

## CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: A QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

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### Abstract

*Discourse Analysis, in its theoretical origins, proposes a basic communicative unit that exceeds, in its full sense, the grammatical sentence. In order to fulfil this objective of "going beyond" the sentence, it has to take into consideration the context in which this enunciation is produced. Therefore, it is the sum of text and context that marks the beginning of Discourse Analysis.*

In short, CDA focuses on macrostructures: analysis of complete utterances (transcriptions of stereotypes, arguments, rationalized prejudices, ...) but also of words, transcending their textual nest and situating them in the contextual horizon proposed by both CDA and pragmatics. The task of identifying these structures, their strategic function (semantic, rhetorical, argumentative...), the social model and the beliefs that make them possible, viable and comprehensible (enough to be shared by sender and receiver). In short, its aim is to place each behavior, each linguistic gesture, each manifestation, in the social order in which it is gestated, in which it has referents and meanings.

The evolution of this discipline, however, which facilitates mechanisms by which inequality phenomena present in discourses can be identified and analyzed, has led, over time, to the term Critical Discourse Analysis, a methodological proposal that serves both analysis and denunciation. One of the most studied phenomena (although obviously not the only one from CDA) is that of the dominant ideology and the way in which it subtly penetrates discourses and, consequently, mentalities.

The guiding principle of CDA is that language is never neutral, never objective. Much less innocent. All language carries its own baggage, its own connotative load.

In its critical vocation, the CDA is in the tradition of the Frankfurt School of the 1930s, which doubts the principles of objectivity. Adorno decrees that language is not something neutral, but something full of values, which presupposes relations of power that discourse represents and nourishes. But even before the Frankfurt School, other theories resounded that have shaped the CDA into what it is today.

Saussure (and before him, Wilhelm von Humboldt) considered language not only as a system of signs, but as a communicative code which fulfils certain functions in a given period of time. In fact, with Structuralism came the need to connect language with a society, with a cultural model, with a collective experience. For Humboldt, however, language symbolizes the

spirit of the people, a phenomenon that would give rise to nineteenth-century nationalism and other identity-based movements.

Sapir and Whorf lay the foundations of linguistic relativism, which would inspire ethnolinguistics of which Gumperz or Dell Hymes are representatives.

Some aspects of Russian Formalism also leave their mark on CDA, with particular relevance to Bakhtin's thought. All spheres of human activity are related to language. This is also perceived by Volosinov, who advocates the integration of language into social processes. Propp, in the 1950s, undertook the analysis of Russian mythology, which gave rise to narratology, which made it possible to move on to the study of macrostructure, a core-concept, as we have mentioned before. An approach that suited both linguists and anthropologists.

In the early 1960s, the School of Analytical Philosophy was established, in which the figure of Austin stands out (his key work is "How to do things with words") and in essence it opposes the idea that a theory of meaning should be reduced to the truth conditions of statements, as the neopositivists (who ended up confusing referent and meaning) maintained. He proposes the theory of linguistic acts. It does not matter the truth value of our utterances (it is often very difficult to assign/determine truth) but the place that the utterance occupies in our linguistic behavior. At the end of the same decade Searle publishes "Speech Act Theory", from which it follows that one has expectations about the consequences of the illocutionary act.

In the 1960s in France, the figure of Pêcheux and his studies of semantics emerged, i.e. the importance of meanings and changes of meaning in a word. And not only that, but also the importance of the sender and the receiver, the interaction that affects the meanings and the communicative act -sender and receiver will always be subject to normative roles, to power relations that result from the interaction itself-

Expectations and a new term, intention (beyond convention), are taken up by Pragmatics, which emphasize discursive features such as relevance, clarity, manner, etc. In other words: all those phenomena in which context affects the meaning. Therefore, aspects as implicatures or ambiguity are object of interest of this field. A relevant representative is Grice and its theory about the communicative principles, and Leech, who had specifically made contributions to the study of the forms and manners of politeness.

There is a specific branch of the Sociolinguistics that studies the language in its social context (the social perspective is necessary in order to have a general framework to understand linguistic activity). In this field we could mention theoreticians like Bernstein, Fishman or Labov, who focuses on the social processes, communicative styles, variables depending upon the social and cultural context, etc.

From the field of semiology there are also significant like those of Kress and Hodge for whom language does not exist without social meanings. Both somewhat reverse Sapir and Whorf's theory that language determines your thinking to ensure that it is thinking (and its complexity, and the number of cross-cutting elements that converge in it) that determines language.

Halliday and his "Systemic grammar" delves into the network of interrelationships, according to the real needs of sender and receiver, and according to codes imposed by the culture itself. He also approaches to the thematic organization of sentences and relations between the different sentences of a discourse.

The works of the Dutch linguist Teun van Dijk, like "Text and context" or "The science of text", conferred a cognitive orientation to discourse studies. At the same time, the historical dimension of CDA was approached by Ruth Wodak, who mainly deals with discrimination and antisemitism in her research.

Definitely textual grammar, a consequence of formalism, tries to provide sentences with broad structural and thematic characterizations. Aspects such as coherence and connectivity of sentence sequences begin to arouse interest, which led discourse studies to a more cognitive dimension (text psychology) and to the elements involved in information processing, with semantic memory, knowledge representation and cognitive processes being essential fields of study. The work of Van Dijk and Kintsch can be placed in this area of knowledge.

Last but not least, works in the field of analysis of textual actors, like the studies of the Australian Theo van Leeuwen, and the phenomenon of intertextuality, from which Norman Fairclough is the most significant representative, have meant redefining discourse studies in a more socially engaged dimension.

Nowadays, thanks to work in the field of CDA and its consolidation as an analytical tool, phenomena such as racism, sexism, discrimination, prejudice, etc. have been extensively studied in a wide range of public discourses, ranging from political to media discourses, or even interpersonal interaction in the private sphere.

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