Title: Critical Discourse Analysis, Critical Discourse Studies, and Critical Applied Linguistics

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Abstract

The common denominator in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), and Critical Applied Linguistics (CALx) is the focus on social issues and concerns and the role of discourse, or more generally semiosis, therein. Therefore, the discussion in this chapter is anchored in the relation between the identified social ills and the theoretical developments and the conceptualization of *discourse*, *ideology*, *critique*, *power*, *truth,* and *emancipation*. By linking the evolution of key concerns and theory from early forms of CDA/CDS/CALx through to contemporary approaches, we aim to provide a framework for comparison and orientation that helps researchers new to critical work to make informed theoretical and methodological choices. We also raise questions for these areas of research in the face of some of today's most pressing social, political and environmental issues, such as the undermining of democracy in the digital age, the recent political attacks on the concepts of truth and science, and the denial of climate change. In this context we ask what kinds of theoretical perspectives are needed to analyse these problems, the role of discourse as part of this, and the potential for making a difference.

Key words

discourse; ideology; truth; relativism; poststructuralism; social constructivism; critical realism

Introduction

Several overviews of the emergence and the different varieties of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) and Critical Applied Linguistics (CAL) already exist (Catalano and Waugh, 2020; Wodak and Meyer 2015; Zotzmann and O'Regan 2016; Pennycook 2001, 2021). In this chapter we focus on the relation between context – i.e. the social issues researchers commonly address – and theoretical and conceptual developments. Our objectives with this procedure are threefold: We aim to highlight the distinctiveness of critical discourse approaches in applied linguistics and to provide a framework that may assist researchers in making informed theoretical, methodological and normative choices based on the exercise of judgemental rationality. Our overview also raises questions for critical analysts of discourse in the face of today's most pressing social, political and environmental issues such as the undermining of democracy in the digital age, gross systemic inequality, attacks on the concepts of truth and scientific knowledge by populists, and the ensuing global environmental crisis. In the context of these shifts, we ask what kind of theoretical perspectives would be most suited to understanding these problems, the role of semiosis within this, and the potential for making a difference. Here, we wish to align ourselves with Fairclough, Jessop, and Sayer (2004) by arguing that semiotic analysis in CDA might benefit from a closer engagement with theoretical perspectives derived from critical realism (CR) (Bhaskar 2008a [1975]), 2008b [1993]; 2016) particularly around ontological realism, epistemic relativism, judgemental rationalism and truth.

Historical perspectives

Any form of CDA, CDS or CALx starts with a social problem before clarifying and analysing the role that discourse/semiosis plays therein. Despite the diversity of perspectives -- from neo-Marxism and Foucauldianism to a range of poststructuralist positions -- most analyses are not only critical and

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normative, but also interdisciplinary, involving areas such as sociology, philosophy, anthropology, political science, and psychology. Journals such as *Discourse and Society* (established 1990), *Critical Discourse Studies* (established in 2004) and *Critical Multilingualism Studies* (established in 2011) bear testimony to this. The name CDS indicates a shift from an original CDA to a broader theoretical engagement with issues of reception, contexts, methods, counter-hegemonic discourses and reframing (Catalano and Waugh 2020). CALx, for its part, takes up 'issues of disadvantage […] – structure and agency, ideology and discourse, colonialism and decoloniality, sexuality and discrimination [and explores] how these areas intersect with each other and how they relate to language and applied linguistic concerns' (Pennycook 2021: 20). Despite the fact that all these approaches assume that discursive practices are closely interrelated and interact with other elements of the social and the material 'extra-discursive' world, the question of how this interrelationship can be conceptualized and translated into research is, however, highly contested and dependent upon the theoretical perspectives adopted. The first section of this chapter therefore begins with earlier perspectives in CDA referencing key concepts such as *discourse*, *ideology*, *critique*, *truth,* and *emancipation*.

CDA originally emerged out of the field of critical linguistics established by Fowler, Hodge, Kress, and Trew (1979) and Hodge and Kress (1979) in the 1970s. These authors began to draw upon social theory to understand how contextual factors influence the internal constituents and make-up of spoken and written texts, and how these discursive practices and representations in turn influence how we understand a specific part of the natural or social world. This is succinctly expressed in the diagram Fairclough initially developed in the 1989 edition of his book *Language and Power* (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1 Fairclough's three-dimensional view of discourse
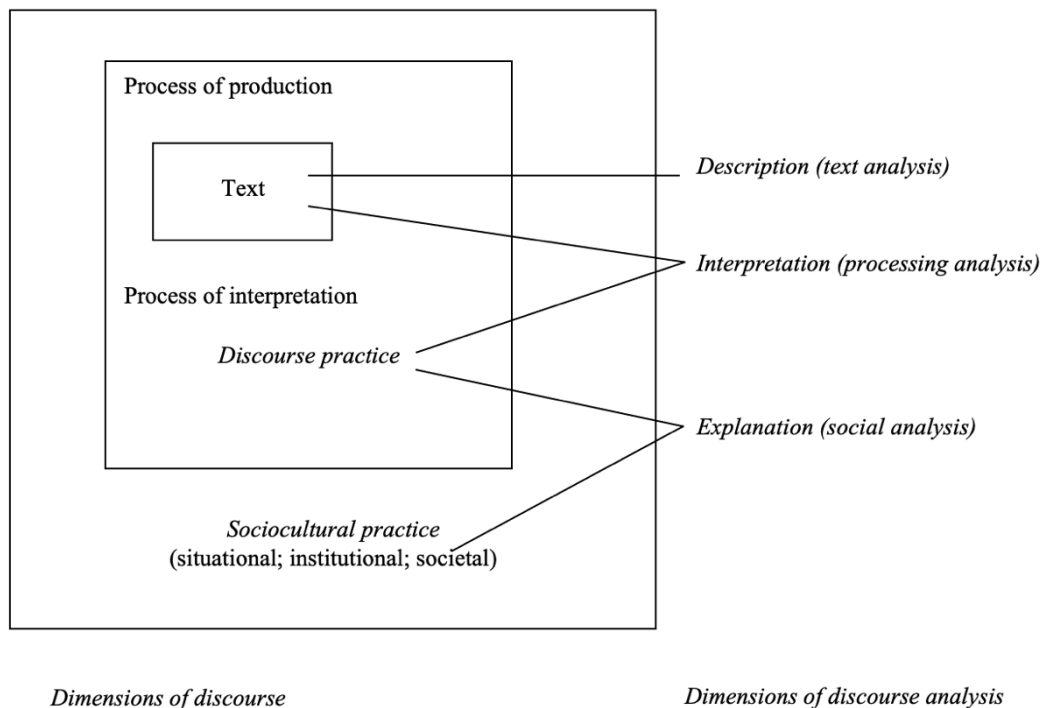
Fairclough represents discourse as operating at three dialectically interrelated levels: 'My view is that there is not an external relationship 'between' language and society, but an internal and dialectical relationship. Language is a part of society; linguistic phenomena *are* social phenomena of a special sort, and social phenomena *are*, in part, linguistic phenomena' (Fairclough 1989: 23). The three-dimensional conception of discourse corresponds to a three-dimensional method of analysis including description, interpretation and explanation. In a first move, a text should be described comprehensively and systematically in terms of the semiotic resources that are used and the meanings which this use invokes, but also in respect of what may be absent and perhaps even purposefully obscured. This allows the analyst to, secondly, conjecture about the potential impact this text might have on readers or listeners. To this end, there needs to be an explanation of why the text was produced in this form in a specific wider social and cultural context. The explanation is closely linked to critique as the aim is to show how the misrepresentation helps to sustain and legitimize observed social relations, which in earlier iterations of CDA/CDS were largely centred upon unjust social relations, often, from a neo-Marxist and/or critical theory perspective. Critical theory was indexed often in relation to Frankfurt School immanent critique (Adorno 1973) and also to notions of hegemony, ideology and distorted communication in the work of Gramsci (1971), Althusser (1971) and Habermas (1971a, 1971b) respectively. The focus of early forms of CDA was thus squarely on those discursive practices and representations of the world that obfuscate, stabilize and legitimize power asymmetries, inequalities and injustices, and for many researchers this remains the aim today. This has entailed for many the possibility of rationally grounded truth and a commitment to human emancipation.

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The counterposing of the existence of an underlying truth with an ideological false consciousness or distortion of truth (Marx and Engels, 1998 [1845]) began to be heavily criticised in the 1970s through postmodern philosophy, mainly through the work of the French social theorist Michel Foucault (1977, 1989), but also others such as Jean-François Lyotard (1984), Jacques Derrida (1976), and Jean Baudrillard (1994 [1981]). These authors wanted to break with what they saw as the Marxist dualism (ideology/truth) and regarded truth, but also other categories like 'liberty, autonomy, democracy and emancipation', as contentious and problematic, since dogmatically followed they 'can become instruments of repression, power and/or governance' themselves (Herzog 2016: 280). Foucault understood these conceptions as closely related to power, and our knowledge of reality as always relative and discursively meditated. Rather than primarily assuming power to be purposefully exercised by individuals or groups over others, he placed emphasis instead on its unseen dimensions and its social distribution. These *regimes of truth*, he argued, are often internalised, embodied, and enacted (1977) and thus operate unnoticed by individuals. From this perspective, power is unavoidable and does not only constrain and oppress but also enables social life.

Based on the idea that we can apprehend reality only discursively many postmodernist and poststructuralist analysts embrace *epistemic relativism*, i.e. they regard the very idea of 'truth' and 'objectivity' as ideological. Instead, they emphasize the incommensurability of different discourses and focus on their local production and effects (Lyotard 1984). This emphasis on epistemic relativism entails a demand for reflexivity, and discourse analysts—but likewise ethnographers or anthropologists working in this tradition—often reflect upon their own positionality when they produce discursively mediated knowledge.

Research methods

As problem-oriented critical domains CDA/CDS/CALx develop their own methods in relation to specific interests and objects of research (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999; Pennycook 2021). In addition to this, the approaches are highly diverse. They include the dialectical-relational approach of Fairclough (2010), the discourse-historical approach of Wodak, Reisigl and others (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, 2015; Wodak, de Cillia, and Reisigl 1999), the socio-cognitive approach of van Dijk (2008, 2015), and the CALx perspective of Pennycook (2021). Therefore, there is no uniform methodological 'toolbox' in this area of research. Nevertheless, we would like to give two brief examples which have been developed in relation to specific objects of analysis.

Policy analysis

Policy analysis can take a variety of forms. Mulderrig (2017), for instance, has analysed anti-obesity campaigns in the UK. Starting from a particular social problem, the increase in obesity in the population, she focuses on the government's attempt to 'nudge' children and adults into healthy eating behaviours and physical exercise through cartoon advertisements. To show how the campaign both represents and fosters internalized, embodied and enacted forms of power, she draws upon Foucault's work on governmentality and biopolitics and combines it with state theory. Mulderrig's analysis shows how the anti-obesity campaign represents and targets mainly lower working-class families, individualizes health care, and is embedded in and driven by a neoliberal austerity regime. The three intersecting discursive and multimodal strategies she identifies are: the representation of (northern, working class) lifestyles as

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delinquent, a discourse of risk and threat that intends to mobilize emotions, and the promotion of 'smarter' consumerism.

Metaphor analysis
Metaphors are figures of speech that generally represent an item X – for instance, an object, subject, action, quality, or process – as something else (Y). By combining or synthesizing X and Y, a new meaning emerges that shapes how we view X as certain aspects will be foregrounded whereas others become backgrounded, or entirely erased. Apart from these cognitive effects, metaphors are also socio-culturally embedded, and often internalized and embodied. Their potential to shape cognition and behaviour thus often go unnoticed. Koller (2005) has investigated how the choice of metaphors in business discourse is driven by ideologies and how these metaphors impact social cognition in turn. To this end, she analysed a corpus of 160,000+ business magazine texts on mergers and acquisitions (M&A) and found that the predominant metaphors revolved around 'evolutionary struggle'. This Darwinist representation of capitalist business creates the view that M&As are part of a 'natural' ahistorical, and unalterable process involving masculine aggression and the 'survival of the fittest', and thus neatly plays into the currently dominant neoliberal capitalist order of things.

Critical issues and topics
In this section we argue that our contemporary social, political and environmental context is qualitatively different from that of the pre-neoliberal era of more than four decades ago. This has implications for CDA as this poses questions concerning fundamental theoretical assumptions about the relationship between semiosis and the social and material world and by implication about key concepts such as discourse, ideology, critique, truth and emancipation.

Surveillance capitalism and 'post-truth' politics
Digital technologies are in principle neutral tools that can enable people to communicate, learn, associate and do business in new ways. The relative lack or *absence* of political regulation, however, has led to a monopolization of this sphere by tech giants such as Google, Facebook, Amazon, Microsoft and Apple. These 'Big Five' offer services that are by no means free as the actual flow and nature of the information is highly structured through algorithms which are programmed according to strategic interests (Archer, 2020). Users' engagement with digital tools is harvested, automatically analysed, and used to finetune business strategies and influence consumer or voting behaviour. Few authors would disagree with the diagnosis of the adverse effects of the current configuration of the digital environment, but what is often overlooked is that the sophisticated manipulation of thought and behaviour through algorithms, also diminishes *agency*. As Zuboff (2019) describes it, the digital texts we engage in at the level of discourse are determined by an underlying 'text' that is designed, owned, and used by others. Its structure is hidden from view and thus not transparent to users.

Due to the affordances of the digital environment, we live in a qualitatively different environment with profound effects on politics: In the first instance, the public sphere has been fragmented through social media that are used by an increasing percentage of citizens to keep themselves politically informed. Social media 'are, however a truth-less public sphere by design' (Marres 2018: 423) as false and misleading information can be easily produced and distributed instantaneously. The resulting echo chambers and filter bubbles have centrifugal powers on social cohesion because they obstruct

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engagement with views one would disagree with. This in turn threatens one of the fundamental principles of democracy: informed debate, and rational argumentation between parties in disagreement (Habermas 1971a, 1971b). The resulting polarization of society has diminished the sense of a shared reality and concomitantly of what we can agree on to be 'true'. This in turn, is of strategic interest to populist 'post-shame' politicians (Wodak 2019, 2020) who do not necessarily make 'alternative' claims to truth but promote the idea that fundamental truth is an obsolete category, and that in the public sphere claims to truth are in equivalence and are not to be checked against an external reality.

The consequences of these structural, technology driven, strategic interventions have already changed the geo-political order, shifting entire democracies onto a more autocratic footing, generating hatred and xenophobia, and derailing urgently necessary actions to ameliorate climate change. As Pomerantsev (2019) argues, we live in a world where influence campaigns are insidious and hidden from view. In comparison to the Cold War era where ideologies clashed, ideologies today are an afterthought as 'information itself is now where the action is' (p. 21).

Of course, discourse is key to 'post-truth' politics as populists like Donald Trump in the US, Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, and Boris Johnson in the UK, have successfully capitalized on the gross injustices and discontent neoliberal policies have generated over the past four decades and which their political parties and the economic interest groups they represent have directly championed (Hochschild 2016). The maintenance and obfuscation of these contradictions requires intense discursive work, for instance, through the reduction of economic, political and social complexities to easy 'knee-jerk' formulae and the deliberate provoking of social dissension by means xenophobic nationalism and 'culture wars.' In such contexts, the generation and seemingly assured presentation of lies as 'alternative facts' and the bullying and demonization of those espousing democratic rationalist views are all symptoms of a more intensive and visibly desperate determination to safeguard the accumulation of capital.

Critical discourse analysts can and should play an important role in understanding how these representations are constructed, what effects these discourses have on voting behaviour and how these debates might be reframed. An exclusive focus on semiosis, would however be short-sighted without dealing with 'the generative complexes at work' (Bhaskar 2008a [1975]: 48) which are responsible for the (re)production and maintenance of these phenomena, including, as outlined above, the strategic use of computer technologies and processes of capital accumulation. To capture this interplay, we argue that a *stratified ontology* is necessary (Sayer 1999), one which accounts for the different properties and powers of discourse/semiosis, technology/artificial intelligence, political economy/capital and human social relations.

'Post-truth', ideological endism and climate change
Post-truth politics overtly disregards truth and those institutions, such as academia and the law, whose purpose it is to generate truthful knowledge (Block 2020). Post-truth politicians and their media agents portray experts – commonly those who disagree with the capitalist-extremist and xenophobic-nationalist line of reasoning they pursue – as 'elites' who unduly exercise 'inauthentic' power over 'the people' and who are purveyors of 'fake news.' In these circumstances, we seem to have arrived at a situation where 'subjective opinions and unverified claims [may legitimately] rival valid scientific and biomedical facts in their public influence' (Harris Ali and Kurasava 2020). This has been accompanied – especially since the

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financial crisis of 2007-8 – by a retreat into *endism*. This is 'the view that history, once real, has come to an end in the present' (Bhaskar 2016: 183). No new ideologies of qualitative institutional or social change appear; only market fundamentalism remains along with the endless drive to accumulate (Bhaskar 2002; Hartwig 2011; O'Regan 2021). This in turn, has been responsible for preventing governments from rationally assessing the systemic failures of capitalism and taking the steps which are essential if pressing problems such as climate change and global human inequality are to be addressed.

Climate change, as Malm (2018: 11) argues, is the prime example of the need for a historical perspective:

> There is no synchronicity in climate change. Now more than ever, we inhabit the diachronic, the discordant, the inchoate: the fossil fuels hundreds of millions of years old, the mass combustion developed over the past two centuries, the extreme weather this has already generated, the journey towards a future that will be infinitely more extreme – unless something is done *now* – the tail of present emissions stretching into the distance […] History has sprung alive through a nature that has done likewise.

The depletion of non-renewable resources and pollution generated by industrial growth and non-action leads to irreversible climate change and has already had devastating effects on human society and the economy. The unprecedented public dismissal and degradation of scientific advice and the role of experts thus occurs at a time when science is most needed. Climate change is commonly denied based on the claim that it has not been proven or that there is no consensus among scientists (Oreskes and Conway 2010). Apart from the fact that doubt in science is deliberately engineered by think tanks paid by the fossil fuel and other industries and disseminated by media outlets affiliated with those interest groups, the claim that there is a lack of consensus or empirical evidence represents a misunderstanding of how science should ideally work. Agreement among all members of the scientific community – or of any community for that matter – is *not* a criterion for the truthfulness of a claim. The validity of the claim rests in the relation to the world it refers to. As such, scientists extrapolate and abstract from empirical evidence to generate the best explanation or theory of the phenomenon which can then form the basis for concerted action.

Climate change is, however, also a perfect example of how semiosis can have effects on the non-discursive as representations and denial of climate change influence people's perceptions and judgements, as well as their responses to anthropogenic climate change. Climate change denial distributed through social and other media works back through reflexive agents and institutions on other strata of the social and natural world. The withdrawal of the US under Trump from the Paris climate accords and the push to further excavate fossil fuels had *real* damaging effects on the natural world. Critical analysis of discourse research can help to deconstruct and reframe such debates, but only if the fundamental nature of the problem and the role of discourse/semiosis therein is understood, namely 'how social relations *combine* with natural ones that are not of their making' (Malm 2017, p. 72). To understand these interrelationships, it is of utmost importance to hold the powers of nature and society analytically distinct as Malm and other Critical Realists have argued. For two things to interact they must first be held analytically apart, so that we can 'study their difference-in-unity–we need to know how they interact, what sort of damage the one does to the other and, most importantly, how the destruction can be brought to an end' (p. 61). In addition to this, a clear conceptualization of epistemic relativism – i.e.

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that rationally grounded truths can exist even though our knowledge of the world is always changing – in relation to a normative commitment to judgemental rationality – i.e. the ability to decide on rational grounds whether some explanations and accounts, and also particular outcomes, are better than others – is much needed.

However, in the more poststructuralist social constructivist quarters of critical discourse analysis, the notion of truth is often highly contested as we earlier outlined. In the context of post-truth politics, relativist, poststructuralist and social constructivist perspectives in the academy have come under increased scrutiny and criticism as being complicit in the right-wing predicament we find ourselves in (Krasni 2020; Ball 2017; Calcutt 2016; D'Ancona 2017; Davies 2017; Kakutani 2018; McIntyre 2018). Although the two positions are entirely distinct in their political orientations, the terrain on which some social constructivists and post-truth politicians do converge is one where knowledge may be reduced to a social construction that is legitimized as a regime of truth without the necessity of being referenced to an externally grounded reality. Such regimes are realized by the simple ideological advocacy and ritual adherence of communities alone.

In the face of mounting criticism, some social constructivists previously taking a strong poststructuralist position have attempted to recalibrate their claims and to reclaim a normative commitment to judgement and the possibilities of scientific and 'extra-discursive' knowledge of the material world. Angermüller (2018), for instance, argues in an article entitled 'Truth after post-truth: For a strong programme in Discourse Studies', that postmodern and poststructuralist forms of discourse analysis question the notion of truth and have been accused of 'playing into the hands of Trump, Brexit and right-wing populists by politicising scientific knowledge and undermining the idea of scientific truth' (p. 1). The author wants to avoid being associated with judgemental relativism, but at the same time to retain what appears to be a *quasi-poststructuralist* or what we will call a 'non-Truth' *weak poststructuralist* view of science and of 'truths as discursive constructions' (p. 1). He argues that we 'do not have to return to Truth [or to] the assumption that some ideas are inherently better than others' (p. 2), and that this 'does not lead to a normative anything goes and moral relativism' (p. 6). Angermüller deserves credit for openly addressing this problem but does not, in our view, provide a justification as to why discourse researchers, especially those taking a 'strong' *poststructuralist* social constructivist view, should *not* think it is not possible to judge between better or worse outcomes or that one truth claim is just as acceptable as any other truth claim. It is because of the separation of oneself from judgemental rationalism by way of the denial of truth, that *poststructuralist* and also *weak poststructuralist* social constructivism can give no compelling reason why one outcome or argument is to be preferred to any other outcome or argument. And yet, as Angermüller's discussion demonstrates, there are increasingly few if any social constructivists who readily embrace the judgemental relativism which this seems to entail: 'Discourse researchers can distinguish between truth claims with higher and lower normative quality without betraying their fundamental constructivist orientations' (p, 2). In this somewhat contradictory manner, a commitment to 'non-Truth' is still able to co-exist with a commitment to being able to make truth judgements, since the exercise of one's judgement is not being denied.

That said, 'truths' – i.e. as regularized formations and practices – *are* discursively constructed. We therefore see nothing very much wrong with conceiving of these kinds of 'truth-practices' as *regimes of signification.* But this is entirely different to saying that judgemental rationalism has no relevance, or in

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what amounts to the same thing, that we 'do not have to return to Truth [or to] the assumption that some ideas are inherently better than others' (Angermüller 2018: 2). On the contrary, some ideas, and options, are indeed inherently better than others, and call for rational judgement.

In this brief overview it has been our wish to illustrate for the reader how a realist ontology in which the material world has its place can go some way towards resolving the dilemmas which we have identified once it is understood that there is no necessary contradiction between epistemic relativism (i.e. as a problematizing practice around knowledge claims) and the exercise of judgemental rationalism (i.e. as a commitment to social amelioration and the ability to choose between better or worse outcomes). To be sure, a commitment to judgemental rationality does not entail that one's judgement is necessarily right; on the contrary. But it is only if we assume an external – social, material and natural – reality to exist, that our human fallibleness as well as our possibility to make rational choices can be acknowledged. This is also why the critical discourse perspective we are advocating is grounded in the suggested theoretical affordances of CR.

Recommendations for practice

That CDA/CDS/CALx are concerned with critical textual analysis is a truism, as the above examples illustrate. Analysts adopt a variety of methods and perspectives in doing what they do. As Wodak and Meyer (2015) have noted in respect of CDA/CDS, 'studies in CDS are multifarious, derived from quite different theoretical backgrounds, [and] oriented towards different data and methodologies' (p. 5). Despite this multifariousness, a number of distinct perspectives exist, as we have noted. Amongst the more significant are those associated with a Marxism/Foucauldianism/Critical Realism tradition in the dialectical-relational approach, a Habermasian communicative action/distorted communication tradition in the discourse-historical approach, a cognition/ideology tradition in the socio-cognitive approach, and a decolonizing, problematizing, situated, collaborative perspective in CALx (Pennycook 2021). It is our recommendation that the reader refers to these traditions and to relevant cited works for examples of how CDA/CDS/CALx has been done (see also O'Regan 2006; Montessori 2009; O'Regan and Betzel 2016; Zotzmann and O'Regan 2016; O'Regan and Gray 2018 for examples of some of the practical procedures which have been applied).

Future directions

CDA/CDS/CALx are problem oriented, interdisciplinary in nature, and committed to social amelioration and change. This poses complex demands on analysts. As textual analysis is seen as an entry point into the analysis and explanation of a particular social ill and the role discourse/semiosis plays therein, there is a need to engage in depth with theories from other disciplines about the problem itself. The publications in D&S and CDS but also other outlets such as monographs and textbooks bear testimony to this interdisciplinarity. As we have argued in this chapter, in some instances the power of discourse in relation to other causally effective mechanisms has been overrated. By paying more attention to ontological and not only epistemological questions communication and collaboration across disciplinary borders could be enhanced and CDA/CDS/CALx could potentially make a greater impact. This leads us to a third element of this area of linguistic analysis: changing practices for the better. CDA has been criticised for focusing on the production and not the reception side of discourses and is thus not able to explain how discourses are reproduced, consumed, or challenged (Martín Rojo 2015). While this might be a valid criticism, there is also a danger in focusing too much on the micro techniques of power alone. We would argue instead

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that at the core of any critical project whose aim is social amelioration is the difference between what exists (*being*) and what could exist (*becoming*) but is not actualised yet (*absence*). Despite its fundamental role, the idea of what is absent, how the situation could be otherwise, and what difference a critical discourse analysis could potentially make might indeed need more attention.

Related Topics
critical applied linguistics; critical sociolinguistics; multimodal discourse analysis; forensic linguistics; corpus linguistics, linguistic anthropology

Further Reading
Reisigl, M. (2020). '"*Narrative!" I can't hear that anymore*'. A linguistic critique of an overstretched umbrella term in cultural and social science studies, discussed with the example of the discourse on climate change', *Critical Discourse Studies*, 18(3): 368-386

This article offers a critique on analytical methods/methodologies regarding narratives through the analysis of climate change discourse. It takes issue with the overused concepts of narrative and narration in social and cultural science studies on climate change and argues for the need to acknowledge fallibility *and* judgemental rationality and hence the possibility of a more meaningful relationship with truth.

Sims-Schouten, W., Riley, S., and Willig, C. (2007) 'Critical realism in discourse analysis: A presentation of a systematic female employment as an example method of analysis using women's talk of motherhood, childcare and female employment as an example', *Theory and Psychology*, 17(1): 101-124.

This article provides a useful demonstration of how CR principles concerning the stratified nature of reality can be applied in critical discourse studies.

Pennycook, A. (2021) *Critical Applied Linguistics: A Critical (Re)Introduction*, (2nd edition), London: Routledge.

This chapter has primarily concerned itself with CDA/CDS, and to a lesser extent with CALx. In this revised second edition, there is a notable change of emphasis in Pennycook's position and makes this text a critical intervention in debates concerning the relationship between relativist and normative positions on discourse and its analysis. As Pennycook himself now states, 'Critical applied linguistics must have a standpoint that critiques inequality' (2021: 20). This is a sentiment with which we also agree. Not only is it the basis for our shared critical attitude in CDA/CDS/CALx, but it is also potentially the pivot in applied linguistics and associated disciplines on which a new *material* unity in critical studies of discourse may turn.

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