control other ones.

The exertion of power manifests in three principal forms, as described by Williams (2011): dominance, resistance, and hegemony. Dominance occurs when one social group enacts power over other social groups; shaping actions, access, and consequences; resistance emerges when subordinate groups

challenge or contest this exercise of power; and hegemony refers to the process by which a dominated social group submits willingly to the dominant group i.e., dominant values, norms, and beliefs are widely accepted as natural, legitimate, and taken for granted.

3. Ideology: Social Group and Opposition

The term ideology is fundamental to CD analysts being the main target of the analysis process. Said another way, CD analysts aim at revealing the ideology that sets behind discourse and social practices. Although this term has not, like many other ones, received an agreed upon definition, we can still refer to van Dijk's (1998) understanding to the term. According to this latter, ideology is defined as a set of basic beliefs that are shared among social group members and stand in opposition with those of outgroup members. Apparently, there should be two fulfilled conditions in order to refer to an ideological meaning: Social group and opposition.

3.1 Social Group

Social actors are assembled within different discourses which “integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, social identities, as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes” (Gee, 1990, p. 142). These groupings are ideologically-based i.e., based on a set of socially-shared explanatory beliefs. That is, an ideology is never individual; it is social. This takes place as ideologies are based on some given social categories including: gender, occupation, profession, generation, educational level, political adherence, financial status, etc. (van Dijk, 1998) that group people into different social groups based on some given shared social profile.

Yet, although ideologies are shared among ingroup members, they have different individual representations (van Dijk, 1998). That is, while core

concepts of a given ideology are maintained, practicing a given ideology in real-life contexts may differ due to contextual and individual features (Elbah, 2019). For instance and by reference to religious ideologies, theists do share the basic beliefs that God exists and believers should carry out some worship practices in order to show faith and commitment. Yet, these ingroup members show a varying degree of commitment while practicing these religious rituals.

3.2 Opposition

In relation to opposition, it is claimed that ideologies exist in opposition. That is, we cannot refer to some basic beliefs as ideological beliefs unless there exists another social group that opposes them. ‘Men versus women’, ‘dominant versus dominated’, ‘old generation versus young generation’, ‘Democrats versus Republicans’, etc., are examples of opposing ideologies. Also, not all opposed discourses or ideologies exist within a one to one association. For instance, in professional discourses a given professional discourse can stand in opposition not only to one professional discourse; but to all other professional discourses. In short, belonging to a given social group implies being opposed to an ‘other’ which can be specific or general, single or multiple, stated or implied (van Dijk, 1998).

4. Conflict

The term opposition leads us to another non-less important term which is ‘conflict’. In this context, van Dijk (1998) states that although opposition is a prerequisite component of ideologies (and hence of Discourses), it does not always lead to conflict or struggle between opposed Discourses. To clarify, we highly expect conflict to rise between men and women, Democrats and Republicans, Muslims and Non-Muslims, but not between lawyers and teachers.

Discussion Questions

- Why are discourse analysts not interested in invented or generated data?
- Which is more powerful and influential: linguistic or non-linguistic behavior? Explain.
- Which are more important for access to power: authoritative or allocative social resources? Explain.
- Since ideology is dynamic, what are the elements that control, and would accelerate, shifting from an ideology to an opposing one?
- Can adherence to certain ideological beliefs take place unconsciously? Explain.
- How does social group membership influence the production and reception of discourse?
- In what ways do opposing ideologies shape the content and structure of ingroup discourse?
- How do discursive strategies maintain hegemony in a social context?
- What role does silence play as a discursive resource in expressing power or resistance?
- How can discourse reflect both pre-existing social realities and emerging ones simultaneously? Give examples.
- How do larger social structures, such as institutions or media organizations, influence social practices?
- What are the challenges facing discourse analysts, given that social contexts are highly dynamic or unstable?
- How can CDA capture the interaction between verbal and non-verbal elements of communication effectively?
- What methods can be used to critically analyze the ideological effects of multimodal discourse?

- In what ways do personal experiences and cognition influence the interpretation of ideological meanings in discourse?

Formative Test 2

Task 1

Give a brief definition to the following terms using your own words.

- **Critical Linguistics**
- **Epistemic Relativism**
- **Power**
- **Mediation**
- **Dynamicity**

Task 2

Within a post-modernist conceptualization to discourse, there has been a shift from a social account to language to a sociological one. Explain briefly.

Task 3

What is the difference between opposition and conflict? Illustrate.

Task 4

For Fairclough, “critical is making visible the interconnectedness of things” (2013, p. 39). Explain.

Task 5

What are the different authoritative social resources?

Task 6

What are the SFL main assumptions?

Task 7

Are CD analysts ideologically biased? How?

Task 8

Do you agree with Gee’s claim that “all discourse analysis is critical discourse analysis” (2014, p. 10). Explain.

Task 9

Arrange the following words in the table below:

Feminism, misogyny, humanity, culture, dance, food, music, religion, racism, solidarity.

Ideological Meaning	Non-ideological meaning
...	...
...	...

Task 10

Say whether the following statements are true or false. Correct, if any, the false ones.

- 1- Ideological meaning is always implicit.
- 2- One individual cannot have an ideology.
- 3- Ideologies are represented differently.

Task 11

Complete the following statement.

To analyse data critically, the analyst shoulddata.

Task 12

Discourse is both *constitutive* and *constituted*. Explain.

Task 13

Racism is socially constructed in linguistic and non-linguistic behaviors. Explain and illustrate briefly.

Task 14

Read the following text then answer the questions below.

Gloria Steinem states that:

“Women’s issues” are no longer in a silo but are understood as fundamental to everything. For instance, the single biggest determinant of whether a country is violent, or will use military violence against another country, is not poverty, natural resources, religion or even degree of democracy; it is violence against women. And since racial separation can’t be perpetuated in the long run without controlling reproduction—and thus women’s bodies—racism and sexism are intertwined and can only be uprooted together.

A belief in equality, without division by sex or race, is now held by a huge majority in public–opinion polls. But a stubborn minority of Americans feel deprived of the unearned privilege of that old hierarchy and are in revolt. The time of greatest danger comes after a victory, and that’s where we are now.

Many of the predictions of my 50-year-old essay about the future hold up, but there are a few lessons I've learned since then (including to negotiate a writing fee beforehand, since my agent later told me I was paid less than male contributors).

I won't be around when these words are read 50 years from now, but I have faith in you who will be.

Source: <https://time.com/5795657/gloria-steinem-womens-liberation-progress/>

1- What is the ideology represented in this text?

.....

2- Explain how this ideology is being represented using van Dijk's ideological square. You can fill in the table below.

The move	Examples from the text
Express/emphasize information that is positive about Us
Express/emphasize information that is negative about Them.

Suppress/de-emphasize information that is positive about Them
Suppress/de-emphasize information that is negative about Us

Keys

Task 1

- **Critical Linguistics:** an approach to the study of language that emphasizes the close relationship between linguistic structures and social ones.
- **Epistemic Relativism:** all discourses are socially constructed relative to the social positions people are in.
- **Power:** “means having preferential access to and control over scarce social resources” (van Dijk, 2005, p. 2).
- **Mediation:** “involves the movement of meaning from one text to another, from one discourse to another, from one event to another... the constant transformation of meanings, both large scale and small, significant and insignificant” (Silverstone as cited in Fairclough, 2013, pp. 72-73).
- **Dynamicity:** refers to the claim that reality is not rigid or static. It is dynamic i.e., constructed on the spot

Task 2

Within a social account to language, language and society are two independent rigid entities. Within a sociological account to language, language and society exist within a dynamic fusion.

Task 3

Opposition refers to the existence of mismatch between Self and Other. It does not necessarily lead to conflict. That is, conflict *may or may not* raise due to opposition.

Task 4

Linguistic and non-linguistic behaviors exist within a dynamic fusion that signals ideological and non-ideological meanings, and has a dialectical relationship with the social structure that describes and explains it. It is the task of CD analysts to uncover this dialectical relationship.

Task 5

Authoritative social resources refer to: techniques, technologies, organizational position, science, and expert knowledge.

Task 6

SFL main assumptions are:

- Language is an integral part of social process.
- Speakers, whether consciously or not, make systematic choices regarding vocabulary and grammar.
- Language shapes and is shaped by context.

Task 7

Yes, CD analysts are ideologically biased as they stand on their own social positioning to claim for an emancipatory goal of CDA.

Task 8

Supporting and opposing views including for instance:

- If we refer to levels of analysis being descriptive (DA) or explanatory (CDA), I do not really agree with Gee's claim.

- If we refer to the fact that meaning-making process whether directly or not, intentionally or not, is always contextualized within broader social systems, I agree with him.

Task 9

Ideological Meaning	Non-ideological meaning
<p>Feminism</p> <p>Misogyny</p> <p>Dance</p> <p>Food (Traditional plate)</p> <p>Music</p> <p>Religion</p> <p>Racism</p>	<p>Humanity</p> <p>Culture (van Dijk's use of the word)</p> <p>Dance</p> <p>Food (Vegans for instance)</p> <p>Music</p> <p>Solidarity</p>

N.B., Terms like dance, food, and music confirms the claim that meaning should be analyzed within its context of use.

Task 10

1. Ideological meaning is always implicit. **False**

Ideological meaning can be explicit or implicit.

2. One individual cannot have an ideology. **True**

3. Ideologies are represented differently. **True**

Task 11

To analyse data critically, the analyst should **have distance from** the data.

Task 12

Discourse is constitutive i.e., it *shapes* the context.

Discourse is constituted i.e., it *is shaped by* the context.

Task 13

Racism is signaled in words, gestures, physical distance, facial expressions, etc.

Task 14

1. The ideology represented in this text is *feminism*.
2. Van Dijk's ideological square.

The move	Examples from the text
Express/emphasize information that is positive about Us	““Women’s issues” are no longer in a silo but are understood as fundamental to everything”
Express/emphasize information that is negative about Them.	“division by sex or race” “[women] paid less than male contributors”
Suppress/de-emphasize information that is positive about Them	“a huge majority in public–opinion polls” implies that women are expressing their views freely.

Suppress/de-emphasize information that is negative about Us	“in revolt” implies rebellion, violence, and standing against the law.
---	--

IV- Three Main Approaches to Critical Discourse Analysis

By emphasizing the interplay between language, power, and society, CDA goes beyond mere textual analysis to interrogate how discursive practices shape and are shaped by social systems, ideologies, and institutions. CDA is not a single method, but rather an approach which includes different perceptions and methods meant to relate discourse to social context (Fairclough, 1995; Wang, 2006). This distinctive feature is important because it emphasizes that CDA is not a rigid set of procedures or a standardized methodology; rather, it is a flexible, multidisciplinary framework that allows researchers to adjust tools and techniques according to particular discourses, social phenomena, or context.

While CDA encompasses many methods, three approaches have proved to be the central ones: Norman Fairclough's Dialectical-Relational Approach, Ruth Wodak's Discourse Historical Approach (DHA), and Teun van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Approach (Djonov & Zhao, 2014; Renkema, 2009). These approaches, while sharing the foundational assumptions of CDA such as the inseparability of discourse and society, the centrality of power relations in discourse, and the role of ideology, differ in focus, analytical precedence, and methodological strategies. Each provides a unique paradigm through which discourse can be studied, allowing researchers to address diverse facets of the intricate relationship between discourse and social reality.

For Fairclough, for instance, analyzing discourse implies tackling three interrelated levels or dimensions: text, discursive practice, and social practice (see Fairclough, 2013). These dimensions enable analysts to examine the micro-level structures of language, the processes by which texts are produced and received, and the broader social and institutional contexts in which discourse takes place. For Wodak, the focus is on integrating all relevant contextual elements related to a given stretch of discourse, including linguistic, historical,

cultural, political, and social factors that shape meaning-making process (Reisigl & Wodak, 2015). This historical and contextual emphasis allows DHA to trace the progression of discourses over time and reveal patterns of continuity and variation in power control and social identity construction.

As for van Dijk, analyzing discourse is no longer a question of simply relating discourse to society, as such a relation often neglects the crucial role of cognition (1998). Van Dijk emphasizes that individuals' mental representations, schemas, and knowledge structures mediate the interaction between discourses and social structures. In other words, social practices are filtered through the cognitive processes which shape how they are produced, reproduced, interpreted, or challenged. In a word, cognition links the social to the individual enabling a deeper understanding of how ideologies, power relations, and social patterns are embedded, negotiated, and contested within social and institutional practices.

1. Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Approach (SCA)

One major characteristic of van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach to analyzing discourse is its focus on a tripartite structure: discourse, society, and cognition. According to him, cognition plays the role of an interface between discourse structures and social structures (van Dijk, 1997). This interface highlights that while social structures and institutions influence discourse, they do so indirectly through the cognitive frameworks, beliefs, and mental models.

By incorporating cognition into the analytical framework, van Dijk avoids the drawbacks of reductionist or deterministic approaches that view the relationship between discourse and society as one-way relationship. Instead, he proposes a more flexible, interactive model in which mental representations both shape and are shaped by social realities.

Within his proposed model of analysis, van Dijk conceptualizes these categories as forming a single, socially-constructed framework that he represents as a triangle (see Figure 1). At each vertex of this triangle, researchers can examine different dimensions of social reality. For instance, analysing discourse allows for the analysis of textual, conversational, and narrative structures, along with rhetorical strategies. The analysis of society focuses on macro-level social structures, such as cultures, institutions, and power relations. Finally, examining cognition directs attention to mental representations such as schemas, beliefs, attitudes, etc. By analyzing all three elements simultaneously, the SCA provides a holistic framework for understanding the complex dialectical interaction between discourse, society, and mind.

To operationalize this approach, van Dijk (2000) proposes a list of analytical categories, which, while not exhaustive, offers a practical starting point for critical analysis (for an example, see Elbah, 2024). These categories include, among others, lexical choices, interactional models, syntactical structures, rhetorical strategies that are directed towards serving a given ideological positioning. SCA is particularly suited to the study of media discourse, ethnic discourse, political speeches, and institutional propaganda.

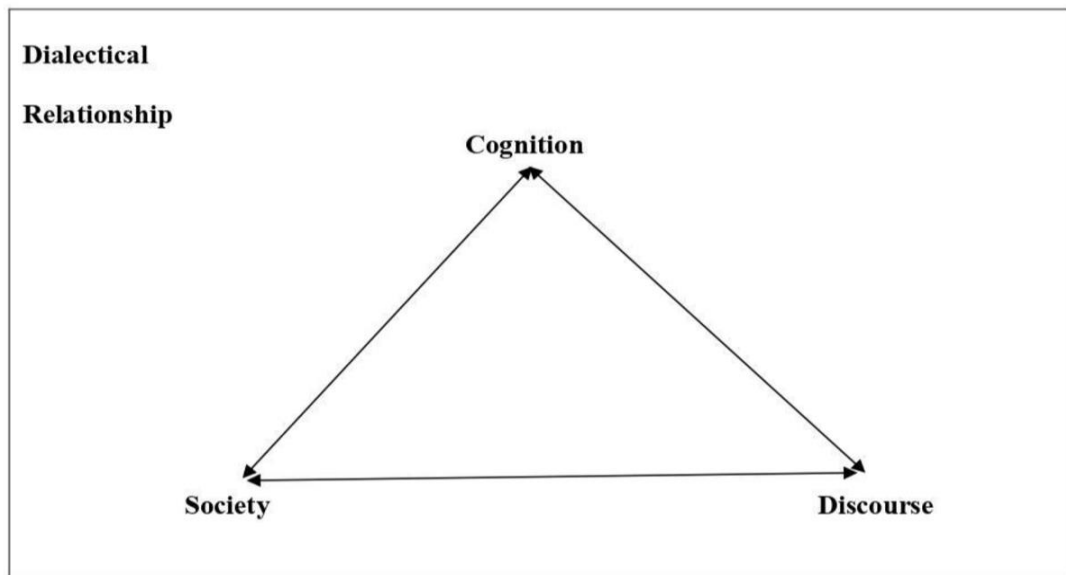


Figure 1: Discourse, Society, and Cognition: A Tripartite Context (Based on van Dijk, 1998)

Homework Assignment

Draw on Elbah (2024) to analyse *Hidden Figures* 2016 using van Dijk's ideological categories.

2. Dialectical-Relational Approach (DRA)

The Dialectical-Relational Approach (DRA) developed by Norman Fairclough is an approach to CDA that considers the dialectical relationship within and among social practices, including discourse. This perspective emphasizes that discourse (and, by consequence, all social practices) both shapes and is shaped by social structures, power relations, and institutional models. In this sense, CDA is not restricted only to the linguistic sign but extends to all semiotic systems as part of broader social processes.

By including semiotic elements such as images, visual signs, gestures, body language, facial expressions and other forms of non-verbal communication, Fairclough highlights that meaning is not limited to words alone but is produced and interpreted through several modes of social

interaction. This broader conceptualization allows analysts to investigate how different semiotic resources interconnect to produce, reinforce, or challenge social norms, hierarchies, and ideologies. Fairclough (2001, p. 121) explains that:

CDA is in my view as much theory as method or rather, a theoretical perspective on language and more generally semiosis (including ‘visual language’, ‘body language’, and so on) as one element or ‘moment’ of the material social process ... which gives rise to ways of analysing language or semiosis within broader analyses of the social process.

This quote underlines the dual role of DRA as both a theoretical and methodological framework. It is not simply a tool for describing linguistic elements but a perspective that situates all semiotic systems within broader social and institutional systems. That is, texts, conversations, and all communicative practices cannot be fully understood in isolation; instead, they should be analyzed as part of a bi-influential dynamic interaction between society and social practices. This dialectical relationship enables researchers to trace how power and social relations are expressed, normalized, or contested through discursive practices across varied semiotic means.

In relation to other social theories and methodologies, Fairclough (2001) claims that CDA is not only an interdisciplinary approach but a transdisciplinary one as well, as “co-engagements on particular aspects of the social process may give rise to developments of theory and method which shift the boundaries between different theories and methods” (pp. 121-122). This standpoint positions DRA as both integrative and adaptive, capable of drawing from and contributing to several fields, including linguistics, sociology, politics, media studies, and anthropology. It highlights the inherently collaborative nature of CDA, in which theoretical insights and methodological tools from various

disciplines are invested to transform and extend the theoretical and practical boundaries of each discipline.

3. Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) is another influential approach within CDA that focuses on the systematic analysis of the broad context of social practices and its dialectical relationship to the meaning-making process. Unlike approaches that primarily examine linguistic features, DHA emphasizes the necessity of examining social practices in their social, cultural, and historical contexts. One of the key reasons why this approach is widely credited is that it draws on a variety of linguistic, sociological, theoretical, and methodological perspectives to handle context both synchronically and diachronically (Wodak & Ludwig, 1999).

In other words, DHA considers both the immediate context in which a given social practice occurs and the historical lines that have shaped its evolution, thereby allowing for a more nuanced understanding of how meaning develops over time.

The DHA attempts to integrate a large quantity of available knowledge about the historical sources and the background of the social and political fields in which discursive “events” are embedded. Further, it analyzes the historical dimension of discursive actions by exploring the ways in which particular genres of discourse are subject to diachronic change. Lastly, and most importantly, this is not only viewed as information. At this point we integrate social theories to be able to explain the so-called context. (Wodak, 2001, p. 65)

Research Questions

- How does CDA relate discourse to social context differently from discourse analysis?

- In what ways do language, power, and ideology interact in shaping social practices according to CDA?
- How does van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Approach (SCA) explain the mediating role of cognition between discourse and social structures?
- How do mental representations, schemas, and knowledge structures influence the production and interpretation of discourse?
- How can van Dijk's analytical categories be applied to uncover ideological meanings? Give examples.
- How does Fairclough's Dialectical-Relational Approach (DRA) conceptualize the dialectical relationship between social practices and social structure?
- In what ways can semiotic resources beyond language (visuals, gestures, and body language) be integrated into discourse analysis within DRA?
- How does the combination of text, discursive practice, and social practice enable Fairclough's approach to analyze power relations and ideology?
- How does Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) use historical, social, and cultural context to explain the evolution of discourse?
- How do diachronic shifts in discourse reveal changes in ideology, power relations, and social norms? Give examples.
- How can DHA integrate social theory to explain the role of discourse in reproducing or contesting social structures?
- What are the limitations of SCA, DRA, and DHA in analyzing discourse, power, and ideology?
- What methodological challenges arise in connecting micro-level textual analysis with macro-level social structures in CDA research?

- How can CDA researchers maintain transparency and rigor while explicitly acknowledging their ideological standing?
- How does the interplay of discourse, cognition, and society contribute to both reproducing and challenging social inequalities?

V- Criticism to CDA

Just like any other methodological framework, CDA is not without its opponents. That is, CDA has been criticized on different grounds, reflecting both theoretical and practical concerns from different scholars across linguistics, sociology, and related fields. These criticisms highlight continuing debates about the reliability, validity, and the scope of critical discourse analysis as a theoretical and analytical approach. While CDA has become a powerful tool for analyzing ideology, power relations, and social inequalities, its critics argue that methodological and interpretive challenges continue to exist. These include:

1. Interpretation vs. Description

Widdowson (as cited in van Leeuwen, 2009) claims that while the task of discourse analysis is to describe formal patterns above the sentence level, CD analysts seem to engage primarily in textual interpretation instead of systematically describing language. This critique emphasizes the tension between descriptive linguistics, which focuses on visible structures and patterns, and CDA, which often interprets meaning in relation to socio-political context and ideology. Critics argue that by prioritizing interpretation over formal description, CDA risks subjectivity, making its findings harder to replicate, verify, or generalize.

This tension arises because CDA's focus on power relations and ideology necessarily requires interpreting meaning in relation to social context, historical conditions, and social actors. While descriptive linguistics is concerned with observable features such as vocabulary choice and frequency, grammar, and syntactical rules, CDA situates these features within broader social, political, and cultural frameworks. This makes replication and verification challenging because different analysts may interpret the same text differently depending on

their theoretical stance and their reading of the socio-cultural background of a given social practice.

2. Ideology Definition

Although the term ideology is fundamental to CDA, it has not received an agreed-upon definition among CD analysts. This lack of consensus can lead to varied views regarding how researchers define ideology and identify ideological traces in discourse and social practices, sometimes resulting in uncertainty or varying analytical outcomes. Different CDA scholars may emphasize with varying degrees political, social, cultural, or cognitive dimensions of ideology, hindering cross-study comparison and replication.

For example, while van Dijk emphasizes the cognitive dimensions of ideology, Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach focuses more on the historical and contextual factors that shape this latter. This variation makes it difficult to establish a standardized analytical framework or carry out triangulation studies. Some critics also argue that CDA's flexibility, while a strength, can lead to inconsistent application or pre-defined interpretation of ideological constructs, allowing analysts to impose their own interpretations onto texts, which may or may not be supported by the data.

3. Fragmentary and Non-Representative Evidence

According to Fowler (1996, p. 8), CDA has a "fragmentary [and] exemplificatory" nature of the evidence. That is, CD analysts do not always explore data completely and representatively, often relying on selected samples or illustrative texts rather than comprehensive corpora. While such examples can explain important social processes, critics argue that selective data may introduce bias or limit the generalizability of findings.

This limitation is particularly significant in studies of media discourse, political speeches, or institutional texts, where the choice of texts may involuntarily reinforce the analyst's presuppositions. Critics argue that relying on a restricted number of texts, without systematic sampling, may overstress certain discursive features while ignoring opposing cases. Consequently, findings may appear convincing but may not be fully representative of the broader social context. To address this, some CDA scholars advocate for combining qualitative interpretive approaches with quantitative methods to reinforce evidence and provide validity.

4. Subjectivity and Analyst Bias

Schegloff (1997) and Widdowson (2004) claim that CDA lacks academic rigor primarily because data analysis can be influenced by the analyst's personal preconceptions. By foregrounding issues of ideology, power, and social injustice, CDA deliberately engages with normative assumptions which may create a risk of subjectivity. Critics warn that without careful methodological procedures, analytical interpretations might reflect the researcher's viewpoint more than the discourse itself.

Stubbs (1997) adds that CDA depends on circular reasoning, defined as a logical fallacy in which the researcher begins with what he or she is trying to prove. For instance, if CD analysts infer ideological beliefs directly from language use without independent evidence to validate those beliefs, their conclusions may be tautological. In other words, their theory is circular. Critics argue that such circular reasoning can weaken the credibility of claims and makes CDA susceptible to accusations of over-interpretation and tendency to confirm assumptions.

5. Lack of Generalizability and Norm Comparison

According to Stubbs (1997), the failure to generalize the results of CDA is due, in part, to the fact that linguistic features are rarely compared with established norms in the language. In other words, while CDA often focuses in depth on specific discourses and situates them within their social and historical contexts; it rarely compares the linguistic patterns it identifies to broader, language-wide norms. As a result, although CDA provides rich social contextualization, it can lack a reference to broader linguistic norms; that is, it may not establish whether specific word choices, syntactic patterns, or rhetorical devices are really unusual or noteworthy within the language as a whole.

This critique reflects a broader tension between context-specific interpretive analysis and the desire for generalizable knowledge about language. CDA prioritizes understanding discourse in its specific social, political, and historical context, often at the expense of producing generalizable findings. While this specificity allows for rich, contextually grounded understandings, it also limits CDA's ability to claim that its findings apply beyond particular discourses. Critics argue that integrating systematic comparisons, larger and linguistic corpora, and longitudinal or cross-cultural analyses would enhance both rigor and generalizability.

Discussion Questions

- ✓ Going too far in considering the historical context of a given stretch of discourse, how can a DHA analyst know where to stop?
- ✓ CD analysts are criticized for doing textual interpretation instead of describing language. Explain.
- ✓ How do critical discourse analysts distinguish between description and interpretation in their analyses?

- ✓ To what extent does CDA provide systematic and representative evidence rather than fragmentary examples?
- ✓ How can CDA enhance its methodological rigor to reduce analyst bias and personal presumptions?
- ✓ How is the concept of ideology operationalized to address the core principles of CDA, given the lack of a universally agreed-upon definition?
- ✓ How do critical discourse analysts acknowledge and manage their own ideological positions in their research?
- ✓ How can CDA include comparisons with broader linguistic norms to improve the generalizability of its findings? Give examples.
- ✓ In what ways can CDA address the risk of circular reasoning when inferring social beliefs from language use?
- ✓ How do CDA's acknowledged biases influence both the interpretation of data and its social impact?

General Conclusion

CDA has made significant contributions to understanding how social structures, power relations, and ideologies shape and are shaped by discourse and social practices. By foregrounding the ways in which discourse can serve the interests of a particular social group while marginalizing others, CDA has provided critical insights into the subtle and complex processes of inequality, marginalization, inclusion, and exclusion that are embedded in everyday social practices; processes that previous linguistic approaches, with their focus on formal structures and sentence-level analysis, often fail to discern or question.

In relation to criticism to CDA, concerns about ideological bias are acknowledged and addressed explicitly within its methodology. Analysts do not claim neutrality; instead, they are asked to state their ideological position transparently as part of their analytical process (van Leeuwen, 2009). This explicit acknowledgment of bias is considered a methodological strength rather than a weakness because it allows readers to critically evaluate the interpretive position of the analyst and its potential influence on the analyzed data.

In this regard, van Leeuwen (2009, p. 169) emphasizes that “their work as scholars entails greater social responsibilities than providing facts for others to interpret and use.” CDA recognizes that meaning-making process is inherently political and socially consequential; shaping and reflecting power relations and struggle over power in everyday social practices. Van Dijk (2001, p. 96) captures this perspective concisely, stating that “CDA is biased – and proud of it,” highlighting that critical engagement with social structures, power relations, and ideological hierarchies necessarily involves evaluative criteria and moral engagement.

Ultimately, while CDA faces valid critiques regarding methodological rigor, subjectivity, and representativeness, these criticisms coexist with its transformative potential: to reveal how discourse and social practices operate within biased social systems, to challenge normalized norms, and to provide insights that can advise scholarship and boost community engagement. By openly acknowledging the role of ideology and power in shaping the production and reception of discourse and social practices, CDA continues to offer a distinct and valuable paradigm for examining the complex interplay between discourse, society, and cognition.

First Semester Test

Task One: Are the following statements true or false? (Write true or false next to each statement). (5 points)

- a- SFL accounts for the linguistic structure of language.
- b- It was only with the advent of CDA that the dialectical relation between form and function was considered.
- c- CDA considers the relationship between discursive practices and socio-cultural context to be deterministic.
- d- The aim of CDA analysts is to impose their own ideology of which they are proud.
- e- Ideologies are socially-shared explanatory beliefs.

Task Two: Complete the following. (3 pts)

1. andare two opposing ideologies. They struggle for and

2. CL views discourse as performing 3 Meta-functions: , , and These functions correspond to

van Dijk's triangle:,
....., and
respectively.

Task Three: (2 points)

1. SFL has sought to establish a linguistic theory “based on some theory of social structure and social change” (Halliday as cited in Meurer, 2004, p. 86).

Structure refers to

Change refers to

2. Social actors enact constantly changing social positionings.

enact refers to

positioning refers to

First Semester Exam

- Analyse the following text using van Dijk's Ideological Categories (use 8 categories):

I would like to start by saying that there are bound to be more attacks in the United States like the ones that we have seen already, unfortunately, and this is where we have to be super vigilant. I just want to throw out one little statistic, and this comes from the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) from the State Department. The START Report, which they initially published in 2012. The progression and the growth of terrorism is stark, and did we ever get to the bottom of the differences in the numbers from 2014? OK. Which should I use? OK, those are even worse. So from 2012, the number of attacks reported by the State Department in this report was 6,771. In 2014, the number of attacks had grown to 16,800 worldwide. That is 2.5 times the number of attacks just 2 years earlier. In terms of deaths, in 2012 there were 11,000 individuals killed in terrorist attacks. In 2014, there were 43,500. That is almost a fourfold increase in terrorist attacks. So the fact of the matter is, the risk, the threat of Islamic terror, from my standpoint, it is real. It is growing, and statistics prove it. And there is no way that we are going to be able to adequately address this unless we fully understand what motivates Islamic terrorists. This hearing is specifically about the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)--but I think that we can talk about Islamic terrorists, in general, and explore that--and what is their ultimate goal. One of the most important jobs of our government--in fact, State and Federal and local as well--is to make sure that our people are safe. There are hundreds of clerics all over the world, learned scholars, who have said, ``Well, this is not Islam"--that is not quite true. It is based on Islam. But, ``This is not the Islam that we believe in." They are boring.

We need people who can communicate with these kids who find the idea of ISIS appealing. I also believe that we have to protect the homeland in more effective ways, including better screening, and not just for refugees. That is, of course, a very small part of the people who come here. The visa programs, obviously we had this issue arise in San Bernardino, where a spousal visa was used to gain entry for one of the terrorists, and we did not do the proper vetting, including looking at her social media, which would have been the obvious thing to do. And, of course, people coming across our borders illegally, so protecting the homeland is critical.

Adapted from: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-114shrg22714/html/CHRG-114shrg22714.htm>

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Categories of Ideological Analysis (alphabetical)

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ACTOR DESCRIPTION• AUTHORITY• BURDEN• CATEGORIZATION• COMPARISON• CONSENSUS• COUNTERFACTUALS• DISCLAIMERS• DISTANCING• DRAMATIZATION• EMPATHY• EUPHEMISM• EVIDENTIALITY• EXAMPLE/ILLUSTRATION• EXPLANATION• FALLACIES• GENERALIZATION• HISTORY AS LESSON• HUMANITARIANISM• HYPERBOLE• IMPLICATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• INTERACTION AND CONTEXT• IRONY• LEGALITY• LEXICALIZATION• METAPHOR• NATIONAL SELF-GLORIFICATION• NEGATIVE OTHER-PRESENTATION• NORM EXPRESSION• NUMBER GAME• OPENESS, HONESTY• POLARIZATION, US-THEM CATEGORIZATION• POSITIVE SELF-PRESENTATION• POPULISM• PRESUPPOSITION• PSEUDO-IGNORANCE• REASONABLENESS• REPETITION• SITUATION DESCRIPTION• VAGUENESS
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- ILLEGALITY

- VICTIMIZATION

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