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CRITICAL DISCOURSE STUDIES: HISTORY, AGENDA, THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

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Keywords

ideology, power, discourse, critique, methodology, levels of theory, approaches to critical discourse studies

CDS – What is it all about?

The manifold roots of critical discourse studies lie in rhetoric, text linguistics, anthropology, philosophy, social psychology, cognitive science, literary studies and sociolinguistics, as well as in applied linguistics and pragmatics. Teun van Dijk (2008) provides a broad overview of the field of discourse studies and identifies the following developments: between the mid-1960s and the early 1970s, new, closely related disciplines emerged in the humanities and the social sciences. Despite their different disciplinary backgrounds and a great diversity of methods and objects of investigation, some parts of the new fields/paradigms/linguistic subdisciplines of *semiotics*, *pragmatics*, *psycho- and sociolinguistics*, *ethnography of speaking*, *conversation analysis* and *discourse studies* all dealt and continue to deal with discourse and have at least seven dimensions in common (see also Angermüller et al. 2014):

- An interest in the properties of ‘*naturally occurring*’ language use by real language users (instead of a study of abstract language systems and invented examples).
- A focus on *larger units than isolated words and sentences*, and hence, new basic units of analysis: texts, discourses, conversations, speech acts, or communicative events.
- The extension of linguistics *beyond sentence grammar* towards a study of action and interaction.
- The extension to *non-verbal (semiotic, multimodal, visual) aspects* of interaction and communication: gestures, images, film, the internet and multimedia.
- A focus on dynamic (socio)-cognitive or interactional moves and strategies.
- The study of the functions of (social, cultural, situative and cognitive) *contexts of language use*.
- Analysis of a vast number of *phenomena of text grammar and language use*: coherence, anaphora, topics, macrostructures, speech acts, interactions, turn-taking, signs, politeness, argumentation, rhetoric, mental models and many other aspects of text and discourse.

The significant difference between discourse studies and critical discourse studies lies in the *constitutive problem-oriented, interdisciplinary approach* of the latter, apart from endorsing all of the above points. *CDS is therefore not interested in investigating a linguistic unit per se but in analysing, understanding and explaining social phenomena that are necessarily complex and thus require a multidisciplinary and multi-methodical approach* (Wodak 2012c; van Dijk 2013). The objects under investigation do not have to be related to negative or exceptionally ‘serious’

social or political experiences or events: this is a frequent misunderstanding of the aims and goals of CDS and of the term ‘critical’ which, of course, does not mean ‘negative’ as in common sense usage (see below; Chilton et al. 2010). Any social phenomenon lends itself to critical investigation, to be challenged and not taken for granted. We will return to this important point and other common misunderstandings of CDS below. To quote Teun van Dijk (2013) in this respect:

Contrary to popular belief and unfortunate claims of many papers submitted to discourse journals, CDA is *not a method of critical discourse analysis*. This may sound paradoxical, but I am afraid it isn’t. Think about it. Indeed, what would be the systematic, explicit, detailed, replicable procedure for doing ‘critical’ analysis? There is no such method. Being critical, first of all, is a state of mind, an attitude, a way of dissenting, and many more things, *but not an explicit method for the description of the structures or strategies of text and talk*. So, in that sense, people who want to practice CDA may be supposed to do so from a perspective of opposition, for instance against power abuse through discourse. [...]. Methodologically, *CDA is as diverse as DA in general*, or indeed other directions in linguistics, psychology or the social sciences. Thus, CDA studies may do so in terms of grammatical (phonological, morphological, syntactic), semantic, pragmatic, interactional rhetorical, stylistic, narrative or genre analyses, among others, on the one hand, and through experiments, ethnography, interviewing, life stories, focus groups, participant observation, and so on, on the other hand. *A good method is a method that is able to give a satisfactory (reliable, relevant, etc.) answer to the questions of a research project*. It depends on one’s aims, expertise, time and goals, and the kind of data that can or must be generated – that is, on the *context* of a research project. [...] So, there is not ‘a’ or ‘one’ method of CDA, but many. Hence, I recommend to use the term *Critical Discourse Studies* for the theories, methods, analyses, applications and other practices of critical discourse analysts, and to forget about the confusing term ‘CDA’. *So, please, no more ‘I am going to apply CDA’ because it does not make sense*. Do critical discourse analysis by formulating critical goals, and then explain by what *specific* explicit methods you want to realize it. (emphasis added)

In this volume, we take Van Dijk’s proposal very seriously: we would like to emphasize that each of the approaches introduced in this book cannot be isolated from specific complex social issues under investigation, from research questions and research interests. Below, we elaborate what the concept of ‘critique’ implies for the social sciences, and thus also for critical discourse studies.

The notions of *text* and *discourse* have to be discussed thoroughly in this context; they have been subject to a hugely proliferating number of usages in the social sciences. Almost no paper or article is to be found that does not revisit these notions, quoting Michel Foucault, Jürgen Habermas, Chantal Mouffe, Ernesto Laclau, Niklas Luhmann, or many others. Thus, *discourse* means anything from a historical monument, a *lieu de mémoire*, a policy, a political strategy, narratives in a restricted or broad sense of the term, text, talk, a speech, topic-related conversations, to language *per se*. We find notions such as racist discourse, gendered discourse, discourses on un/employment, media discourse, populist discourse,

discourses of the past, and many more – thus stretching the meaning of *discourse* from a genre to a register or style, from a building to a political programme. This causes and must cause confusion – which leads to much criticism and more misunderstandings (see Flowerdew 2014; Hart and Cap 2014; Richardson et al. 2013; Wodak 2012a). This is why the contributors to this volume were asked to define their use of the term as integrated in their specific approach.

A brief history of ‘the Group’

CDS as a network of scholars emerged in the early 1990s, following a small symposium in Amsterdam, in January 1991. Through the support of the University of Amsterdam, Teun van Dijk, Norman Fairclough, Gunther Kress, Theo van Leeuwen and Ruth Wodak spent two days together, and had the opportunity to discuss theories and methods of discourse analysis, specifically critical discourse analysis (CDA) (which was the term used in the 1990s and 2000s). The meeting made it possible to confront the very distinct and different approaches and discuss these with each other, all of which have, of course, changed significantly since 1991 but remain important, in many respects. In this process of group formation, differences and sameness were laid out: differences with regard to other theories and methodologies in discourse analysis (Renkema 2004; Titscher et al. 2000; Wetherell et al. 2001; Wodak and Krzyżanowski 2008) and sameness in a more programmatic way, both of which frame the range of theoretical approaches (Wodak 2012a). In the meantime, some of the scholars previously aligned with CDS have chosen other theoretical frameworks and have distanced themselves from CDS (such as Gunther Kress and Ron Scollon [who unfortunately died in 2008]); on the other hand, new approaches have been created which frequently find innovative ways of integrating the more traditional theories or of elaborating them (see below).

In general, CDS as a school or paradigm is characterized by a number of principles: for example, all approaches are problem-oriented, and thus necessarily interdisciplinary and eclectic. Moreover, CDS approaches are characterized by the common interests in deconstructing ideologies and power through the systematic and reproducible investigation of semiotic data (written, spoken or visual). CDS researchers also attempt to make their own positionings and interests explicit while retaining their respective scientific methodologies and remaining self-reflective of their own research process.

The start of the CDS network was marked by the launch of van Dijk’s journal *Discourse & Society* (1990) as well as by several books that coincidentally or because of a *Zeitgeist* were published simultaneously and were led by similar research goals.¹ The Amsterdam meeting determined an institutional start, an attempt both to constitute an exchange programme (ERASMUS for three years)² as well as joint projects and collaborations between scholars of different countries. A special issue of *Discourse & Society* (1993), which presented the above

mentioned approaches, was the first visible and material outcome. Since then new journals have been launched, multiple overviews have been written, handbooks and readers commissioned and nowadays critical discourse studies is an established paradigm in linguistics; currently, we encounter *Critical Discourse Studies*, *The Journal of Language and Politics*, *Discourse & Communication*, *Discourse & Society* and *Visual Communication*, among many other journals; several e-journals also publish critical research, such as *CADAAD*. Book series attract much critically oriented research (such as *Discourse Approaches to Politics, Culture and Society*), regular CDS meetings and conferences take place and collaborative interdisciplinary projects are under way. In sum, CDS has become an established discipline, institutionalized across the globe in many departments and curricula.

The common ground: discourse, critique, power and ideology

When deconstructing the label of this research programme, we necessarily have to first define what CDS means when it employs the terms ‘critical’ and ‘discourse’. It is important to stress that CDS has never been and has never attempted to be or to provide one single or specific theory. Neither is one specific methodology characteristic of research in CDS. Quite the contrary, studies in CDS are multifarious, derived from quite different theoretical backgrounds, oriented towards different data and methodologies. Researchers in CDS also rely on a variety of grammatical approaches. The definitions of the terms ‘discourse’, ‘critical’, ‘ideology’, ‘power’ and so on are therefore manifold. Thus, any criticism of CDS should always specify which research or researcher they relate to. Hence, we suggest using the notion of a ‘school’ for CDS, or of a programme, which many researchers find useful and to which they can relate. This programme or set of principles has, of course, changed over the years (see Fairclough and Wodak 1997; Wodak 1996, 2012a).

Such a heterogeneous school might be confusing for some; on the other hand, it allows for continuous debates, for changes in the aims and goals, and for innovation. In contrast to ‘closed’ theories, for example Chomsky’s Generative Transformational Grammar or Michael Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics, CDS scholars have never had the reputation of being a dogmatic ‘sect’ and – as far as we are aware – do not want to have such a reputation.

This heterogeneity of methodological and theoretical approaches that can be found in this field confirm Van Dijk’s point that CDS and critical linguistics ‘are at most a shared perspective on doing linguistic, semiotic or discourse analysis’ (van Dijk 1993: 131; see also above). Below, we summarize some of these principles, which are adhered to by most researchers.

The notion of discourse

Critical discourse studies see ‘language as social practice’ (Fairclough and Wodak 1997), and consider the ‘context of language use’ to be crucial. We quote one definition which has become ‘very popular’ amongst CDS researchers:

CDS see discourse – language use in speech and writing – as a form of ‘social practice’. 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: The discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them. That is, 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. Since discourse is so socially consequential, it gives rise to important issues of power. Discursive practices may have major ideological effects – that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position people. (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 258)

Thus CDS approaches understand discourses as relatively stable uses of language serving the organization and structuring of social life. However, in the German and Central European context, distinctions are made between ‘text’ and ‘discourse’ relating to the tradition in text linguistics as well as to rhetoric (see Angermüller et al. 2014; Wodak 1996). In contrast to the above, in the English-speaking world, ‘discourse’ is often used both for written and oral texts (see Gee 2004; Schiffrin 1994). Other researchers distinguish between different levels of abstractness: Lemke (1995) defines ‘text’ as the concrete realization of abstract forms of knowledge (‘discourse’), thus adhering to a more Foucauldian approach (see also Jäger and Maier in this volume). van Leeuwen (this volume) emphasizes the practice-dimension of the concept of discourse whereas the discourse-historical approach views ‘discourse’ as structured forms of knowledge and ‘text’ refers to concrete oral utterances or written documents (Reisigl and Wodak in this volume).

The critical impetus

The shared perspective and programme of CDS relate to the term ‘critical’, which in the work of some ‘critical linguists’ can be traced to the influence of the *Frankfurt School* and Jürgen Habermas (Anthonissen 2001; Fay 1987: 203; Thompson 1988: 71ff.). ‘Critical theory’ in the sense of the *Frankfurt School*, mainly based on the seminal 1937 essay by Max Horkheimer, means that social theory should be oriented toward critiquing and changing society as a whole, in contrast to traditional theory oriented solely to understanding or explaining it. Core concepts of such an understanding of Critical Theory are: (1) Critical Theory should be directed at the totality of society in its historical specificity, and (2) Critical Theory should improve the understanding of society by integrating all the major social sciences, including economics, sociology, history, political science, anthropology and psychology.

What is rarely reflected in this understanding of critique is the analyst's position itself. The social embeddedness of research and science, the fact that the research system itself and thus CDS are also dependent on social structures, and that criticism can by no means draw on an outside position but is itself well integrated within social fields, has been emphasized by Pierre Bourdieu (1984). Researchers, scientists and philosophers are not situated outside the societal hierarchy of power and status but subject to this structure. They have also frequently occupied and still occupy rather superior positions in society.

In language studies, the term 'critical' was first used to characterize an approach that was called Critical Linguistics (Fowler et al. 1979; Kress and Hodge 1979). Among other ideas, those scholars maintained that the use of language could lead to mystification of social events which systematic analysis could elucidate. 'For example, a missing by-phrase in English passive constructions might be seen as an ideological means for concealing or "mystifying" reference to an agent' (Chilton 2008). One of the most significant principles of CDS is the important observation that use of language is a 'social practice' that is both determined by social structure and contributes to stabilizing and changing that structure simultaneously.

Critical theories, thus also CDS, want to produce and convey critical knowledge that enables human beings to emancipate themselves from forms of domination through self-reflection. Thus, they are aimed at producing 'enlightenment and emancipation'. Such theories seek not only to describe and explain, but also to root out a particular kind of delusion. Even with differing concepts of ideology, Critical Theory seeks to create awareness in agents of their own needs and interests. This was, of course, also taken up by Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of '*violence symbolique*' and '*méconnaissance*' (Bourdieu 1989).

In agreement with its Critical Theory predecessors, CDS emphasizes the need for interdisciplinary work in order to gain a proper understanding of how language functions in constituting and transmitting knowledge, in organizing social institutions or in exercising power. In any case, CDS researchers have to be aware that their own work is driven by social, economic and political motives like any other academic work and that they are not in any superior position. Naming oneself 'critical' only implies specific ethical standards: an intention to make one's position, research interests and values explicit and their criteria as transparent as possible, without feeling the need to apologize for the critical stance of their work (van Leeuwen 2006: 293).

Following Andrew Sayer (2009), there are different concepts of critique in social sciences:

In a simple way, critique could merely indicate a critical attitude to other, earlier, approaches to the study of society. Hence all social science should be critical. If it goes further, critique shows that some of the concepts that are influential in explaining social phenomena are false or ignore something significant. In this sense, critical research is oriented towards the *reduction of illusion* in society itself. It supports 'subjugated knowledge' against 'dominant knowledge'. This kind of critique implies a *minimalist normative standpoint*. The idea of explanatory critique goes another step further as it explains why specific false beliefs and concepts are held.

Critique in this sense implies that social phenomena could be different – and can be altered. Societies are changeable, human beings are meaning-makers, and the critical subject is not a detached observer but s/he looks at society with a fresh and sceptical eye. Thus the subject is not external to discourses on which s/he reflects. From this viewpoint, reflexivity has received increased attention.

Nevertheless, many scholars have difficulties in taking an explicit critical standpoint nowadays (Sayer 2009): it is not only worries about essentialism and ethnocentrism, it goes much deeper to the fact–value, science–ethics, positive–normative dualisms of modernist thought. ‘The crisis of critique stems from an evasion of the issue of conceptions of the good, and ethics’ (2009: 783).

Ideology and power – a kaleidoscopic view

The critical impetus of CDS is the legacy of enlightenment (Horkheimer and Adorno 1991 [1969; 1974]). Critique regularly aims at revealing structures of power and unmasking ideologies. Ideology is then not understood in a positivistic way, i.e. ideologies cannot be subjected to a process of falsification. Nor is it the Marxian type of ideology according to the economic base/superstructure dichotomy that is of specific interest for CDS.

Political scientists name four central characteristics of ideologies:

1. Ideology must have power over cognition,
2. it is capable of guiding individuals’ evaluations,
3. it provides guidance through action, and
4. it must be logically coherent (Mullins 1972).

Although the core definition of ideology as a *coherent and relatively stable set of beliefs or values* has remained the same in political science over time, the connotations associated with this concept have undergone many transformations. During the era of fascism, communism and cold war, totalitarian ideology was confronted with democracy, the evil with the good. If we speak of the ‘ideology of the new capitalism’ (see Fairclough in this volume), ideology once again has a ‘bad’ connotation. Clearly it is not easy to capture ideology as a belief system and simultaneously to free the concept from negative connotations (Knight 2006: 625).

It is, however, not that explicit type of ideology that interests CDS, it is rather the more hidden and latent inherent in everyday-beliefs, which often appear disguised as conceptual metaphors and analogies, thus attracting linguists’ attention: ‘life is a journey, social organizations are plants, love is war’ and so on (Lakoff 1987; Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 1999). In everyday discussions, certain ideas emerge more commonly than others. Frequently, people with diverse backgrounds and interests may find themselves thinking alike in

surprising ways. Dominant ideologies appear as 'neutral', linked to assumptions that remain largely unchallenged. When most people in a society think alike about certain matters, or even forget that there are alternatives to the status quo, we arrive at the Gramscian concept of 'hegemony'. In respect to this key concept of ideology, van Dijk (1998) sees ideologies as the 'worldviews' that constitute 'social cognition': 'schematically organized complexes of representations and attitudes with regard to certain aspects of the social world, e.g. the schema ... whites have about blacks' (van Dijk 1993: 258).

Furthermore, it is the functioning of ideologies in everyday life that intrigues CDS researchers. Fairclough has a more Marxist view of ideologies and conceives them as constructions of practices from particular perspectives:

Ideologies are representations of aspects of the world which contribute to establishing and maintaining relations of power, domination and exploitation. They may be enacted in ways of interaction (and therefore in genres) and inculcated in ways of being identities (and therefore styles). Analysis of texts ... is an important aspect of ideological analysis and critique ... (Fairclough 2003: 218)

It is important to distinguish between ideology (or other frequently used terms such as stance/beliefs/opinions/*Weltanschauung*/positioning) and discourse (Purvis and Hunt 1993: 474ff.). Quite rightly, Purvis and Hunt state that these concepts 'do not stand alone but are associated not only with other concepts but with different theoretical traditions'. Thus, 'ideology' is usually (more or less) closely associated with the Marxist tradition, whereas 'discourse' has gained much significance in the linguistic turn in modern social theory 'by providing a term with which to grasp the way in which language and other forms of social semiotics not merely convey social experience but play some major part in constituting social objects (the subjectivities and their associated identities), their relations and the field in which they exist' (Purvis and Hunt 1993: 474). The conflation of 'ideology' and 'discourse' thus leads, we believe, to an inflationary use of both concepts. They tend to become empty signifiers simultaneously indicating texts, positioning and subjectivities as well as belief systems, structures of knowledge and social practices (see Wodak 2012a). Discussions about the – various and interdisciplinary – epistemological underpinnings of CDS approaches are part and parcel of the chapters presented in this book (see also Wodak 2012c; Hart and Cap 2014).

Power is another concept that is central for CDS. Typically CDS researchers are interested in the way discourse (re)produces social domination, that is mainly understood as power abuse of one group over others, and how dominated groups may discursively resist such abuse (e.g. van Dijk in this volume). This raises the question of how CDS understands power and what normative standpoints allow researchers to differentiate between power use and abuse – a question that has so far remained unanswered (Billig 2008).

Power is one of the most central – and contentious – concepts in the social sciences. There is almost no social theory that does not contain, suggest or imply a specific notion of power.

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Max Weber's notion of power serves as a common denominator: power as the chance that an individual in a social relationship can achieve his or her own will even against the resistance of others (Weber 1980: 28).

Concerning the source of power, at least three different concepts should be distinguished:

1. Power as a result of specific *resources* of individual actors (e.g. French and Raven 1959).
2. Power as a specific attribute of *social exchange* in each interaction (e.g. Blau 1964; Emerson 1962, 1975), depending on the relation of resources between different actors.
3. Power as a widely invisible systemic and constitutive characteristic of society (e.g., from very different angles, Foucault 1975; Giddens 1984; Luhmann 1975).

As far as the results of power are concerned (which – according to Max Weber's view – are named *domination*), again three dimensions should be distinguished (Lukes 1974, 2005):

1. *Overt power*, typically exhibited in the presence of conflict in decision-making situations, where power consists in winning, that is prevailing over another or others.
2. *Covert power*, consisting in control over what gets decided, by ignoring or deflecting existing grievances.
3. The *power to shape desires and beliefs*, thereby precluding both conflict and grievances.

From these perspectives, discourse is Janus-headed: it is a consequence of power and domination, but also a technology to exert power.

Michel Foucault, who introduced the conjunction of power and discourse, focuses on 'technologies of power': *discipline* is a complex bundle of power technologies developed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Power is thus exercised with intention – but this is not individual intention. Foucault focuses on what is accepted knowledge about how to exercise power. One way of doing this is by threatening somebody or something with violence. However, when suggesting how happy people would be if they would finally buy specific consumer products, should also be perceived as an exercise of power; marketing currently provides us with much knowledge of powerful techniques. Although Foucault also combines the notions of power and domination in a Weberian tradition, he focuses primarily on the structural dimension. Thus domination is not only the overt pressure that one person exercises over others. Manifold forms of domination might be exercised within society simultaneously, by various actors and without subjects being aware of this (Foucault 1975).

In modern societies, power and domination are embedded in and conveyed by discourses. Discourses are not only coherent and rational bodies of speech and writing, but play an important role as discursive formations in conveying and implementing power and domination in society (e.g. Hall 1992). Consequently, discourses and dispositives (see Jäger and Maier in this volume) are core elements of a ‘microphysics of power’ (e.g. Foucault 1963, 1975, 2004; Sauvêtre 2009) that permeate society like an invisible cobweb.

More recently, Holzscheiter has introduced an instrumental, optimistic and emancipatory conception of the power–discourse interplay (e.g. Holzscheiter 2005, 2012). She frames discourses as effective social and linguistic practices that are based on immaterial capabilities. She argues that in the quest for non-material power resources, subordinated actors – in her research, NGOs in the field of international relations – may dispose of discourses to generate power positions. Conventional power theories are of limited use as, ‘They insufficiently take into account the role of language – as both a means for communication and as collectively shared meaning-structures – in the establishment and persistence of intersubjective power relations’ (Holzscheiter 2005: 723).

A framework capable of integrating most of the diverse concepts of power mentioned above is provided by Pierre Bourdieu, who offers a multifaceted view on the language–power-relation (e.g. Bourdieu 1982, 1991). According to Bourdieu, all *social fields* are structured by relations of power and domination (Bourdieu 1977, 1980). Social fields are dynamic systems, characterized by struggles among the actors within this field over the distribution of resources; the latter account for the attribution of status in the field and – power. Furthermore, the notion of social field corresponds to a distinct logic of practice, a constellation of rules, beliefs and practices.

Bourdieu thus takes a resource- and interaction-oriented standpoint: the resources at stake in social fields are economic, cultural, and social capital (Bourdieu 1986), they are acquired through heritage or struggle, and social fields differ in how they assess/rank actors’ equipment of capitals (e.g. Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). Actors’ capitals are partly institutionalized (property, academic titles, group memberships) and partly incorporated.

To explain the ‘incorporation’ of capitals, Bourdieu introduces his most intriguing concept: *habitus*. It is regarded as a durable but also evolving system of dispositions which could be potentially activated and should ideally fit to a particular social field. A particular habitus ensures that an actor acts, perceives and thinks according to the rules of the field, and his or her movements within the respective field of career appear as ‘natural’. S/he acts ‘intentionally without intention’ (Bourdieu 1987; 1990: 12). Actors take part in discourses that follow the rules of discursive games that are relevant in a social field. They are equipped with their linguistic habitus, which comprises their linguistic competencies, based on their capitals. Within this normative framework, there exist certain degrees of freedom for such actors, allowing them to act strategically and to also change power relations. In this sense, actors might also apply the emancipatory function of discourse mentioned above.

Within CDS, power is usually perceived in the Foucauldian sense, and discourse is widely regarded as a manifestation of social action which is determined by social structure and simultaneously reinforces or erodes structure.

Consequently it is not the individual resources and not the specifics of unique interactions that are crucial for CDS analyses, but overall structural features in social fields or in society. Power is central for understanding the dynamics and specifics of control (of action) in modern societies, but power remains mostly invisible. The linguistic manifestations, however, are analysed in CDS. The interdependence between social power and language is a continual and persistent topic not only in CDS (Fairclough 1991; Wodak 1989) but also in sociology (Bourdieu 1991) and sociolinguistics (e.g. Talbot 2003; Young and Fitzgerald 2006).

Discursive differences are negotiated in many texts. They are governed by differences in power that is in part encoded in and determined by discourse and by genre. Therefore texts are often sites of struggle in that they show traces of differing discourses and ideologies contending and struggling for dominance.

In sum, defining features of CDS are its concern with power as a central condition in social life, and its efforts to develop a theory of language that incorporates this phenomenon as a major premise. Not only the notion of struggles for power and control, but also the intertextuality and recontextualization of competing discourses in various public spaces and genres are considered important (Iedema 1997; Iedema and Wodak 1999; Muntigl et al. 2000; see Fairclough, Reisigl and Wodak, and van Leeuwen in this volume). Power is about relations of difference, and particularly about the effects of differences in social structures. Language is entwined in social power in a number of ways:

- Language indexes and expresses power.
- Language is involved where there is contention over and a challenge to power.
- Power does not necessarily derive from language, but language can be used to challenge power, to subvert it, to alter distributions of power in the short and the long term.
- Language provides a finely articulated vehicle for the expression of differences in power in hierarchical social structures.

CDS can be defined as fundamentally interested in analysing hidden, opaque, and visible structures of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language. In other words, CDS aim to investigate critically social inequality as it is expressed, constituted, legitimized, and so on, by language use (or in discourse). Most critical discourse analysts would thus endorse Habermas's claim that 'language is also a medium of domination and social force. It serves to legitimize relations of organized power. Insofar as the legitimizations of power relations ... are not articulated ... language is also ideological' (Habermas 1967: 259).

Research agenda and challenges

In this section, we summarize some important research agendas and challenges for research which currently characterize CDS. Although we, of course,

encounter a vast amount of research and also many methodological and theoretical approaches and proposals, we have decided to restrict ourselves to six major areas and related challenges:

- Analysing, understanding and explaining the impact of *neoliberalism* and the *knowledge-based economy* (KBE) on various domains of our societies; related to this, the recontextualization of KBE into other parts of the world and other societies (e.g. Drori et al. 2006).
- Analysing, understanding and explaining the impact of *globalization* in most domains of our lives – as well as the contradictory tendencies of glocalization and renationalization which can be observed in many parts of the world. Interestingly, although we are confronted with ever-faster and all-encompassing communication and related networks 24/7 (Hassan and Purser 2007), simultaneously, anachronistic nationalistic and even nativist imaginaries of homogeneous communities are becoming stronger worldwide.
- Analysing, understanding and explaining climate change and the many controversial debates surrounding the production of alternative energy sources and so forth.
- Analysing, understanding and explaining the use of digitally mediated communication and its impact on conventional and new modes of communication which seem to open up new modes of participation and new public spaces. However, new studies should explore what impact the new communication networks really have on social and political change in systematic detail.
- Integrating approaches from cognitive sciences into CDS; this requires complex epistemological considerations and the development of new theories, methodologies and tools.
- Analysing, understanding and explaining the relationship between complex historical processes and hegemonic narratives. Identity politics on all levels always entails the integration of past experiences, present events and visions of the future in many domains of our lives.

Methodological issues: theory, methods, analysis, interpretation

CDS view themselves as strongly grounded in theory. Yet we find no dominant theories but rather eclectic approaches in CDS. To which theories do the different methods refer? Here we detect a huge variety of theories, ranging from theories on society and power in Michel Foucault's tradition, theories of social cognition, and theories of functional grammar as well as individual concepts that are borrowed from larger theoretical traditions. Initially, this section aims to systematize these different theoretical influences (see also Figure 1.4).

A second part in this section is devoted to the operationalization of theoretical concepts. The primary issue at stake is to understand and challenge how the

various approaches to CDS are able to translate their theoretical claims into instruments and methods of analysis. In particular, the emphasis is on the mediation between Grand Theories as applied to society, and concrete instances of social interaction that result in texts (to be analysed). With regard to methodology, there are several perspectives within CDS: in addition to what can be described primarily as variations from hermeneutics, we are confronted with interpretative perspectives with differing emphases, among them even quantitative procedures (see Mautner in this volume).

Particularly worthy of discussion is the way in which sampling is conducted and justified in CDS. Most studies analyse ‘typical texts’. What is typical in which social situation, and for which aspect of a social problem, frequently remains vague. The possibilities and limitations in respect to the specific units of analysis will be discussed within the context of theoretical sampling. Some authors explicitly refer to the ethnographic tradition of field research (e.g. Reisigl and Wodak in this volume).

The connection between theory and discourse in CDS can be described in terms of the model for theoretical and methodological research procedures illustrated in Figure 1.1. Hereby theory is not only essential to formulate research questions that guide the data selection, data collection, analysis of data and interpretation. It should also be grounded in prior interpretations of empirical analyses. Thus CDS imply a circular and recursive–abductive relationship between theory and discourse.

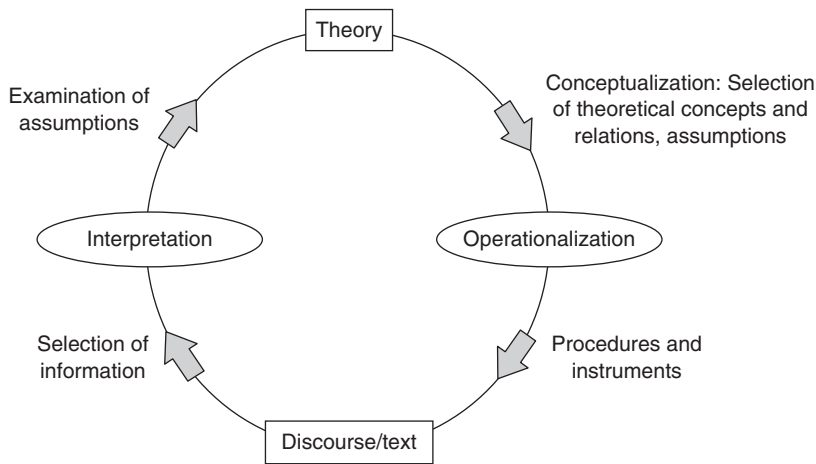


Figure 1.1 Critical discourse studies as a circular process

In CDS, as in all social research, theory, methods and analysis are closely interrelated, and decisions about the one affect the others. Data, i.e. in the case of CDS discourses and texts, are never theory-neutral. Which data are collected and how they are interpreted depends on the theoretical perspective. Theories, concepts and empirical indicators are systematically related: in theories, we link concepts, e.g. by functional or casual relationships. To observe and operationalize these concepts, we use empirical indicators (Gilbert 2008: 22).

CDS: HISTORY, AGENDA, THEORY, METHODOLOGY

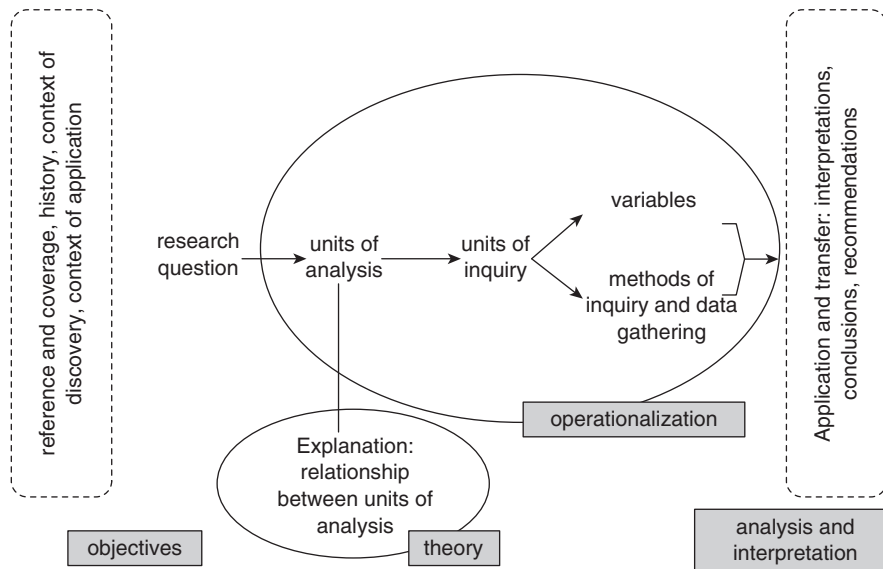


Figure 1.2 The research process (adapted from Titscher, Meyer and Mayrhofer 2008: 308)

Figure 1.2 illustrates the typical stages of the research process in empirical social research. In the context of discovery, we decide about and select *research objectives*. These may include the development of theoretical approaches, but also empirical coverage and the potential application of results. Hereby, we also decide whether findings and interpretations/explanations are valid only in respect to the units of analysis or beyond (generalizability).

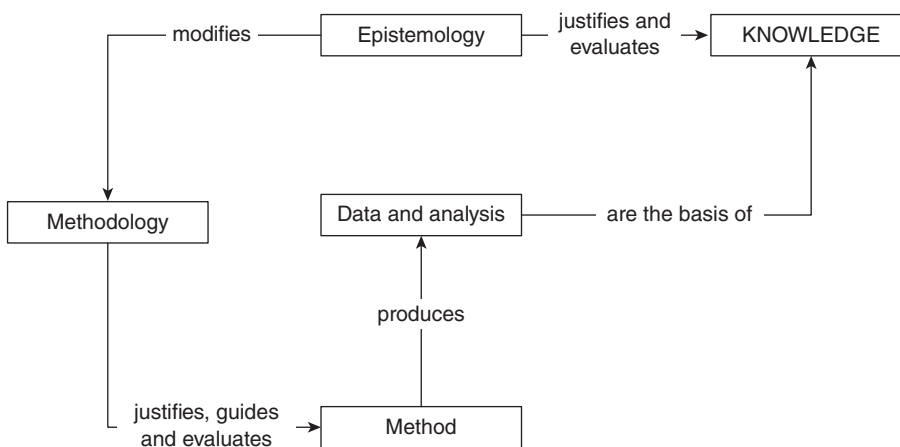


Figure 1.3 The simple relationship between epistemology, methodology and method (adapted from Carter and Little 2007: 1317)

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In both qualitative and quantitative research the process of *operationalization* is crucial for the validity, but also for the auditability and the justification of CDS research. What are the units of analysis (e.g. ingroup/outgroup differentiation, discrimination, social status of speaker), what are the units of inquiry (e.g. group meetings, interviews, newspapers) and which variables are collected (e.g. indicators of ingroup/outgroup differentiation, indicators of discrimination, educational status of speakers/writers) by means of which methods (content analysis, rhetorical analysis, surveys, etc.). Finally, data are analysed and results have to be interpreted.

Figure 1.3 shows the simple relation between methodology, epistemology and method. These three notions are defined in conflicting ways in the literature. For this volume, we will try to clarify these ambiguities by introducing simple and precise definitions:

- *Epistemology* is the study of the nature of knowledge and justification. It tries to clarify the antecedents, conditions and boundaries of human knowledge; it, for instance, answers the question of whether social phenomena are real or just a construct of the observer, and, should these be real, whether we can observe this social reality adequately.
- *Methodology* is defined as a (normative) theory of how research should be conducted to generate knowledge. It tells us how research should proceed; it deals with the study (description, explanation, justification) of methods, but does not indicate the methods themselves. For instance, methodology yields process models such as the one presented in Figure 1.2.
- *Methods* are techniques for gathering evidence, e.g. for collecting and selecting data (cases, units of analysis), but also for explaining relationships (e.g. dependent by independent variables), for conducting interpretations in a transparent and reproducible way, etc.: 'Methods can be thought of as research action' (Carter and Little 2007: 1317).

As illustrated in Figure 1.3, a specific methodology suggests and justifies specific methods that produce and analyse data. This analysis is the basis of interpretation and thus creates knowledge. A specific epistemology – e.g. either constructivist or realistic – has a modifying impact on methodology, but also justifies and evaluates knowledge. CDS are typically on the social constructionist side of the street: CDS conceive discourse as the result of jointly constructed meanings of the world. They assume that understanding, significance and meaning are developed not separately within the individual, but in coordination with other human beings. There are hegemonic streams, but also divergent and opposing viewpoints. Thus discourses emerge as social constructs, but do have 'real' consequences in social structure (e.g. the discrimination of immigrants).

Theoretical grounding and objectives

Among the approaches presented in this book, scholars use theoretical cornerstones of very different origins in order to 'build their CDS-castles'. Neither is there any

guiding theoretical viewpoint that is used consistently within CDS, nor do the CDS protagonists proceed consistently from the area of theory to the field of discourse and back to theory (see Figure 1.3).

Within the CDS approaches presented here, various theoretical levels of sociological and sociopsychological theory (the concept of different theoretical levels draws on the tradition of Merton [1967: 39–72]) can be detected:

- **Epistemology**, i.e. theories that provide models of the conditions, contingencies and limits of human perception in general and scientific perception in particular. Simplified, these theories lie between the poles of realism and constructivism.
- **General social theories**, often called ‘Grand Theories’, conceptualize relations between social structure and social action and thus link micro- and macro-sociological phenomena. Within this level we distinguish between more structuralist and the more individualist approaches. The former provide rather deterministic top-down explanations (structure → action), whereas the latter prefer bottom-up explanations (action → structure). Most modern theories reconcile these positions and imply some kind of circular relationship between social action and social structure (e.g. Pierre Bourdieu, Antony Giddens, Niklas Luhmann).
- **Middle-range theories** focus either upon specific social phenomena (e.g. conflict, cognition, social networks) or on specific subsystems of society (e.g. economy, politics and religion).
- **Microsociological theories** try to make sense of and explain social interaction, for example the resolution of the double contingency problem (Parsons and Shils 1951: 3–29) or the reconstruction of everyday procedures which members of a society use to create their own social order (ethnomethodology).
- **Sociopsychological theories** focus on the social conditions of emotion and cognition, and prefer, compared to microsociology, causal explanations to a hermeneutic understanding of meaning.
- **Discourse theories** aim at the conceptualization of discourse as a social phenomenon and try to explain its genesis and its structure.
- **Linguistic theories**, e.g. theories of semantics, pragmatics, of grammar or of rhetoric, describe and explain the patterns specific to language systems and verbal communication.

As all these theoretical levels can be found in CDS, it seems that the unifying parameters of CDS are rather the specifics of research questions (*critique*) than the theoretical positioning. In the following we present a short outline of the theoretical positions and methodological objectives of the CDS approaches presented in the volume.

Major approaches to CDS

The differences between CDS and other discourse analysis (DA), pragmatic and sociolinguistic approaches may be most clearly established in respect to the general principles of CDS. Firstly, the nature of the problems with which CDS are concerned is significantly different from all those approaches that do not

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explicitly express their research interest in advance. In general, critical discourse studies ask different research questions, and some CDS scholars play an advocacy role for socially discriminated groups. When viewing the CDS contributions assembled in this volume it also becomes evident that sometimes the distinctions between social scientific research, which ought to be intelligible and reproducible, and political argumentation become blurred.

Specifically, we distinguish between approaches that proceed *deductively* and those that choose a more *inductive* perspective. Linked to this distinction is the choice of objects under investigation: more deductively oriented theories that also propose a closed theoretical framework are more likely to illustrate their assumptions with a few examples that seem to best fit their claims (e.g. the dialectical-relational approach and sociocognitive approach in this volume). More inductively oriented approaches usually remain at the ‘meso-level’ and select problems they are ‘curious’ about and where they attempt to discover new insights through in-depth case studies and ample data collection (for example the discourse-historical approach, social actors approach, corpus linguistics approach, dispositive analysis in this volume). Of course, all approaches proceed *abductively*, i.e. oscillate between theory and data analysis in retroductive ways. However, on a continuum, we are able to distinguish obvious priorities in choosing entry points and themes.

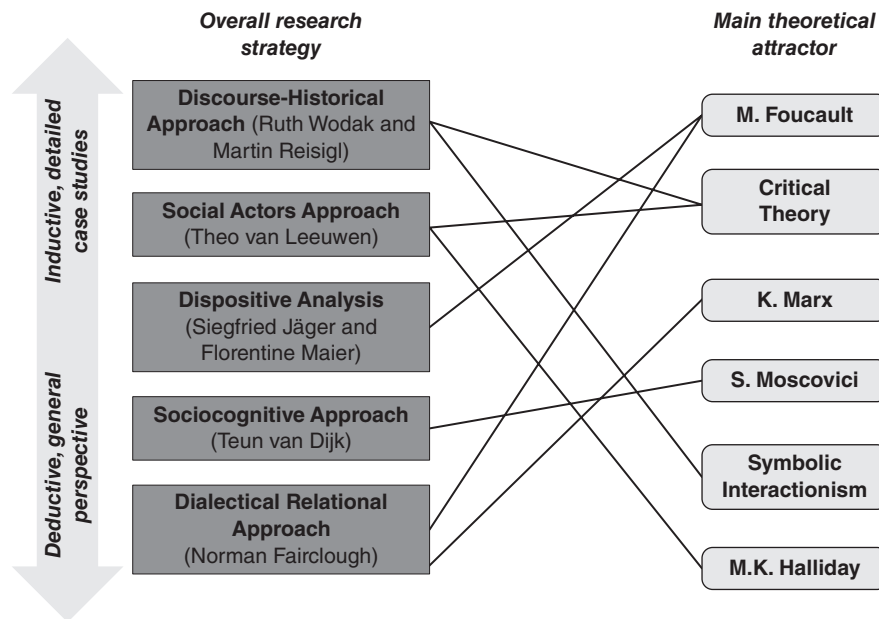


Figure 1.4 Overall research strategies and theoretical background

Figure 1.4 does not cover all the approaches presented in this volume, as the chapters presented by Mautner on corpus linguistics, KhosraviNik and Unger on social media and by Jancsary, Höllerer and Meyer on multimodal texts offer methodologies and methods for analysing specific data sets without relying strongly on specific theoretical attractors.

It has been criticized with good reason that each systematization of different approaches necessarily neglects the interconnectedness of particular approaches (Hart and Cap 2014, in their introduction). CDS emerged as a mixture of social and linguistic theories, and Halliday's systemic functional grammar was very influential. Hart and Cap (2014) further rightly state that different approaches to CDS rely on various linguistic theories: Halliday's systemic functional grammar (Halliday 1985), pragmatics, cognitive linguistics, corpus linguistics – and also rather generic theories such as post-structuralism and cognitive psychology. To cut a long story short: mapping different approaches to CDS has become more complex, as different authors use theoretical entry-points in a rather eclectic way depending on their specific interests and research questions.

Related to the choice of more 'macro-' or 'meso-topics' (such as 'globalization' or 'knowledge' versus 'un/employment' or 'right-wing populism'), we encounter differences in the evaluation of the chosen topics and objects under investigation. Macro-topics are relatively uncontroversial in the respective national or international academic contexts; some meso-topics, however, touch the core of the respective national community to which the researcher belongs. For example, research on concrete antisemitic, xenophobic and racist occurrences is much more controversial in certain academic and national contexts and is sometimes regarded as 'unpatriotic', or hostile. This explains the serious problems which some critical scholars have encountered when venturing into such sensitive fields (Heer et al. 2008).

In any case, it remains a fact that critical discourse studies follow a different and critical approach to problems, since CDS endeavours to make power relations explicit that are frequently obfuscated and hidden, and to derive results which are also of practical relevance.

Furthermore, one important assumption characterizes some CDS approaches that all *discourses are historical* and can therefore only be understood with reference to their context. Hence, the notion of context is crucial for CDS, since this explicitly includes sociopsychological, political, historical and ideological factors and thereby postulates an interdisciplinary procedure.

Interdisciplinarity is implemented in many different ways in the CDS approaches in this volume: in some cases, interdisciplinarity is characteristic of the theoretical framework (dispositive approach, dialectical-relational approach, sociocognitive approach); in other cases, interdisciplinarity also applies to team research and to the collection and analysis of data (social actors approach, discourse-historical approach). Moreover, CDS approaches use the concepts of intertextuality and interdiscursivity and analyse the intricate and complex relationships with other texts; in sum, it may be concluded that critical discourse studies are open to a broad range of factors exerting an influence on meaning-making.

CDS and other DA approaches also differ in respect to constitutive assumptions about the *relationship between language and society*. CDS do not believe this relationship to be simply deterministic but invoke the concept of *mediation*. The dialectical-relational approach draws on Halliday's multi-functional linguistic theory (Halliday 1985) and the concept of orders of discourse according to Foucault, while the discourse-historical approach and the

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sociocognitive approach make use of theories of social cognition (e.g. Moscovici 2000). Reflection on the mediation between language and social structure is absent from many other linguistic approaches, for example from conversation analysis. This is somewhat related to the level of social aggregation: although CDS approaches focus on social phenomena such as ideology or power, scholars select different units of analysis: the way in which individuals (or groups) mentally (cognitively), perceive, or the way social structures determine, discourse (see Figure 1.5). In other words: we distinguish between more cognitive–sociopsychological and more macro-sociological–structural approaches – although admittedly this is a rough distinction.

Moreover, most researchers integrate linguistic categories into their analyses – but to a different extent and with a different focus and intensity. Critical discourse studies do not necessarily include a broad range of linguistic categories in each single analysis; one might get the impression that only few linguistic devices are relevant. For instance, many CDS scholars consistently use social actor analysis by means of focusing upon pronouns, attributes and the verbal mode, time and tense; Hallidayan transitivity analysis and the analysis of *topoi* are employed frequently by social scientists because these concepts – quite wrongly – seem to be easy to apply without much linguistic background knowledge. Exceptions always prove the point: Reisigl and Wodak (this volume) and van Dijk (this volume) illustrate how a broad range of macro- and micro-linguistic, pragmatic and argumentative features can be operationalized and integrated in the analysis of texts (Figure 1.5).

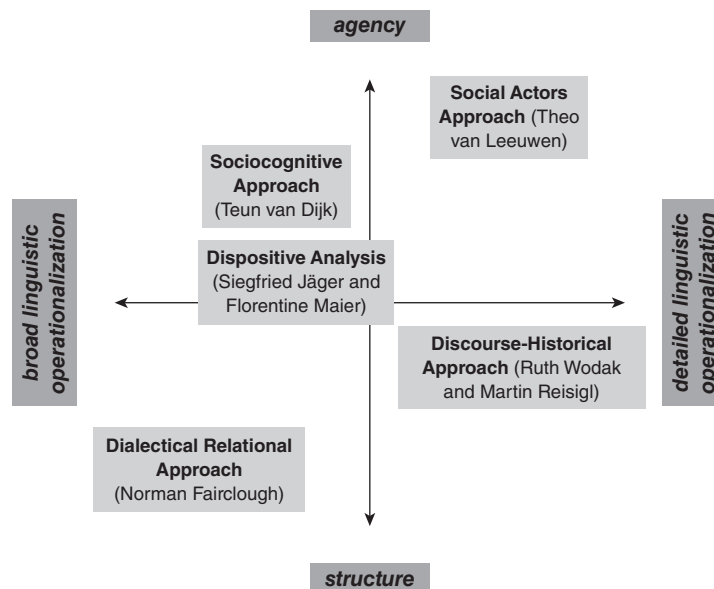


Figure 1.5 Linguistic involvement and level of aggregation

CDS generally perceive their procedure as a *hermeneutic process*, although this is not always evident in the positioning of every author. As an opponent to (causal) explanations of the natural sciences, hermeneutics can be understood as the method of understanding and producing meaning relations. The *hermeneutic circle* – i.e. the meaning of one part can only be understood in the context of the whole, but this in turn is only accessible from its component parts – indicates the problem of intelligibility of a hermeneutic interpretation. Therefore a hermeneutic interpretation specifically requires detailed documentation. Indeed, the details of the hermeneutic interpretation procedure are not always made transparent by many CDS-orientated studies.³ If a crude distinction were to be made between ‘*text-extending*’ and ‘*text-reducing*’ methods of analysis, then CDS, on account of their focus on distinct formal properties and the associated compression of texts during analysis, might be characterized as ‘*text-reducing*’.

Data collection

We concluded above that CDS does not constitute a well-defined empirical method but rather a bulk of approaches with theoretical similarities and research questions of a specific kind. But there is no CDS-way of collecting data, either. Some authors do not even mention data sampling methods, other scholars strongly rely on traditions based outside the sociolinguistic field.⁴ In any case, similar to Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967), data collection is not considered to be a specific phase that must be completed before the analysis can be conducted: after the first data collection one should perform first pilot analyses, find indicators for particular concepts, expand concepts into categories and, on the basis of these first results, collect further data (*theoretical sampling*). In this procedure, data collection is never completely concluded nor excluded, and new questions may always arise that require new data or re-examination of earlier data (Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corbin 1990).

Most CDS approaches do not explicitly explain or recommend data sampling procedures. Obviously corpus linguistics specifically refers to large corpora of texts. Other approaches introduced in this volume rely on existing texts, such as mass media communication or organizational documents. Beyond this, some of them – especially the DHA – additionally propose incorporating fieldwork and ethnography, if possible, in order to explore the object under investigation as a precondition for any further analysis and theorizing. Focusing on existing texts, however, does imply specific strengths (e.g. providing non-reactive data, see Webb et al. 1966) but also limitations in respect to necessary context knowledge and information about conditions of text production and reception.

Summary

The aims of this chapter were to provide a summary of CDS approaches and to discuss their similarities and differences. CDS are characterized by their

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diversity and their continuous development and elaboration. Therefore, this chapter does not claim to provide a complete overview of CDS; we obviously focus on the approaches assembled in this volume. Nevertheless, a few general points can be made within this diversity:

- Concerning the theoretical background, CDS work eclectically in many aspects. The entire range from Grand Theories to micro-linguistic theories are touched upon, although each single approach emphasizes different levels.
- There is no accepted canon of data sampling procedures; indeed many CDS approaches work with existing data, i.e. texts not specifically produced for the respective research projects.
- Operationalization and analysis are problem-oriented and imply linguistic expertise.

The most evident similarity is a shared interest in social processes of power, inclusion, exclusion and subordination. In the tradition of Critical Theory, CDS aims to shed light on the discursive aspects of societal disparities and inequalities. Critical discourse studies frequently explore the linguistic means used by the elites to reinforce and intensify inequalities in society. This entails careful and systematic analysis, self-reflection at every point of one's research, and distance from the data which are being investigated. *Description, interpretation and explanation* should be kept apart, thus enabling *transparency* and *retroductability* of the respective analysis. Of course, not all of these recommendations are consistently followed, and they cannot always be implemented in detail because of time pressures and similar structural constraints.

Therefore some critics will continue to state that CDS constantly sits on the fence between social research and political activism (Widdowson 2004a; Wodak 2006a); others accuse some CDS research of being too linguistic or not linguistic enough. In our view, such criticism keeps a field alive because it necessarily triggers more self-reflection and encourages new responses and innovative ideas.

Notes



- 1 See Fairclough 1991; van Dijk 1984; Wodak 1989.
- 2 The Erasmus network consisted of cooperation between Siegfried Jäger, Duisburg; Per Linell, Linköping; Norman Fairclough, Lancaster; Teun van Dijk, Amsterdam; Gunther Kress, London; Theo van Leeuwen, London; Ruth Wodak, Vienna.
- 3 The question whether it is possible to make hermeneutic processes transparent and intelligible at all remains undecided, although some authors (Oevermann et al. 1979) developed a hermeneutically oriented method with well-defined procedures and rules.
- 4 A general overview on sampling and the problem of text selection is provided by Titscher et al. (2000).