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THE TEXT AS A CRITICAL OBJECT:

On theorising exegetic procedure in classroom-based critical discourse analysis

One of the reasons CDA calls itself critical is because its perspectives of discourse and society are largely derived from critical social theory. Transferring these perspectives to educational contexts requires that teachers develop workable pedagogic frameworks and procedures which apply CDA principles and practices to the reading and discussion of texts in the classroom. If these are to be considered 'critical,' it seems useful that these are also derived from critical social theory. This type of critical theorisation seems to be underdeveloped in a CDA which relies principally on systemic functional linguistics for its procedural attitude to the text. This paper suggests a possible development of this space in which exegetic procedure and discussion are theorised from critical perspectives in the thought of Adorno, Derrida and Habermas, and according to systemic perspectives in the work of Foucault. The paper also presents a framework of analysis for use by teachers and students which is based on these perspectives.

Key words critical discourse analysis, critical social theory, systemic functional linguistics, immanent critique, deconstruction, public sphere, power

Introduction

The theme of this paper arises from my own practice as a teacher on university undergraduate programmes in communication, language, media and culture, and from my interest in the critical social theories which provide a backdrop to the field we know as critical discourse analysis (CDA). As a teacher I have found myself drawn to the problem of applying the principles of CDA to classroom practice around texts, and of trying to develop a workable CDA framework for student led analyses and discussions of them. In thinking about these

issues I have found certain perspectives in critical social theory to be of particular use in trying to ground a procedural approach to the text, and it is these perspectives which are the subject of this paper. In this discussion I wish to present an alternative view of exegetic procedure in CDA which is not based on a Hallidayan systemic-functional classification of the text (Halliday, 1978, 1989, 1994; Eggins & Martin, 1997). The reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, the reliance on a systemic-functional model of the text does not seem entirely adequate to a mode of discourse analysis which, due to its relation with social theory, is considered to be ‘critical;’ and secondly, because the terminological and conceptual complexity of the Hallidayan model is such that it can be an obstacle to introducing CDA to a wider audience. This latter problem is one which a number of critical discourse analysts have noted. Fairclough (2003: 6), for example, has referred to the ‘forbidding technical terminology’ of CDA, and how work needs to be done ‘to recontextualise this body of research in ways which transform it, perhaps quite radically, into a practically useful form for educational purposes’ (Fairclough, 1999: 80). Fowler (1996: 8-9) too has commented that CDA can be both ‘abstract and difficult,’ and that its concepts ‘need to be explained more clearly’ if students are to do effective critical work with texts. Similar comments have made by Toolan (1997) and by Wallace (1992, 2003).

Turning to the first question, I am interested in exploring a theorisation of procedure which can be applied both to the critical reading of texts and, in a classroom, to the discussion which will often accompany this. By theorising these two things, one of my aims is to provide an approach to procedure in which a number of critical and poststructuralist perspectives are brought into dialogue. I call this approach treating the Text as a Critical Object (TACO). The chief theoretical influences for this are the theorists Theodor Adorno, Jacques Derrida, and Jürgen Habermas, and it is their perspectives which form the main part of this paper. Also relevant for his contribution to understandings of systems and power is

Michel Foucault, and aspects of his thought will be introduced in order to highlight some of the ‘systemic’ similarities which seem to exist in the work of these other thinkers, as well as in the work of Foucault himself. Central to the interpretative model which I am proposing is a theoretical reworking of interpretative paradigms in CDA which is based on procedures which may be found in critical social theory. This concerns, in particular, a reformulation of the procedural paradigm of description, interpretation, and explanation which is associated with Fairclough’s three-dimensional view of discourse (Fairclough, 1989, 1992, 1995, 2001). The reason for focusing on Fairclough’s procedural model is that his is the most developed in relation to critical social theory. In addition, it is arguably the paradigm with which CDA is most associated, and according to which its analyses of texts are carried out.

The role of social theory in CDA

One of the reasons CDA calls itself critical is because of its association with critical social theory. For example, Fairclough notes that a characteristic of his approach ‘is that it combines a Bakhtinian theory of genre (in analysis of discourse practice) and a Gramscian theory of hegemony (in analysis of social practice)’ (Fairclough, 1995: 2; original parenthesis). When we look at how CDA theorises itself, it is possible to see more clearly how this relationship to social theory is established. We can use the three tiers of Fairclough’s model of discourse to illustrate this (*Fig. 1*).

Fig. 1. The relationship between discourse and social theory in CDA

Text	Halliday (SFL: dialectic of the text and the context)
Discourse practices	Foucault (orders of discourse) Bakhtin (intertextuality) Pêcheux (interdiscourse)
Social practices	Marx (ideology) Gramsci (hegemony) Althusser (ideological state apparatuses) Foucault (power)

Based on Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1995, 2001)

There are three levels of discourse in Fairclough's model: the text, discourse practices, and social practices. Fairclough theorises each of these levels by reference to a particular body of thought. At the level of discourse practices the range of theorists which are drawn on includes Foucault, Bakhtin and Pêcheux. At the level of social practices it includes Marx, Gramsci, Althusser, and Foucault again. Each thinker contributes a particular perspective to Fairclough's conception of discourse. This range of influences is quite broad and the table represented in *Fig. 1* is not exhaustive. More theorists could be mentioned, particularly at the levels of discourse practices and social practices (see Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). At the level of the text, however, this is not the case; here CDA has relied more or less exclusively on Hallidian systemic functional linguistics (SFL). The reasons for this are twofold: not only does SFL provide a useful grammatical language of description, it also provides a theoretical model according to which textual analyses can be carried out, and this has made it attractive as a procedural model for CDA. The theoretical model proposes a classification of the text in terms of its relationship to contexts of production and use. These are well known as the ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions of the text, and the field, tenor and mode dimensions of the context (see Halliday, 1978, 1994; Halliday & Hasan, 1989; Eggins & Martin, 1997; Chouliaraki, 1998; Wallace, 2003).

Fairclough (1989, 1992, 2001) has chosen to reclassify Halliday's textual metafunctions and given them different names. He refers to the experiential, relational, expressive/identity, and connective functions of texts, although he also, in places, retains Halliday's terms as well (Fairclough, 1992). The experiential function corresponds to Halliday's ideational function, and the relational and identity functions represent a division of Halliday's interpersonal function into two (Fairclough, 1992: 64-5). The expressive and identity functions seem to be the same. They refer to the role of discourse in constituting or constructing identities (Fairclough, 1992: 168; 2001: 93). Finally, Fairclough's connective

function corresponds to Halliday's textual function. In place of the field, tenor and mode, Fairclough has reformulated and developed Halliday's context dimensions in a more rigorously socio-theoretical manner through his conception of the 'order of discourse,' a term which he derives from Foucault (1981). This refers to 'the overall configuration of discourse practices of a society or one of its institutions' (Fairclough, 1996: 70).

Halliday's systemic classification of the text and context is a fundamental statement regarding the manner in which human beings construct the meaning relations of their world(s). Less explicitly recognised is that it is also a dialectical model in that it applies to language what the dialectic of Hegel applies to reason, and the dialectic of Marx applies to historical materialism (Hegel, 1998 [1822]; Marx 2000 [1859]). It is in the Hallidian dialectic between the text and the context that human beings make their world meaningful and comprehensible. The dialectical nature of the Hallidian text-context classification and the theoretical relationship which it has with Hegelian and Marxist dialectics is one of the major factors which recommends SFL to CDA; indeed, it is what makes CDA the study of 'language as a form of social practice' (Fairclough, 2001: 18).

Despite these recommendations, there is still something which is not entirely satisfactory about the reliance on SFL for a critical theory of procedure at the level of the text. This is that despite its dialecticism systemic functional linguistics is not a critical social theory. The qualification of being a critical social theory is that it engages philosophically with questions regarding the historical, political, economic and cultural nature of social being; its ideas and ideologies, its institutions and power structures, its social frameworks and meanings. By inserting itself into the debate about the nature and the place of reason, truth, knowledge and understanding in what is considered by many to be a post-Enlightenment age, a critical social theory is one which engages in the philosophical discourse of late modern society (Habermas, 1987a; Giddens, 1990; Harvey, 1990; Jameson, 1998; Chouliaraki &

Fairclough, 1999). Within the framework of recent western philosophy there are two traditions of critical social theory which interest this paper. One tradition extends from Hegel through Marx to the critical theory of the Frankfurt School and the other extends from Nietzsche through Heidegger to the poststructuralism of Foucault and Derrida. Hallidayan SFL, its dialectical nature notwithstanding, is not this type of social theory. It follows then that if CDA is to theorise critical procedures for the analysis of texts, and to become, in the words of Rajagopalan (1999), ‘critical all the way through,’ it needs to look beyond the functional categories of SFL and to seek such procedures in critical social theory. SFL might then become a linguistic resource in a critical theory of procedure, rather than, as it has done, become the procedure itself. For the purposes of designing such a procedure there are, as I have indicated, three thinkers whose work seems particularly suited to this task. They are Adorno, Derrida, and Habermas. Adorno and Derrida are important because of the procedural techniques of interpretation and problematisation which both of them adopt in their work, and Habermas is important because his thought is characterised by a concern for procedures of discussion. These aspects of the work of each of these thinkers are illustrated in *Fig. 2*.

Fig. 2. Critical Social Theory and the Text as a Critical Object

Adorno	Procedure: immanent critique of objects
Derrida	Procedure: deconstruction of texts
Habermas	Discussion: public sphere; communicative action
Foucault	System: subject positions; networks of power

Foucault is included in this list because procedures of interpretation and discussion are also ‘systemic;’ that is, they suggest a framework which is to be followed, and they occur

in contexts, such as classrooms, which are systemically organised and structured. It is these structuring effects which make Foucault's thought also important to this paper.

Critical Reading: Adorno and the immanent critique of the object

Adorno was a member of the Frankfurt School of critical theorists. The Frankfurt School is most associated with the philosophical Marxism of Benjamin, Horkheimer, Marcuse, Adorno himself, and more recently Habermas. In their work the critical theorists undertook an extended critique of German idealist and materialist philosophy. This took the form of a dialogic engagement with a wide range of philosophical positions in the thought of, among others, Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche. In this process the critical theorists distanced themselves, to a greater or lesser degree, from a range of standard Hegelian as well as classical Marxist positions on the nature of social progress, history, subjectivism and truth, while simultaneously reformulating and reapplying these understandings for the purposes of elaborating a critical theory of society. The critical theorists argued that any understanding of society had to be historically located; that is, located and practised within the confines of a materialist conception of history because, in their view, all knowledge is historically conditioned. They therefore rejected, as did Nietzsche (1968a), the idea that there was an objective reality which could be passively reflected upon, arguing instead that social theorists are themselves a part of social and historical processes and therefore unable to stand apart from these processes (Held, 1990). Although all knowledge is seen as historically conditioned, Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse sought to develop analytical techniques, united under the title 'immanent critique' or 'immanent criticism,' by which independent moments of critical insight might be made possible: 'only then will a critical social consciousness retain its freedom to think that things might be different some day' (Adorno: 1973: 323). It is these techniques, which they all to some extent shared, that can provide an initial theoretical framework for the critical reading of texts.

There are a number of reasons why Adorno's work is important. First, Adorno's view of immanent critique was, theoretically, the most developed of the critical theorists, based as it was upon his own interpretative philosophy of 'negative dialectics.' Second, he shared and also developed theoretically Nietzsche's multiperspectival approach to knowledge (Nietzsche, 1968a, 1968b; Best & Kellner, 1991, 1997), but rather than calling it 'multiperspectivism,' Adorno named his a 'constellations' perspective. Third, immanent critique and constellations may be said to anticipate respectively Derrida's approach to deconstruction and at least some aspects of the discourse ethics of Habermas, making Adorno a key thinker in forming a theoretical link between the modernism of Habermas and the poststructuralism of Derrida (Ryan, 1982; Jay, 1984). A final reason for adopting Adorno is that of all the critical theorists his work has a practical textual dimension which is not present in the work of the other Frankfurt theorists. This is because Adorno devoted much of his time to the study of mass culture and, within that, to the study of texts. These textual studies included extended critical commentaries on American television programmes and television culture (Adorno, 1957, 1967), on the speeches and propaganda of American fascist agitators and American extremist groups (Adorno, 1994), and a 'content analysis' of a daily astrological column in the *Los Angeles Times* (*ibid*). He also wrote a great deal on Jazz, classical music, and theatre (Adorno, 2000). Unlike Foucault, whose studies of discourse largely bypassed texts and text analyses, Adorno took a keen interest in them. From a CDA perspective this seems promising.

Although Adorno was interested in texts, and particularly in the texts of mass culture, he preferred to make general critical commentaries on them, rather than undertake more systematic discourse analytical studies of them. Adorno was not interested in discourse analysis as such, or in discourse analytical procedures, but in giving an account of 'specific stimuli [in texts] ... and the presumptive effect of these stimuli' in moulding 'some ways of

their reader's thinking' (Adorno, 1994: 54; see also Crook, 1994: 25-28). Adorno reserved his more systematic interpretative procedures for philosophy (Adorno, 1967, 1973, 1977), and it is in his approach to philosophical questions that a more studied orientation to procedure can be found. He gave this the term 'immanent critique.' Immanent critique was common to much Frankfurt School critical theory, and it was Adorno who was largely responsible for the way in which it was formulated by other members of the School, such as Horkheimer and Marcuse. In immanent critique 'objects,' such as social institutions, ideological concepts, and beliefs, are judged according to whether they meet their own criteria of truth; that is, according to their own conceptions of what they think they are. The role of immanent critique in critical theory is to 'transform the concepts which it brings, as it were from outside, into what the object left to itself seeks to be, and confront it with what it is. It must dissolve the rigidity of the temporally and spatially fixed object into a field of tension of the possible and the real' (Adorno, 2000: 177).

What this means is that in the study of any object we must first record the object's preferred idea of itself which it publicly seems to want to present, and then compare this self-conception with what the object is (or does) in practice. According to Adorno, if this is done in a systematic way, it may become possible to detect contradictions or disjunctions between the object's self-image and what the object appears to be in practice, thus allowing this conception to be problematised and possibly overturned. Adorno draws on the influence of Hegel in this respect, who said, 'Genuine refutation must penetrate the power of the opponent and meet him on the ground of his strength; the case is not won by attacking him somewhere else and defeating him where he is not' (Hegel cited in Adorno, 2000: 115).

Importantly, the move to critique occurs from within; that is, from within the object's self-conception (Adorno, 1973). All objects, and here it is useful to think of texts, which are presented as having certain meanings, or as belonging to a certain meaning classification,

often have ‘definitions not contained in the definition of the class’ (Adorno, 1973: 150). That is, objects cannot necessarily delimit what they are; they will often include elements which have not been properly or fully accounted for. For example, the ideals of bourgeois capitalism – justice, equality, freedom, and fair exchange – when contrasted with how they operate in practice, will fail to live up to their own criteria, and in Adorno’s view are thereby negated (Held, 1990). This is because bourgeois capitalism includes, as part of its praxis, features such as inequality, injustice and exploitation which undermine and problematise its idealised self-conception; that which ‘left to itself, [it] seeks to be’ (Adorno, 1973: 150). Adorno observes that ‘[t]he concept of freedom lags behind itself as soon as we apply it empirically ... But because it must always be also the concept of what it covers, it is to be confronted with what it covers. Such confrontation forces it to contradict itself’ (*ibid*: 151). Bourgeois capitalism thus fails against its own standards and ideals; it discloses ‘a pervasive discrepancy’ between what it actually is and the values it accepts (Horkheimer cited in Held, 1990: 186). Immanent critique is therefore a method for showing how an object’s self-conception may be a pretence which it denies or has chosen to ignore, and it is ‘through the analysis of [the object’s] form and meaning’ that these potential contradictions may be brought to the fore (Adorno, 1967: 32).

If Adorno employs immanent critique as a means of closely analysing and problematising the object, I would suggest that in any critical reading of a text we might do something similar and use a procedure of immanent critique for closely analysing and problematising the text. A procedure of immanent critique centred on a text would involve a detailed comparison of how the text seems to want to be read, the text’s ‘dominant’ or ‘preferred’ reading, with how the text appears in practice, its ‘texture’ (Halliday and Hasan, 1976). The preferred reading refers to how, from the perspective of a critical reader, the text seems to want to be read. The term is derived from Hall (1990: 134), who uses it to refer to

how ‘the different areas of social life appear to be mapped out into discursive domains, hierarchically organised into *dominant* or *preferred meanings* … a pattern of ‘preferred readings’’ (original emphasis). Although Hall is not using this notion to refer specifically to texts, its use in this paper is not so different, because it is by means of the articulation and circulation of texts, and the general acceptedness of ‘preferred meanings’ that discursive domains are constituted. The notion of a preferred reading, or a generally accepted interpretation, is not unique to Hall. Eco (1992: 144) has referred to ‘a minimal paradigm of acceptability of an interpretation,’ and Derrida (1988: 146) to ‘a strong probability of consensus in the interpretation of texts … [a] minimal consensus.’ The term ‘preferred reading’ also appears in CDA; Janks and Ivanić (1992: 307), for example, use this term to refer to how ‘all texts work to ‘anchor’ some meanings in preference to others.’ When juxtaposing the preferred reading with the ‘textured’ meaning modalities of the text, the point is to record whether there seem to be any points of unevenness between the preferred reading and these modalities. First, what does the text seem to be saying? Second, having examined it very closely, how well does the text succeed in saying it? In this way, the perception which the text has of itself – its preferred reading – might be problematised.

Adorno’s negative dialectics, like the philosophy of Nietzsche, is non-totalising; that is, it rejects the idea of a correspondence between the subject and full comprehension of the object; an identical knowledge of the thing itself (Jay, 1977, 1984). Adorno thought of this as a fiction, and gave it the name ‘identity thinking’ (Adorno, 1973). Identity thinking stops at the appearance of the object. That is, it accepts the object at face value and does not look beyond how the object wants to be received or understood. To identity thinking Adorno opposes ‘non-identity thinking.’ Non-identity thinking is a kind of deconstructive thinking; it ‘sets out to free dialectics from affirmative traits’ (Held, 1990: 203), that is, from traits which (a) presuppose dialectical reconciliation and (b) which overemphasise the role of the subject

in the evolution of history. Non-identity thinking also enables us to (c) free our thought from systematising philosophies, or the totalising tendencies of ‘sacred texts’ (Adorno, 1973: 55); that is, philosophies and texts which seek to explain the totality of the real, such as Hegelian idealism, Marxist determinism and scientific positivism. In Adorno’s words, ‘it lies in the definition of negative dialectics that it will not come to rest in itself, as if it were total. This is its form of hope’ (Adorno, 1973: 406). For Adorno, it is the capacity of non-identity thinking to identify and isolate possible points of unevenness within the object that makes non-identity thinking critical. The procedural means by which this occurs is the practice of immanent critique: ‘[i]mmanent criticism of [objective] phenomena seeks to grasp, through the analysis of their form and meaning … a heightened perception of the thing itself’ (Adorno, 1967: 32).

In these terms immanent critique is potentially a procedure for mapping and problematising texts, and for developing a heightened critical perception of them. If ‘text’ is substituted for ‘object’ and ‘critical reading’ for ‘immanent critique,’ negative dialectics, non-identity thinking, and immanent critique can be made to take on a more textual and exegetic complexion. Adorno seems to be aware of this potential when he says, ‘[p]hilosophy rests on the texts that it criticises, and it is in dealing with them that the conduct of philosophy becomes commensurable with tradition. This justifies the move from philosophy to exegesis’ (Adorno, 1973: 55). By calling for the immanent critique of the sacred texts of western philosophy Adorno thus anticipates the deconstruction of western metaphysics by Derrida.

Constellations

Complementing immanent critique in negative dialectics are ‘constellations.’ This is the Nietzschean idea that in order to reach any approximation of the object, one representation will not do (Best & Kellner, 1991). What is necessary are multiple representations of the object, or a variety of views around it. In Adorno’s words, ‘[a]s a constellation, theoretical

thought circles the concept it would like to unseal, hoping that it might fly open like the lock of a well-guarded safe-deposit box: in response not to a single key or a single number, but to a combination of numbers' (Adorno, 1973: 163). Constellations, by bringing together various perspectives on the object therefore provide a basis for knowledge formation: 'philosophy has to bring its elements ... into changing constellations, or, ... into changing trial combinations which can be read as an answer' (Adorno, 1977: 127). What Adorno and some of his interpreters seem to miss is the possibility of each element of the constellation issuing from a different subject, rather than from a solitary subject-philosopher who through the medium of a philosophical critique trials different interpretive combinations on the object. Adorno's method is therefore not multi-subjective. This is the route which is instead taken by Habermas (1984, 1987a, 1987b), whose theory of communicative action rests upon an Adornian intersubjective constellation derived from the validity claim perspectives of more than one subject; that is, upon a notion of 'intersubjective' as opposed to 'subject-centred' reason. It is in the multi-subjective potential of Adorno's approach that his constellations perspective may be said to anticipate in some ways the discourse ethics of Habermas.

According to Adorno, it is through the juxtaposition of constellations with immanent critique that it becomes possible to illuminate aspects of 'unintentional reality' (Adorno, 1977: 127). In other words, to see what is not usually seen when looking at the object, because of the tendency towards identity thinking and an acceptance of the way in which the object wishes to be received. In relation to the text this tendency towards identity thinking may be interpreted as a willingness to look no further than the preferred reading and how the text seems to want to be read. If the text however is made the subject/object of an immanent critique in combination with a constellations perspective, the following educational gloss seems possible. In a critical reading the perspectives of students may be said to represent a constellation of opinions about a text; this is because the text has been read from the

individual perspective of each member of the class. In the ensuing discussion these perspectives are made public in the contexts of group and open-class discussion, as well as in the context of a possible problematisation of the text. This problematisation will occur whenever the text can be shown to include elements which do not seem to be properly or fully accounted for. If this can be demonstrated, the text may be said to project a meaning which is not part of its preferred reading, and which therefore seems to undermine its intent.

Critical reading: Derrida and deconstruction

The second element in developing a theorisation of procedure is Derrida's method of deconstruction. Derrida has written of method in many places. For example, in *Of Grammatology* (1976), particularly in the section on 'The Exorbitant Question of Method' (pp. 157-164), in *Positions* (1981a), in *Limited Inc.* (1988) and in *Points* (1995); and it is these texts which I have used as my principal sources. I have adopted a similar attitude to Derrida and deconstruction as that expressed by Fairclough (1992: 38) in relation to Foucault and discourse. Fairclough argues that one cannot simply apply Foucault's ideas on discourse to CDA; it is rather 'a matter of putting Foucault's perspective to work' within it. I would also say then that you cannot simply apply deconstruction to critical reading. It must also be put to work, and this requires adapting it conceptually while attempting to preserve its procedural integrity.

According to Derrida, to do deconstruction requires more than anything else the capacity to ask questions: 'The only attitude (the only politics – judicial, medical, pedagogical, and so forth) I would *absolutely* condemn is one which directly or indirectly, cuts off the possibility of an essentially interminable questioning, that is, an effective and thus transforming questioning' (Derrida, 1995: 239). His work is characterised in many places by a marked critical forthrightness. In *Points* (1995), for example, he declares that 'The critical idea ... must never be renounced,' that it is 'one of the forms and manifestations' of

deconstruction (*ibid*: 357), and that in order to resist the ‘danger’ of the power of the press ‘one must exercise one’s critical judgement, speak, study, respond, increase the number of examples, create counter-powers, and above all invent new spaces and new forms, new types of publication and communication – and we must begin now preparing ourselves and students to do this’ (Derrida, 1995: 449). Derrida has also used the term ‘critical reading’ to describe deconstruction. It first appears in *Of Grammatology* (1976). Here Derrida talks of the method of deconstruction as a ‘doubling commentary;’ that is, first, as a descriptive commentary of how the text wants to be read (the reading of minimal consensus) and, second, as a fine-grained commentary which engages in and problematises the first. It is here that he notes, ‘This moment of doubling commentary should no doubt have its place in *a critical reading*’ (Derrida, 1976: 158; emphasis added). But he goes on:

To recognize and respect all its classical exigencies is not easy and requires all the instruments of traditional criticism. Without this recognition and this respect, critical production would risk developing in any direction at all and authorize itself to say almost anything. But this indispensable guardrail has always only *protected*, it has never *opened* a reading. (Derrida, 1976: 158).

The preferred reading, this indispensable guardrail, is therefore the position from which deconstruction begins; it is the point at which the text may be opened to its other possibilities. In these terms deconstruction is a means of preventing the closure of the text and of problematising its apparent self-certainties. According to Derrida, ‘our reading must be intrinsic and remain within the text’ (Derrida, 1976: 159). That is, it is not enough simply to be in disagreement with the text; there has to be some critical demonstration which engages the text from within. As Critchley (1999a: 26) puts it, ‘[a] deconstructive reading must ...

remain within the limits of textuality, hatching its eggs within the flesh of the host.’ A deconstructive reading adheres to a set of principles. These are outlined in *Fig. 3*.

Fig. 3. Derrida's principles of critical reading

- A critical reading respects how the text seems to want to be read; it adheres to norms of minimal intelligibility; it affirms what the text seems to want to say;
- it takes place within the bounds of the text; it is intrinsic to the text;
- it is a double reading; it is a doubling commentary;
- it maps the text;
- it inscribes itself upon the text;
- it reinscribes the text through rigorous commentary;
- it isolates features of the text which appear problematic to the dominant reading;
- it shows the text what it does not seem to know; it reveals the text’s self-transgression – its ‘structural unconscious;’
- it problematises; it interrupts;
- a critical reading deconstructs.

(Based on Derrida, 1976, 1981a, 1988, 1995)

Derrida first outlines his reading method in *Of Grammatology* where he undertakes a deconstructive reading of Rousseau’s *Essay on the Origin of Languages*. In this text Derrida’s argument hinges upon the ambivalent meaning of the French word *supplément* (supplement) in Rousseau’s text. Rousseau wishes to dismiss writing as a mere appendage of speech, a degraded and debasing ‘supplement’ which undermines the purity of the spoken word in its proximity to thought and reason. But Derrida notes that *supplément* has two meanings. On the one hand, it can mean something added on; and this is the sense, or ‘centre,’ which Rousseau wishes to give it. On the other, it can also mean ‘*in-the-place-of*, ... as if one fills a void’ (*Of Grammatology*: 1976: 145; original emphasis). On this logic the supplement is only added on because there is something missing from the thing that it is

being added on to; speech in this case. The supplement is therefore not simply an addition to speech but also a necessary restoration or replacement of something that is missing in speech. Writing in this perspective both adds to speech and restores it; it is not merely an appendage. Derrida by careful argument attempts to show how Rousseau has privileged only the additive sense of *supplément* and made this the centre of his text. But for Derrida, *supplément* is an ‘undecidable’ which cannot be faithful to the centre of meaning which Rousseau wishes it to have. Using ‘levers’ which are therefore supplied by Rousseau’s text, Derrida turns Rousseau’s text back on itself and causes it to confront its own pathology, or ‘structural unconscious’ (Derrida, 1988: 73). Derrida thus imitates the critical gesture of Adorno. When confronted with itself, the text may fail to live up to its concept – the self-image which is the ‘reading of minimal consensus.’

Derrida demonstrates, on the basis of meticulously close and careful readings of many of these texts, for example of Plato, Rousseau and more recently John Austin that far from being closed and transparent systems of meaning, these texts are often contradictory and self-problematizing, and that they may be made to slip from their preferred intentions (see Derrida, 1976, 1981b, 1988; Norris, 1987; Harland, 1993). This is the move of deconstruction. Often this move will turn on the identification of a fragment – a word or phrase in a text – which is considered marginal and unimportant to the main argument, and is perhaps only in the text as an aside or secondary observation, and showing how this fragment may contain meanings and implications which if brought forward and placed alongside the text’s main argument may be seen to undermine that argument, to disturb its self-assumed harmony, and even overturn it. Derrida applies this methodology generally to the philosophical texts that he reads.

While this is the method preferred by Derrida for undertaking a deconstruction of philosophical texts, it would be unwise to follow this particular deconstructionist path too

closely. Firstly, unlike deconstruction, the model of CDA which this paper proposes is not concerned with metaphysical critique. Secondly, and more significantly, Derrida's view of discourse, like that of Foucault's, has the flaw that it contains a rather narrow view of discourse. Where Foucault often seems sententially preoccupied with 'statements' (Foucault, 1989 [1972]; Fairclough, 1992), Derrida seems preoccupied with the metaphorical ambivalence of single words and phrases, such as *supplément* in the work of Rousseau, *pharmakon* in the work of Plato, and *parasitic* or fictional speech acts in the work of John Austin, and it is on these that his deconstructions tend to turn (see Derrida, 1976, 1981, 1988; Harland, 1993). Derrida shows little concern for the broader meaning modalities of texts, such as lexical collocation and chaining, grammatical and rhetorical features, image and semiosis, for example. There is also little regard for the social contexts in which texts are produced and in which they circulate, or for the ideological and discursive frameworks to which they refer. Derrida's view of discourse is therefore quite a restrictive one for CDA, even as it is painstakingly textual. If CDA is to adopt the procedural methodology of deconstruction, there is a need then to broaden its focus, so that these wider aspects of discourse and text may be brought into consideration.

A central point for Derrida is that the first reading should not be understood as the reproduction of a primary or true meaning of the text: 'the originary and true layer of a text's intentional meaning; ... No, this commentary is *already* an interpretation' (Derrida, 1988: 143; original emphasis). It is important, however, that the first interpretation should attempt to reproduce the dominant or preferred reading of the text in the form of a minimal consensus concerning the text's intrinsic intelligibility; 'no research is possible in a community ... without the prior search for this minimal consensus' (*ibid*: 146), and therefore no critical reading would be possible either. This first and affirming moment of reading represents for Derrida nothing less than a 'principle of reason' and 'deontology' in the reading of texts

(Derrida, 1995: 427 and 430), ‘[o]therwise,’ he writes, ‘one could indeed just say anything at all and I have never accepted saying, or encouraging others to say, just anything at all’ (*ibid*: 144-45; see also Critchley, 1999a: 24; Derrida, 1976: 158). With this understanding Derrida’s procedural schematic for deconstruction may be said to involve two stages of interpretation, which when combined with Adorno’s perspective of immanent critique, may be utilised as a preliminary basis for a procedure of critical reading. This is outlined in *Fig. 4*.

Fig. 4. TACO: a preliminary procedure

1. **Descriptive interpretation:** the preferred reading. What is the preferred reading (the main message of the text; the reading which accords with the way the text seems to want to be read; the reading of minimal consensus)?
2. **Deconstructive (or immanent) interpretation:** the preferred reading measured against the texture of the text. Does any aspect of the texture of the text appear to contradict or undermine the preferred reading?

In this procedure the first reading reproduces the preferred reading as a first stage of interpretation. The second reading holds a mirror to the first and through a rigorous examination of the text looks for possible ‘blind spots’ and incongruities which may have been passed over or neglected and which seem problematic to the first reading. This is the second stage of interpretation in which text’s immanent features are juxtaposed to the preferred reading. Questions which might be asked from this perspective include: ‘What is the preferred reading, and how far does the text itself seem to replicate this reading? Do any incongruencies appear as a result of the second reading which seem to have been glossed over or ignored in the production of the first?’

In the TACO perspective the texture of the text includes the visual layout and how this appears; the lexical, grammatical and genre dimensions of the text and the meanings

these suggest; and the overall frames of social reference within which the text seems to make sense. These social frames refer to frameworks of understanding in the production and interpretation of texts and relate to conceptual notions of, for example, gender, politics, the economy, family, health, beauty, business, income, age, success, failure, etc. Habermas (1984, 1987b) refers to these notions as being part of our ‘lifeworld knowledge;’ Bourdieu (1991) uses the term ‘habitus,’ and Fairclough (1989, 2001) has referred to ‘Members Resources.’ Thompson, in reference to Bourdieu’s habitus, defines this as incorporating ‘a set of dispositions which incline agents to act and react in certain ways. The dispositions generate practices, perceptions and attitudes which are ‘regular’ without being consciously coordinated or governed by any ‘rule’’ (Thompson, 1991: 12). If Derrida’s doubling commentary is to account for the wider meaning modalities of the text and the lifeworld practices, perceptions and attitudes referred to by Thompson, it needs more procedural detail about, for example, the frame of the text (where it begins and ends), the topic (what is it?), and the subject position which is set up for the reader. If these dimensions are added to Derrida’s procedural framework, it looks like this:

Fig. 5. The Text as a Critical Object

1. **Descriptive Interpretation:** the frame of the text; the visual organisation of the text; the topic; the preferred reading and the reading position.
2. **Representative Interpretation:** interpretation of the image, grammar, vocabulary and genre choices of the text.
3. **Social Interpretation:** the social context(s) which the text seems to be a part of: e.g. contexts of gender, race, economy, politics, family, class, income, age, sex, property, geography, etc.
4. **Deconstructive Interpretation:** aspects of the descriptive, representative and social dimensions of the text which appear to contradict or undermine the preferred reading.

This, in brief, is the critical reading procedure which I call TACO. In some respects these stages may be thought of as an ‘unfolding’ of Derrida’s procedure for deconstruction, and also of Adorno’s procedure for immanent critique. The first stage corresponds to Derrida’s first reading in which the preferred reading is reproduced. It also corresponds to Adorno’s identification of the self-image of the object in immanent critique. The second, third and fourth stages correspond to Derrida’s second reading where the texture of the text is studied in closer detail. Again, these stages may be said to correspond to what I call the ‘mirror stage’ in immanent critique where the object is confronted with its ‘self.’ The close, immanent, reading of the text is most concentrated at the representative interpretation stage where the discourse features of the text are considered. This stage may be said to act a textual anchor for the third and fourth stages of the reading. That is, it is in relation to the second stage that interpretation at the third and fourth stages is made possible. Moreover, because the social and deconstructive interpretations take place by way of the text, this has the further implication that all of the stages in this procedure are therefore dependent upon the text and are not separate from it. The full procedure is set out below.

The Text as a Critical Object

1. ***Descriptive interpretation:*** the frame of the text, the visual organisation of the text, the topic, the reading position, the preferred reading, and the ideal reader.
2. ***Representative interpretation:*** interpretation of the image, grammar, vocabulary and genre choices of the text.
3. ***Social interpretation:*** the social context(s) which the text seems to be a part of: e.g. contexts of gender, race, disability, economy, politics, family, class, income, age, sex, property, geography etc.
4. ***Deconstructive interpretation:*** aspects of the descriptive, representative and social dimensions of the text which appear to contradict or undermine the preferred reading.

Questions to ask:

1. Descriptive interpretation

- What is the frame of the text and how does the text look?
- What is the topic?
- How is the topic being presented (e.g. formal, informal, persuasive, aggressive, angry, friendly, humorous, comic, etc.)?
- What is the preferred reading (the main message of the text; the reading which accords with the way the text seems to want to be read; the reading of minimal consensus)?
- Who might be the ideal reader of this text? E.g. A person who ...

2. Representative interpretation

- What social values can be attached to the **discourse features** of the text (image/vocabulary/grammar/genre)?

Image

1. How is the text organised visually? E.g. is it in columns or is it a single block of text? Are words written in different sized fonts?
2. Does the text use words and pictures? If so, what is the balance between words and pictures? Where are words and pictures in relation to one another?
3. If the text is a combination of visual and written modes, or is written in a variety of formats, what is on the left (in the GIVEN position)? What is on the right (in the NEW position)? What is located in the upper part of the text (in the IDEAL position)? What is located in the lower part of the text (in the REAL position)?
4. What are the effects of these choices on the text?

Vocabulary

1. What kind of vocabulary is used in the text? E.g. formal/informal, positive/negative, casual/dramatic, emotional/serious.
2. What semantic fields (word families) do vocabulary choices belong to?
3. What vocabulary is associated with the participants in the text? Do these choices create a particular impression of the participants?
4. Is there any vocabulary which seems very important?
5. What words are given capital letters, italicised, underlined, put in inverted commas?
6. What are the effects of these choices on the text?

Grammar

1. What tenses are used in the text? Do any of these seem very important?
2. Does the text use ‘we’, ‘you’ or ‘I’? When and how does the text use them?
3. Are there any nominalisations in the text? When are they used?
4. When are active and passive constructions used? Are there any common themes attached to the use of these different voices? What is usually foregrounded or backgrounded in these constructions? Are the agents animate or inanimate?
5. In the text as a whole which information is put first? What is thematised?
6. What are the effects of these choices on the text?

Genre

1. To what genre does the text belong? (advertisement, news report, narrative, political statement, notice etc?). Is there mixing of genres?
2. If there is mixing of genres, what are the effects of these choices on the text?

3. Social interpretation

- What social frameworks is the text a part of (e.g. gender, race, economy, business, politics, family, class, income, age, sex, property, geography, etc.)?
- What typical kinds of social knowledge do these frameworks suggest?

4. Deconstructive interpretation

- Does any aspect of the text's structure (descriptive, representative, social) appear to contradict or undermine the text's preferred reading?

The questions listed under each stage will need some explanation but are not entirely unfamiliar to those which can be found in other models of CDA (e.g. Fowler et al, 1979; Fairclough, 1989, 2001; Wallace, 1992, 2003). Considering the framework as a whole, a key difference from these other models is that some aspects of multimodal analysis have been incorporated into it, particularly in relation to image. These image features are derived from the multimodal perspectives of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 1998; see also Kress, 2000) and I would encourage interested readers to refer to the cited references for an explanation of relevant terms. The other main difference is that this framework is not proceduralised in terms of the Hallidayan classification of the text which was discussed earlier. This I feel makes the framework more accessible to use because it is no longer a characteristic of the procedure that the interpretation of different discourse features is dependent upon relating them to Hallidayan metafunctions of meaning or, as was noted for Fairclough's approach, to experiential, relational, identity and connective values. It is the range of meaning relations which the Hallidayan classification implies which can make Fairclough's procedure quite difficult to apply and use, and is one of the reasons why I have sought alternatives. In *Fig. 6* Fairclough's procedure is juxtaposed with my own. This table shows more clearly how the TACO procedure differs from as well as corresponds to his.

Fig. 6. Fairclough's CDA and TACO

Fairclough's CDA	TACO
	Descriptive interpretation: the frame of the text, the visual organisation of the text, the topic, the preferred reading, reading position, and ideal reader.
Description and interpretation of the formal linguistic properties of texts. E.g. experiential, relational, expressive/identity, and connective values of the vocabulary and grammar dimensions of the text.	Representative interpretation: description and interpretation of the immanent features of the text - image, grammar, vocabulary and genre.
Interpretation of the relationship between productive and interpretative discursive processes and the text.	
Explanation of the relationship between discursive processes and social processes.	Social interpretation: the social context(s) which the text seems to be a part of; e.g. contexts of gender, race, disability, economy, politics, family, class, income, age, sex, property, geography, etc.
	Deconstructive interpretation: aspects of the descriptive, representative and social dimensions of the text which appear to contradict or undermine the preferred reading.

With *Fig. 6* it is possible to suggest some further procedural differences between Fairclough's framework and my own. The first of these is that taken as a whole the TACO framework is differently 'synchronised' to Fairclough's. In his procedure detailed consideration and interpretation of the discourse features of the text are incorporated into his description stage. The move to the detail of the text in Fairclough's model is therefore an immediate one; and for this reason it seems 'bottom-up.' In my own procedure I want readers to develop a broader understanding and overview of the text prior to moving to a more detailed analysis of it and so at the descriptive interpretation stage the focus is on how the text seems to be operating as a textual event. By this I mean how the text in the view of

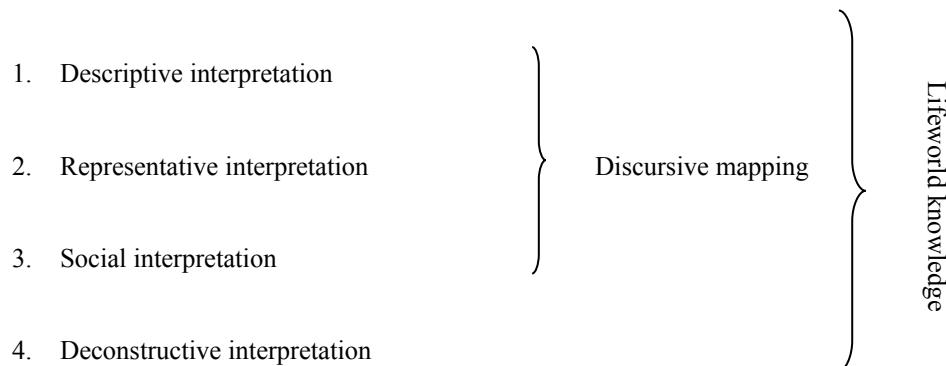
the reader seems to wish to be received. The questions at this stage are therefore broadly evaluative of how the text is orienting itself to the reader. How does the text look, what is the text trying to say, what is the topic, and what kind of person does the text seem to have been produced for? Because Fairclough does not seem to incorporate this type of orientation to the text, his procedure in the way that it is constructed might be said to bypass the first reading of a Derridean/Adornian approach and to begin at the second more detailed one. His procedure is therefore not a doubling commentary or immanent critique in the sense which has been presented here.

Another difference is that I have presented the deconstructive interpretation in my framework as being an additional stage which extends beyond Fairclough's three stages. While comparisons of this kind may be somewhat arbitrary, the reason for presenting it in this way is to show that while the principles of CDA can be seen to overlap with deconstruction and with immanent critique, the destabilisation of the self-certainties of the text is not an absolute requirement of a TACO approach. This also means that in this approach a reading can still be critical even when the text is not deconstructed. A key aspect of this approach is that it looks to examine the discursive ways in which human beings construct the world in the way that they do (Foucault, 1980; Smith and Deemer, 2000; Pennycook, 2001). That is, critical interpretation as a process of 'discursive mapping' which explores our enmeshment in the textual construction of social life (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Derrida, 1988; Foucault, 1989 [1972]; Pennycook, 1994; Kress, 1996; Jameson, 1998). Discursive mapping is the staged process by which a text becomes a critical object.

The deconstructive interpretation in TACO comes at the point where a discursive mapping of the text has already occurred, that is, via the first three stages of the framework. But the deconstructive interpretation will not be automatic because not all texts will lend themselves to it. I am thinking here of mundane or purely informational texts, for example,

bus tickets, fire notices, no smoking signs, or instructions for installing a piece of software. That some texts may not lend themselves to a deconstructive interpretation is not just confined to mundane texts however. The same will also be true of elaborate texts such as newspaper articles, advertisements, web pages, and other texts of a more complex design, which having gone through a process of critical reading may be found to say exactly what they seem to intend to say. But even if this is the outcome, and the text is not deconstructed, the purpose is to take the interpretation of the text to that point, to its deconstructive ‘rim,’ because what is achieved by going through the first three stages is a systematic account of the way the text appears to construct, reconstruct and generally make sense of that part of the reality to which it belongs. The process of discursive mapping is illustrated in *Fig. 7*.

Fig. 7. Discursive Mapping



This illustration shows how our lifeworld knowledge/habitus/MR is not just an element of the social interpretation but is inherent to each of the interpretative stages of the procedure, including the deconstructive one. All interpretations depend upon lifeworld knowledge. Without this knowledge interpretation could not occur, and discursive mapping and deconstruction would not be possible.

Critical reading and discussion: Habermas and the public sphere

The final element in a theorisation of procedure relates not to exegesis but to discussion. I will make some observations on discussion and its relationship to procedure which have been suggested by Habermas's accounts of communicative action in the public sphere (Habermas, 1984, 1987a, 1987b, 1989a, 1989b, 1992, 1996). It is from Habermas that a procedural theorisation of discussion which is applicable to the classroom may be derived. In Habermas's view, the societal public sphere is in crisis due to the colonisation of the lifeworld by instrumental reason. Instrumental reason represents a form of domination, and if people are to be freed from domination, it is necessary to struggle against this tendency and to preserve and maintain discursive spaces within the lifeworld. Habermas discusses this in terms of the rediscovery of the political public sphere, or 'civil society,' which is 'constituted by voluntary unions outside the realm of the state and the economy' (Habermas, 1992: 454). It is in this public sphere that 'there can come into being a discursive formation of opinion and will on the part of a public composed of the citizens of a state' (ibid: 446). The public sphere includes 'churches, cultural associations, academies, independent media, debating societies, groups of concerned citizens, grass-roots petitioning drives, occupational associations, political parties, labour unions, and "alternative institutions"' (ibid: 446). Although not included in this list, the classroom can be conceived as one such space. According to Fraser (1992), the Habermasian public sphere 'designates a theatre ... in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk. It is the space in which citizens deliberate about their common affairs, and hence an institutionalised arena of discursive interaction ... it is a site for the production and circulation of discourses that can in principle be critical of the state' (Fraser, 1992: 110-11). The public sphere also adheres to certain rules and conditions:

Access to the public sphere is open in principle to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere is constituted in every conversation in which private persons come together to form a public ... Citizens act as a public when they deal with matters of general interest without being subject to coercion; thus with the guarantee that they may assemble and unite freely, and express and publicise their opinions freely. (Habermas, 1989b: 231)

In *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (henceforth STPS) Habermas discusses the classical bourgeois public sphere of the 18th century. He identifies this as a period of highly developed public sphere activity. The public sphere at this time was able to perform its critical function very effectively because the institutions which made it up, the coffee houses, *salons*, table societies etc, operated according a number of institutional criteria which they held in common. The first of these was that ‘they preserved a kind of social intercourse that, far from presupposing the equality of status, disregarded status altogether’ (Habermas, 1989a: 50). The mutual willingness to suspend status distinctions ‘was based on the justifiable trust that within the public – presupposing its shared class interest – friend or foe relations were impossible,’ and this allowed ‘reasonable forms of public discussion’ to occur (ibid: 131).

The second criterion which the institutions of the public sphere held in common was that ‘discussion within such a public presupposed the problematisation of areas that until then had not been questioned’ (ibid: 36). Until the 18th century the institutions which had held a monopoly of interpretation on philosophy, on literature, and on the arts had been the church and the state, but with the development of capitalism these ‘culture products’ became commodities and ‘as commodities they became in principle generally accessible’ (ibid: 36). This meant that many topics which had hitherto not been opened to public interpretation and discussion became topics of discussion within the public sphere ‘in as much as the public defined its discourse as focusing on all matters of public concern’ (Calhoun, 1992: 13).

The third criterion which Habermas identifies as held in common by the institutions of the public sphere is that they were inclusive. Anyone with access to cultural products (books, plays, journals, etc.) ‘as readers, listeners, and spectators could avail themselves via the market of the objects that were subject to discussion’ (*ibid*: 37). A key issue is that these objects can also be conceived as texts. If the objects that are subject to discussion are understood in this manner, then Habermas’s perspective can be seen to complement the text/object perspectives of Adorno and Derrida. Where Adorno and Derrida can be employed to theorise the procedure for reading texts, Habermas can be used to theorise the discussion of them. If the main points of *STPS* are applied to a theorisation of discussion, the following ‘conditions of discussion’ may be suggested (*Fig. 8*). These conditions suggest theorised grounds for the possibility as well as the procedure of critical discussion in the public space of the university classroom and may be understood as representing an initial recontextualisation of a discourse model of public space to such a classroom.

Fig. 8 TACO conditions of discussion: a public sphere approach

1. Discussants are bound by institutional norms of constraint; these include a disregard for social status between discussants, a respect for rights of participation, and the expectation of intersubjective communication;
2. A critical discussion involves the problematisation of areas that are not usually questioned;
3. A critical discussion illuminates some aspect of perceived reality from the perspective of different discussants; a critical discussion is a constellation of views;
4. The object of a critical discussion is a text;
5. A critical discussion is, in principle, open to anyone; a critical discussion is inclusive.

Habermas’s first reaction in *STPS* and then in later works such as *Theory and Practice* (1974) and *Legitimation Crisis* (1976) was to determine how it would be possible to reconstruct a critical discourse in the midst of the technocratic rise of instrumental reason. In

STPS he argues for greater democratisation within institutions; ‘their inner structure must first be organised in accord with the principle of publicity ... to allow for unhampered communication and public rational-critical debate’ (Habermas, 1989a: 209). Not satisfied with this solution, however, mainly because of what he sees as a continued tendency towards a discourse of the subject, he increasingly turns towards language and an investigation of the intersubjective grounds of communication.

An important concomitant development in the process of his thought at this time is the conceptual distinction he makes between a systems world and a lifeworld. The systems world is the world of technocratic consciousness and instrumental reason, of systemic solutions to systemic problems; the lifeworld is the world of personal relationships and communicative action. For Habermas, the early Frankfurt School, including himself, had placed too much emphasis on the instrumental rationalisation of society to the extent that any potential for emancipation appeared etiolated and flattened; their collective mistake, in his view, had been to generalise instrumental reason to the point where it became representative of reason as a whole (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). In this context instrumental reason, the reason of technocracy and bureaucracy, is individualised because it is primarily realised in terms of the individual and collective acts of technocrats. In other words, it had become another example of the philosophy of consciousness, or the discourse of the subject. According to Outhwaite (1996: 15), ‘If rationalisation is seen as in this way, as the performance of an individual or collective *subject*, mastering itself as part of the extension of its power, there is no obvious way out of such traps.’

Habermas’s conception of the lifeworld, which he brings to fruition in *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1984, 1987b), represents a diagnostic correction to the overgeneralisation of instrumental reason. The lifeworld represents for Habermas our unspoken background knowledge of the world against which we enter into communication.

In addition to being cognitive horizon of meaning, it also represents the complex of everyday practices, customs and ideas of a society. The lifeworld is always oriented to communication and is ‘the correlate of processes of reaching understanding’ (Habermas, 1984: 70). In this sense it may also be said to represent an allegorical reconstruction of the public sphere, in which the processes of reaching an understanding are a reconstruction of rational-critical debate as well as being processes of communicative action. It is through these processes that the lifeworld is symbolically produced and reproduced in a manner reminiscent of Foucault’s discursive formations (Foucault, 1989 [1972]). The dialectical bond of the lifeworld and communicative action are counterposed by Habermas to the systems world. This enables him to realise ‘a two-tiered concept of society as lifeworld and as system’ (Habermas, 1992: 444). Although they are counterposed to one another, the lifeworld and the systems world are not mutually exclusive; they require one another in order to exist.

The systems world is the world of technocratic consciousness. Habermas represents the systems world as existing in a symbiotic, if one-sidedly symbiotic, relationship with the lifeworld. The systems world might imagine itself existing without the lifeworld, but the lifeworld must not be allowed to achieve the systemic effacement the systems world, even if that seems appealing, because without a systems world we would, according to Habermas, exist in chaos, with profoundly negative consequences for social organisation. In his own words, ‘systemic mechanisms need to be anchored in the lifeworld’ (Habermas, 1987b: 154). For example, the existence of systems world constructs in the lifeworld, such as the rule of law and conceptions of justice and human rights are, according to Habermas, essential, as well as welcome, contributions to social organisation. Equally, a society where all decisions had to be universally agreed before they could be implemented would quickly cease functioning if some system of plebiscitory democratic representation were not introduced (Calhoun, 1992).

The principal sources for a perspective of communicative action recontextualised as a discursive response to the text are *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (1979), the first volume of *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1984), and *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (1989c). Habermas's conception of communicative action is encapsulated in the idea of 'a universal pragmatics' whose task is 'to identify and reconstruct universal conditions of possible understanding' (Habermas, 1996: 118). Having considered the possibilities for a reconstruction of the public sphere through institutional democratisation (Calhoun, 1992), Habermas turns to the general presuppositions of communication, or 'validity claims,' which in his view are universally present in speech, and which Grice (1975) in another context labelled 'maxims of cooperation.' Habermas articulates these presuppositions in a manner which is similar to Grice, but perhaps with less rigour. For Habermas a communicating actor who is oriented to understanding must raise at least three validity claims with an utterance, namely:

1. That the statement is true (or that the existential presuppositions of the propositional content mentioned are in fact satisfied);
2. That the speech act is right with respect to the existing normative context (or that the normative context it is supposed to satisfy is itself legitimate); and
3. That the manifest intention of the speaker is meant as it is expressed.

(Habermas, 1984: 99)

These claims may be glossed as suggesting the following universal principles of understanding:

- comprehensibility (that the speaker is intelligible)
- truth (that the speaker tells the truth)
- truthfulness (that the speaker intends to tell the truth)

- correctness (that against a recognised normative background the utterance chosen by the speaker is right and appropriate to the context)

The model of communicative action which is presupposed by these principles is idealised. It is idealised because Habermas wishes to elaborate from these principles normative grounds for the possibility of universal consensus. That is, he wishes to use the cooperative norms of intersubjective communication as the basis for a universal moral theory or discourse ethics; it is therefore a conception of the grounds of universal morality in the abstract. Although necessarily an idealisation, the process of reaching an understanding requires that participants in communication orient themselves towards the possibility of agreement. The theory of communicative action is therefore not only a theory of the possibility of reaching understanding, but also a theory of reaching that understanding *through a process of discussion*. According to this perspective, if the universal principles of understanding are taken as the normative basis of communication, all validity claims raised in discussion, or in argument, may be measured for their truth and for their moral rightfulness against that normative base. In this way moral judgements can be made and a universally legitimate moral consensus can in principle be reached according to the accepted strength of the better argument.

The importance of Habermas's discourse ethics for this paper is not the moral standpoint which it encodes, but its representation of the process of discussion through which understanding might be reached. If the theory of communicative action is read through the lens of an orientation to discussion, rather than according to an orientation to agreement, and this is done in conjunction with what he has said about rational public discourse and the reconstruction of the public sphere, Habermas's thought becomes an extremely valuable resource for theorising the process of discussion which might follow a critical reading. This

is because his thought is, above all, about the elaboration of a proceduralist theory of communication:

The principle of discourse ethics (D) makes reference to a *procedure*: ... Practical discourse. Practical discourse ... is a procedure for testing the validity of norms that are being proposed and hypothetically considered for adoption. That means that practical discourses depend on content brought to them from outside' (Habermas, 1996: 187; original emphasis).

In a classroom context, what Habermas refers to as a practical discourse is in effect a discussion between two or more class members regarding the interpretations which they have each arrived at as a result of a critical reading. These class members, or 'discussants,' are exchanging information about a common object of discussion, a text, which they have all read and analysed according the four stage procedure described earlier in this paper. In this interpretative process they will have attempted to test the validity of norms that adhere to the way the text seems to want to be read, its preferred reading. Taking this further we may also say that their interpretations are derived from 'content brought to them from outside' in the sense that the text has arrived in the classroom from another lifeworld context, for example that of a newspaper or magazine, and also in the sense of their background knowledge of the world; without which their interpretations would not be possible: 'It would be utterly pointless to engage in a practical discourse without the horizon provided by the lifeworld' (ibid: 187). The notion of a 'practical discourse' is according to Benhabib (1992: 87) the defining feature of a public sphere: 'The public sphere comes into existence wherever and whenever all affected by general social and political norms of action engage in a practical discourse, evaluating their validity.'

In *The Theory of Communicative Action* there are many points where a proceduralist attitude to discussion is apparent. Habermas informs us that the concept of communicative

action assumes interaction between at least two subjects who are able to establish interpersonal relations and that central to this task is the concept of interpretation: ‘The central concept of *interpretation* refers in the first instance to negotiating definitions of the situation which admit of consensus’ (Habermas, 1984: 86; original emphasis). Similarly, in a discussion relating to the interpretation of a text, classroom discussants are negotiating their impressions of (i) the preferred reading of the text and (ii) the extent to which the descriptive, representative, and social dimensions of the text are congruent with that initial reading. The proceduralist theme is frequently taken up by Habermas. One passage in particular seems especially relevant, and I have added my own parenthetical gloss to it in order to illustrate why it seems an important procedural statement for the purposes of this paper:

A speaker puts forward a criticisable claim in relating with his utterance to at least one “world” (text); he thereby uses the fact that this relation between actor (reader) and world (text) is in principle open to objective appraisal in order to call upon his opposite number (partner) to take a rationally (textually) motivated position. The concept of communicative action presupposes language as the medium for a kind of reaching of understanding, in the course of which participants (readers), through relating to a world (text), reciprocally raise validity claims (interpretations) that can be accepted or contested. (Habermas, 1984: 99)

The process of agreement in a public sphere according to Habermas (1992: 446) represents the process by which there is ‘a discursive formation of public opinion and will on the part of a public composed of the citizens of a state’ (Habermas, 1992: 446). The idea of discursive will formation may be adapted to a discussion of the text insofar as discussants attempt to reach some collective understanding of a text, with the difference that they may or may not reach an agreement regarding their interpretations. I call this process of collective understanding ‘discursive knowledge formation.’ Discursive knowledge formation is the

pedagogic outcome of a discursive exchange about a text, in which other discussants' observations contribute to a collective 'constellatory' impression of the text. As absolute consensus is 'rather the exception in the communicative practice of everyday life' (Habermas, 1984: 100), a collective understanding may be understood as containing elements of the consensual as well as the non-consensual. More important than an undifferentiated consensus is the fact of an exchange of views, and that class members have oriented themselves to the conditions of discussion which apply to the constitution of an educational public sphere, or arena of discursive relations. That is, there should in principle be equality of access to discussion, and that students are oriented to the expectation spoken interactions in pairs, groups or as a whole class.

Systems and power

These are primarily issues of classroom management; they are also issues of power. All classrooms are sites of power and power relations, particularly between teachers and their students, but also in a classroom's existence within the structural and discursive matrices of an educational institution, such as a university. Teachers must plan lessons and apply some systemic organisation to their classrooms and, in order to do so, they must exercise their power, and adopt certain roles or 'subject positions' when there. In Habermas's words, 'The competent combination of specialised performances requires a delegation of the authority to direct, or of *power*, to persons who take on the tasks of organisation' (Habermas, 1987b: 160; emphasis in original). The ubiquity of power relations should not be seen as necessarily problematic (Chouliaraki, 1998; Mellor and Patterson 2001). This is because the exercise of power and the attendant power relations which cause classroom participants to enter certain subject positions, for example as students and as teachers, are what make a classroom what it is; i.e. a place where people gather to learn. In this there are also certain parallels with Foucault. When Habermas refers to the delegation of power, he is referring to the systems

world and the necessity of there being some form of organisation for the lifeworld to be able to function, and this is not dissimilar to how Foucault sees power as ‘employed and exercised through a net-like organisation’ (Foucault, 1980: 98). It is through the discursive threads of power, and the systemic networks which people enter into, that subject positions and therefore identities are constructed (Foucault, 1981, 1982). The argument that some kind of system is necessary in order for us to be able to do anything at all may be applied to the classroom context where there must be some organisational point from which discussion can begin, i.e. a *system* of pedagogic organisation, or learning could not occur. There therefore seems to be a possible, if necessarily tentative, coincidence between Foucault and Habermas on the question of power because both of them see systemic power as a constraint which allows us to act. Foucault, because power is subjectifying; it establishes the subject positions according to which individuals are able to participate in discursive practices; and Habermas, because the systems world confers necessary organisational mechanisms on the lifeworld which are needed if the lifeworld is to be able to function.

We may also see the analogous logic of the systems world and the lifeworld at work in the methodology of deconstruction, where the systems world is in Derrida’s hands a minimal consensus which imposes some minimum order on the meaning of the text, and the lifeworld the opening orbit of deconstruction and the orientation to the ‘Other’ which prevents the text from becoming a uniform and unquestioned system of meaning relations. In other words, in a Habermasian vein, we may argue that the task of deconstruction is to erect a democratic dam against the encroachment of system imperatives on the interpretation of the text, in order that the text’s self-image can be recorded and held to account. Nevertheless, as with the condition of classroom discussion, critique must start somewhere, and for Derrida this somewhere is the nominal system of meaning which is the reading of minimal consensus.

The reading of minimal consensus corresponds to what Derrida (1988, 1995) calls an ‘ethics of discussion’ in the reading of texts; that you must respect the text; that you cannot just say anything about the text. From this perspective it is possible to argue that in relation to Habermas’s systems/lifeworld distinction the reading of minimal consensus in a procedure of critical reading is the corollary of a procedural system of pedagogic organisation. They are the necessary minimal constraints by which critical action in an educational context is able to occur.

The overlapping orientations of Habermas, Foucault, Adorno and Derrida to notions of systemic power and/or of systems are presented in *Fig. 9*. In addition to the systemic orientation which each of them has, I have also indicated (i) at what level these are primarily applicable (societal, institutional, or textual/objectual), (ii) what the key concepts are which may be associated with such an orientation, and (iii) how they enable a procedural and systemic orientation to discussion in pedagogic contexts.

Fig. 9. Orientations of power and systems relations in critical reading and discussion

	Orientation to systemic power and/or systems relations	Key concepts	Orientation to discussion
Habermas	systems world (societal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • technocratic consciousness • instrumental reason • organisational systems • public sphere 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conditions of discussion • absence of status differentials • rights of participation • intersubjective communication • a practical discourse
Foucault	systemic networks of power (institutional)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discursive formations • orders of discourse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contextual and discursive constraints • subject positions
Adorno	self-conception of the object; a system of preferred meaning (objectual/ textual)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appearance • immanence • a constellations perspective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • immanent critique • constellations
Derrida	a system of minimal consensus (textual/ objectual)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an indispensable guardrail • the reading of minimal consensus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • double reading • interpretation • deconstruction • an ethic of discussion

The consensual/non-consensual public sphere: Habermas and Derrida

Although Derrida and Habermas come from different philosophical traditions, a number of writers have pointed to certain coincidences of thought and purpose which seem to make possible the opening of a dialogue between them (Best & Kellner, 1991; Norris, 1992; Critchley, 1999b; Borradori, 2003). If ethics is interpreted as a concern for openness, justice, truth, and responsibility, and deconstruction as a sustained and critical questioning of claims to truth, there does seem to be an ‘ethical Derrida’ as well as a ‘deconstructing Habermas’ to be found in and between the lines of their texts. These are demonstrably shared concerns for both thinkers. Moreover, Derrida’s ethics of discussion may be seen to reinforce and expand on Habermas’s conditions of discussion in the public sphere:

The task is always *in principle* to render an account and to *render reason*. In both cases one should mark – in the *public* space and as rationally as possible – one’s respect for the principle of reason. This should be done in principle ... through research, questioning, inquiry that seeks the “true,” analysis, presentation of what “is” or exposition of the “facts,” historical narrative, discussion, evaluation, interpretation, and putting all these propositions together thanks to what is called language, communication, information, pedagogy, and so forth. I insist on these two motifs, *the public space* and *the principle of reason*, as I have often done. (Derrida, 1995: 427; original emphasis).

Derrida and Habermas, at least in this context, do not seem so far apart as they are sometimes presented. If they are closer than they are often given credit for, then perhaps the main difference between them is their respective attitudes to political/ethical/textual openness. Although both are oriented to a politics and an ethics of openness, Derrida would hope that it remains just that, an openness without closure, an indefinite opening to the ‘Other,’ whereas Habermas would prefer a much more grounded understanding of openness

according to which the critical intersubjective adjudication of a just, rational and universally legitimating society would become possible. In other words, where Habermas's public sphere is oriented to universal consensus, Derrida's is oriented to an interminable questioning. In this light, the main difference between them may be not so much one of irreconcilability as one of philosophical/rhetorical style and emphasis (see also Norris, 1992).

Conclusion

In this paper I have argued for a theorisation of procedure in CDA which is derived from critical social theory rather than from SFL. The exegetic and discursive elements of this procedure are a combination of modernist and poststructuralist philosophical perspectives. I think that by bringing these perspectives together it is possible to reduce CDA's reliance on systemic functional linguistics for its procedural attitude to the text, and to move this onto more recognisably critical grounds. The development of this perspective has brought into dialogue some quite diverse philosophical positions, particularly between Habermas and Derrida on the public sphere, between Adorno and Derrida on interpretation, and between Habermas and Foucault on power. The combination of these perspectives in the procedural framework of this paper makes this a CDA with poststructuralist characteristics.

In addition to being a theorisation of exegetic procedure, this approach is also a theorisation of classroom-based discussion. In the public sphere of the classroom students come together as a constellation in order to exchange their readings of texts, and in order to cooperate with one another in the tasks of learning and thinking about knowledge and how it is constructed. To treat the text as a critical object is therefore to obey a set of CRITICAL injunctions with regard to any text:

C is for critical. Be critical; avoid closure

R is for respect. Respect how the text seems to want to be read

I is for interpretation. Interpret the text from within

T is for teaching. Teach your interpretation to others

I is for investigation. Investigate the interpretations of others

C is for cooperation and communication. Cooperate in order to communicate

A is for analysis. Analyse the construction of knowledge

L is for learning. Learn from the knowledge of others

If these injunctions summarise this approach, they also summarise what I see as the main theoretical contributions of Adorno, Derrida, and Habermas to this paper. This discussion has shown that each of these thinkers have theoretical perspectives which are opposed to closure. Adorno's perspective is one which resists the closure of the self-identity of the object; Derrida's is one which resists the closure of the self-certainty of the text; and Habermas's is one which resists the closure of discursive spaces in the lifeworld. For Adorno and for Derrida the task of identifying what an object or a text wishes us to understand is an important starting position in any critical procedure or practice. It is where a critical practice may be said to begin. This task also entails a certain duty of care towards the text, to respect what the text seems to want to say. By showing this respect, critical readers place some limits on what can be said, and demonstrate that it is not possible to say just anything at all. By confining ourselves to the text, interpretation therefore proceeds from within. When critical readers analyse texts, they reach individual interpretative decisions as a result of following a procedure. The point is to share these interpretations by teaching them to others, and by investigating the interpretations of others in turn. This should be a cooperative and communicative endeavour, but it need not necessarily lead to consensus; the participants in discussion can agree to disagree. When class members enter into discussions about texts there is a sense in which they are analysing the discursive construction of knowledge because texts

are discursive instances of the contexts which have produced them. Finally, by sharing, cooperating and investigating texts together, class members may be said to be engaged in a practical discourse, and therefore to be learning from the knowledge of others, whether they agree with their perspectives or not.

The theorisation of procedure which I have presented in this paper has had three principal objectives. The first has been to suggest a theorisation of procedure which is based on critical social theory rather than one which is based on SFL. The second, which is a consequence of the first, is that the framework which results is intended to be a more accessible model of analysis for educational purposes than CDA approaches which base their exegetic procedures on a systemic functional classification of the text. The third is to offer a procedural framework which can be used by both teachers and students, and by a wide range of other interested groups, when doing critical work with texts. If only the second and the third objectives meet with any success, then that would be a welcome development. With regard to the first objective, I will leave it for others to decide whether the theorisation I have presented can fill the critical-theoretical space which was identified at the start of this paper. While I hope that this may be so, I am aware that the theorisation I have proposed leaves a number of questions open, which I have not properly been able to address. These concern in particular the normative purposes of a CDA which is working within a poststructuralist perspective and the problem of the performative contradiction which this implies (Habermas, 1987a, Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, Pennycook, 2001). Can a poststructuralist CDA have a normative purpose? If so, what is it, and how is it really possible to privilege this purpose over others? Or to put this another way, on what grounds does CDA claim ‘truth’ to itself, if that is what it is? These questions have been a concern of contributors to this journal for some time (Rajagopalan, 2004; Luke, 2004, 2005; Rymes et al, 2005). My feeling is that to look for normative grounds in foundational distinctions between what is true and what is false is to

seek what cannot be found, because such normative grounds are extra-discursive and ahistorical, and are therefore outside the orbit of human experience. Since we cannot take a stand on normative grounds, at least on any normative grounds which are outside human experience, in order for a stand to be made, it must be situated *within* the ideological/historical/discursive terrain, and not outside it. Moreover, it should be guided by a multiple array of perspectives in social and cultural theory, and not just one. That is to say, rather than putting our faith in an all-encompassing ‘ism,’ we should seek to open new paths to new subjectivities through the application of a variety of ‘isms.’ This is what Nietzsche meant when he said, ‘we should learn how to employ a *variety* of affective perspectives and interpretations in the service of knowledge’ (Nietzsche: 1968b: 555; original emphasis). How we choose which perspectives, or ‘isms,’ to employ will depend on the extent to which they add to or detract from what Rajagopalan has called the project of ‘keeping the critical spirit open-ended’ (Rajagopalan, 2004: 263). It is, to recall Adorno (1973: 406), a question of not allowing critical practice to come to rest in itself, and therefore also of not allowing texts as critical objects to come to rest in themselves either. This is CDA’s form of hope.¹

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