

# **Discourse Analysis: Towards an understanding of the role of CDA in Modern Languages**

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## **Abstract**

Critical applied linguistics is a recently emerging discipline which investigates education, regulation and the use of language studies in exploring the power of language in society. This study seeks to understand how power is constructed culturally and socially within the context of modern languages, especially the hegemony of the American English from a critical perspective. The paper addresses issues of language hegemony and linguistic imperialism, World Englishes trends, critical language policy research trends, etc. The paper ends with research implications for language teaching approaches.

**تحليل الخطاب : نحو فهم دور تحليل الخطاب النقدي  
في اللغات الحديثة**

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**الملخص**

علم اللغة التطبيقية النقدي هو أحد العلوم الناشئة حديثاً ويسعى إلى البحث في طرق الاستفادة من تعليم وتنظيم واستخدام دراسات اللغة من أجل استكشاف قوة اللغة في المجتمع. وتسعى هذه الدراسة إلى فهم كيفية بناء السلطة ثقافياً واجتماعياً في سياق اللغات الحديثة، وخاصة هيمنة اللغة الإنجليزية ولاسيما اللهجة الأمريكية من منظور نقدي. وتتناول الدراسة قضايا هيمنة اللغة والإمبريالية اللغوية، واتجاهات اللغة الإنجليزية العالمية، واتجاهات أبحاث السياسة اللغوية من منظور ناقد، وما إلى ذلك. وتنتهي هذه الدراسة بتناوب تأثيرات البحث على مداخل تعليم اللغة.

## Introduction

Critical applied linguistics is a recently emerging discipline which investigates education, regulation and the use of language studies in exploring the power of language in society. The discipline is theoretical in perspective, but there are emerging practical themes that relate it to the domain of applied linguistics in a cross-disciplinary fashion.

This new discipline has its purpose as to explore the interrelationships that networks language, ideology and power. Over the past few decades, critical discourse analysis (CDA), a branch of critical applied linguistics (CAL) presented different perspectives on the development of the relationship between language and power in various phases. During these stages, linguists have frequently resorted to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a collection of approaches utilizable to provide answers to issues frequently raised about the relationships between language and society (Berger, 2016; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Figueriredo, 2000; Flowerdew, 1999; Gee, 1992; Meyer, 2001; van Dijk, 1997). Arthur Berger (2016) explains that CDA

“moves beyond the sentence and be able to analyze all kinds of texts, from conversations to advertisements and texts with written or spoken language, images, video and music. As it evolved, some ideologically centered discourse analysts developed what is called CDA: Critical

Discourse Analysis and then, to deal with the complex nature of mass mediated texts .." (p. 597)

Being an inter-and-cross-disciplinary science, critical discourse analysis seeks to understand issues related to language hegemony, analysis of language uses, including dialects, idiolects, diglossia, registers and other issues that have the socio-econo-political impact on language users. One of these significant issues has to do with language power and hegemony, with special attention to English and world Englishes. Foreign language educators and students need to understand and realize what dialect of modern English should be learned/taught and why. They should also know the rationale for the hegemonization.

This study seeks to understand how power is constructed culturally and socially within the context of modern languages, especially the hegemony of the American English from a critical perspective. The paper addresses issues of language hegemony and linguistic imperialism, World Englishes trends, critical language policy research trends, etc.

The development of scholarly interest in the academic study of discourse applications to social events has not emerged out of a void. Since the 1970s, there developed a lot of change in linguistic theories and methods in social sciences and humanities, which also

impacted linguistics.

There were transformations from traditional linguistics to interactional linguistics, to critical linguistics. Definitely, during the five past decades, linguists became cognizant of the fact that traditional linguists had to ponder over questions related to the relationship between language and society.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Michael Halliday's (1975, 1978) theory of systemic functional linguistics, a basic theory informing critical linguistics and critical discourse analysis, focused on language as a meaning-making process. This theory was commensurate with the critical study of language. At one fell swoop, there developed some dissension and revolution in social sciences as a reflection of the developments in sciences and society, such as the USA-led wars around the world, the peace movement, the women's lib movement, the civil rights movement, the technological revolution and globalization of the world and the hegemonizing role of the United States which have given rise to the dominance of English as a politically useful language are examples of this language-power relation (Halliday, 1976;1985; 1989). All of this was complemented by a wide-ranging linguistic seizure in academia, inducing a movement away from methodological individualism, and the propagation of post-structural and post-modern theories.

Vygotsky was the leading scholar who elaborated on language as a meaning-making process in children when they acquire their first language.

His scholarly corpus describes the generative, functional, and structural analysis of language processes used by first language children to acquire lexicon and relate it to the relevant meanings in social interaction as they organize this lexicon in an internal system of schemata. The foundation of this schematic system is the child's capacity to infer new meanings of new lexical items by referring to the symbolic representation of old and new lexicons in the course of meaningful communication. Vygotsky's investigation into the structure of speaking and thinking systems is basic to his analysis of how L1 children generate meanings of their sociocultural worlds in the medium of language.

### ***Social Theory and Language Theory Combine to Create CAL***

The academic works in social theories coupled with linguistic research efforts and literature led to much interdisciplinary work, at first, conducted by an enlightened school of scholars, each at their own universities to elaborate on these connections between language and power in society.

In the early 1990s, some scholars (Fairclough, 1989; 1991; 1992; 1993; 2003; Kress, 2003; van Dijk, 1993; 2001; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; and Wodak, 1996) at a conference in Amsterdam started elaborating on the theories and methods esoteric to CDA. These scholars belonged to diverse academic backgrounds, therefore revealing an interdisciplinary approach to the study of CDA (van Dijk, 2001).

### ***CAL in the Classroom of Foreign Languages***

Researchers in language and language

education domains have been drawn to the study of discourse analysis as a way to grasp ways in which people make meaning in educational contexts using language. Early corpus on linguistic analysis in educational research came as a result of the work of sociolinguistics (Gumperz, 1982; Labov, 1972; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975), linguistic anthropology (Silverstein & Urban, 1996), and the ethnography of communication (Gumperz & Hymes, 1964; Hymes, 1972). For instance, Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) developed the blueprint for coding discourse acts in classroom conversations produced by teachers and students to provide a general structural model of discourse organization in classroom interactions. Cazden (2001) followed suit in the descriptive study and analyses of classroom discourse. Since then, linguists began exploring the micro-interactions that take place in classrooms from sociological, cultural and linguistic perspectives to speculate on how social structures are reproduced via language in classroom settings (Bourdieu, 1979/1984; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Oakes, 1986; Willis, 1977).

Capitalizing on critical social theory, prior research in CAL and CDA aimed to explore how macro-structures rule over sociolinguistic interactions, rituals, and traditions of the classroom (see Bernstein, 1971). Furthermore, linguistic anthropologists and discourse analysts have merged social theory with language theory in an attempt to connect their micro-level analyses with the broader social impact factors in the society which reflect on language use. Critical Discourse Analysis developed in consequence as a systemic academic

endeavor to integrate social theory into the theory of discourse analysis to describe, interpret, and explain how CDA constructs represent language usage in the social world.

### **Research Methodology**

This study made use of an interpretive, descriptive method of research that involved developing a coding system for standard reviewing of writings in the fields of CAL and CDA, using relevant research questions and investigation methods to produce an appropriate coding scheme. This approach also described the aspects of CDA that were pertinent to research in education (theory of discourse, using sample studies to refine the coding scheme).

The researcher reviewed some selected databases, such as Science Direct, Proquest, ERIC, Web of Science, etc., in search of the key terms of critical applied linguistics and critical discourse analysis over some decades where research has been extensively published on the topics of critical applied linguistics, using bibliographic branching and referrals from other researchers. Criteria for selection included detecting research with standard abstracts in APA formats, publications in impact factor journals, and research published in peer reviewed journals with specific keywords including critical applied linguistics and critical discourse analysis. Other materials from books and relevant literature were also included, as well as studied in controlled or semi-controlled environments such as classrooms, after-school language learning programs and institutions or literacy programs in first

language settings of second/foreign language environments.

The purpose is to span a wide range of perspectives, approaches, methodologies, and theories relevant to critical applied linguistics, eventually spanning more than 700 references. This varied literature covers critical perspectives, critical thinking, and discourse analysis. A coding scheme was developed to standardize the reviewed literature in a codebook, where the material published was read by a team of assistant researchers in a research methodology class done by the present researcher. The materials were read by the team twice or thrice to be eventually for interrater reliability informed by the researcher and his assistants. This method of analysis helped to clarify trends in the data.

## Limitations of the Study

Only research explicitly described as pertinent to critical applied linguistics and critical discourse analysis was determined to be scrutinized in this study. However, no claim can ever be made to have included every article or piece of literature on the topic. Due to novelty, the researcher only tackled studies that take stock of what has been researched and studied in critical applied linguistics with an eye on the pedagogical applications of the discipline in foreign/second language education.

## Findings of the Study

The table below presents the findings of this meta-analysis:

Themes	Descriptions
<b>Empirical research</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 48% of reviewed works were empirical in research stance</li> <li>● 33% reviewed works were theoretical works</li> <li>● 19% were descriptive</li> <li>● 33% included analyses of written language, while 28 did not address any firmly established theory of language</li> <li>● 100% of the reviews occurred in middle school, high school, or higher education settings.</li> <li>● 81% of the reviews adopted analytic procedures</li> </ul>
<b>Theoretical research</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 48% of reviewed works were empirical in research stance</li> <li>● 33% reviewed works were theoretical works</li> <li>● 19% were descriptive</li> <li>● 33% included analyses of written language, while 28 did not address any firmly established theory of language</li> <li>● 100% of the reviews occurred in middle school, high school, or higher education settings.</li> <li>● 81% of the reviews adopted analytic procedures</li> </ul>
<b>Descriptive research</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 48% of reviewed works were empirical in research stance</li> <li>● 33% reviewed works were theoretical works</li> <li>● 19% were descriptive</li> </ul>

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<b>Mode of analysis in language specimens</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 48% of reviewed works were empirical in research stance</li> <li>• 33% reviewed works were theoretical works</li> <li>• 19% were descriptive</li> <li>• 33% included analyses of written language, while 28 did not address any firmly established theory of language</li> <li>• 100% of the reviews occurred in middle school, high school, or higher education settings.</li> <li>• 81% of the reviews adopted analytic procedures</li> </ul>
<b>Theory of Language</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 48% of reviewed works were empirical in research stance</li> <li>• 33% reviewed works were theoretical works</li> <li>• 19% were descriptive</li> <li>• 33% included analyses of written language, while 28 did not address any firmly established theory of language</li> <li>• 100% of the reviews occurred in middle school, high school, or higher education settings.</li> <li>• 81% of the reviews adopted analytic procedures</li> </ul>
<b>Context of research and analysis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 48% of reviewed works were empirical in research stance</li> <li>• 33% reviewed works were theoretical works</li> <li>• 19% were descriptive</li> <li>• 33% included analyses of written language, while 28 did not address any firmly established theory of language</li> <li>• 100% of the reviews occurred in middle school, high school, or higher education settings.</li> <li>• 81% of the reviews adopted analytic procedures</li> </ul>
<b>Nature of analysis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 48% of reviewed works were empirical in research stance</li> <li>• 33% reviewed works were theoretical works</li> <li>• 19% were descriptive</li> <li>• 33% included analyses of written language, while 28 did not address any firmly established theory of language</li> <li>• 100% of the reviews occurred in middle school, high school, or higher education settings.</li> <li>• 81% of the reviews adopted analytic procedures</li> </ul>

The works reviewed were situated within an educational context or pertained to educational issues. However, there was much diversity in the research topics and focus of works. This diversity spanned topics of literacy in second language acquisition environments and foreign language education settings, how linguistic knowledge is constructed, classroom applications of discourse analysis, pedagogical applications of language theory, etc. (e.g., Kondrateva & Ibatulina, 2016; Zembylas, 2010)

Many different approaches to critical applied linguistics were detected in the reviews. Major lines include French discourse analysis (Foucault, 1972; Pecheux, 1975), social semiotics (Hodge & Kress, 1988; Kress, 2003), sociocognitive studies (van Dijk, 1993), and the discourse historical method (Wodak, 1996; Wodak, Meyer, Titscher & Vetter, 2000).

These approaches were functionally utilized to study the associated social problems in an extensive array of academic disciplines such as policy analysis, social work, linguistics, and education.

Many researchers contributed to the development of critical applied linguistics and critical discourse analysis (e.g., Wodak, 1996; Wodak, Meyer, Titscher, & Vetter, 2000, Wodak & Reisigl, 2001; Corson, 2000, and Rogers, 2003).

Works reviewed relate CAL and CDA to post-structuralism, especially post-structuralist feminism, and Foucault and mostly considered Foucault's theory of language.

Most works studied claim to

dismantle and deconstruct linguistic discourses, challenge current language pedagogies and analyze how discourses function in the construction of social practices.

The analyses were closely associated with Systemic Functional Linguistics, critical linguistics, or interactional sociolinguistics.

The frameworks of analyses adopted a three-tiered framework and referred to Fairclough's work while some researchers related Fairclough's works to other frameworks (Chouliaraki, 1998; Collins, 2001).

Most articles reviewed concur that the framework brings together a micro and macro analysis and offers a description, interpretation, and explanation of social events.

CAL and CDA claim to describe, interpret, and explain the relationships between language, social practices, and the social world as it was explicitly or indirectly stated in the reviews. The studies reviewed utilized language indexes to study social relations in conversational analyses and to analyze social interactions about language use in real world settings or classroom settings. The language was revealed to be a dialogic intertextual and historically based model of interactions between interlocutors.

## **Themes Resultant from Analyses**

Thematically, the works reviewed typically concentrated on analyses of news, political reviews, job interviews, and other conversational discourses from real life interlocutors' conversational interchanges which represent different

conversational roles or represent manipulative strategies that look to be neutral or natural to most people. According to Rampton (2001), conversational interactions and dialogic discourses were scarcely dealt with in early critical discourse accounts up to the early 20th century. However, this trend was reversed. Critiques brought up in CAL, and CDA emphasized such interactions especially to make use of the findings of these analyses in educational contexts. Apparently, language education researchers using CDA and CAL approaches started to focus on CAL and CDA as increasing research addresses CDA with newly produced interactional data.

Impressively, however, these analyses were not frame-worked within the history of discourse analysis and socio-linguistic analysis. Even more, elements of early discourse analyses in the reviews did not reflect a connection between CDA and CAL with other forms of discourse analysis (See, for instance, Collins, 2001; Heller, 2001; Moje, 1997; Rampton, 2001).

In addition, the relationships between the type of text analyzed (written, interactional or a combination of written and interactional) and the theory of language were closely studied in the review.

The review shows more emphasis was drawn on relating the theories of language to post-structural theories of discourse.

Research, especially in the USA, focused on literacy development analysis from a critical discourse analysis perspective (Brown & Kelly, 2001; Egan-Robertson, 1998; Hinchman &

Young, 2001; Rogers, Tyson, & Marshall, 2000; Johnson, 2001; Orellana, 1996; Young, 2000).

This review also revealed that a bulky number of studies focused on interactions in classrooms, unveiling interesting discussions of the role of CAL and CDA in language learning and teaching. Some of this research viewed learning as an agent of change for bringing forth changes discourse practices across time (Rogers, 2002b).

### ***Socio-political trajectories***

Our synthesis review presents Gee's discourse theory and analysis as one that assumes language is political and social and thus "critical," even though it fails to describe it as a brand of CAL or CDA.

The literature shows that Fairclough, (1989, 1992), Gee (1996), and Lemke (1995) introduced their theories on language as explicitly quintessentially critical discourse theories. Relevant later research reviewed built on these theories in sociopolitical analyses of language specimens in a way projecting personal communications/interlocutions in spoken and community writing programs as analyses of sociopolitical discourses.

Research done within the framework of CAL and CDA shows that linguistic variation results from the marginalization of ethnic and linguistic groups within multilingual communities. CDA was also developed to examine the underlying philosophical and ideological assumptions about multiculturalism and intercultural education in some recent manifestations of educational policy (Zembylas, 2010).

However, these ideas are deeply grounded in the fact that most of this

research was predominantly based on European languages and should be understood and used from a European-language-based discourse perspective.

In addition, CAL and CDA literature focus more on the macro level of context or the societal and the institutional as well as the micro level of a text or the grammatical devices that constitute discourses in these languages.

The review also shows that the linguistic resources that constitute interactions instead focuses on how macro relations are mapped onto micro interactions (Billig, 1999; Widdowson, 1998).

### ***Common Methods of Analyses Identified in the Findings***

In some cases, the texts and discourses under analysis were scrutinized outside the context of their production, consumption, distribution, and reproduction. In this vein, 33% of the reviewed works included analyses of written texts where the context was the text itself, for example, policy documents, newspaper articles, textbooks, and transcripts of real-time videos or audios of mapped discourse (Ailwood & Lingard, 2001; Barnard, 2001; Collins, 2001; Hays, 2000; Luke, 1997; Pitt, 2002; Stevens, 2003).

These studies also made use of anthropological or ethnographic methods (participant-observation recorded in field notes, document collection, and debriefing) (e.g., Chouliaraki, 1998; Comber, 1997; Hughes, 2001; Hinchman & Young, 2001; Egan-Robertson, 1998; Rogers, Tyson, & Marshall, 2000; Rogers, 2002a; Young, 2000), interviews or focus groups (Brown & Kelly, 2001;

Collins, 2001; Nichols, 2002; Peace, 2003; Johnson & Avery, 1999; Young, 2000).

Studies in the review were also varied in details and descriptions within the methodological frameworks and regarding study range, duration, and length, data sources which varied between written texts, interactional texts, interviews.

For population and sampling, studies reviewed recruited research participants of varied biographical characteristics and from different ethnicities and nationalities, with an emphasis on focus groups (Brown & Kelly, 2001; Collins, 2001; Nichols, 2002; Peace, 2003; Johnson & Avery, 1999; Young, 2000). Some studies provided elaborate descriptions of their data sources (Comber, 1997; Egan-Robertson, 1998; Hughes, 2001; Hinchman & Young, 2001; Moje, 1997; Rogers, 2002a; Rogers, Tyson, & Marshall, 2000; Young, 2000). Others lacked such descriptions.

Methodologically, some studies exhibited innovative ways of including context in their analyses. For instance, one researcher (Nichols, 2002) in a study investigating the gendered character of parents' reports of their children, created three trends within the interview protocol (memories of their own literacy experiences, descriptions of home-based literacy experiences, and remarks of their children's literacy-related behaviors). Hays (2000) profoundly analyzed newspaper excerpts dealing with educational materials ethnographically. Stevens (2003) analyzed observations of the Reading Leadership Academy conference proceedings in 2002. Some

studies recorded interactional data in classrooms through participant observation or conducted interviews (e.g., Bergvall & Remlinger, 1996; Chouliaraki, 1998; Fox & Fox, 2002; Peace, 2003).

This variety of research methods reviewed in this synthesis confirms the variety of approaches and that such variety buttresses the theoretical framework and the method.

### ***Analysis of Findings from the Review***

The studies reviewed reveal a spectrum of broad themes from their analyses and then used examples of discourse to support the themes (Bergvall & Remlinger, 1996; Rogers, Tyson, & Marshall, 2000; Nichols, 2002; Peace, 2003; Tunstall, 2001). Many studies used the Fairclough's three-tiered framework.

Findings reflect on the social theories with the critical applied linguistics framework (Chouliaraki, 1998; Collins, 2001; Woodside-Jiron, 2004).

Findings also described the specific linguistic resources that may be used for analysis at each of the corresponding CDA levels.

Overall, findings collectively exhibited a lack of connection between linguistic practices, social practices, and wider social formations.

A rigorously projected thread running through many of the findings was the identification of unintended consequences of educational decisions, policies, and social practices.

Themes of findings also presented power and privilege and power and hegemony as trends in the study and

analysis of language in CAL and CDA research studies. As Wodak & Reisigl (2001) pointed out: Language is not powerful on its own—it gains power by the use powerful people make of it. This explains why Critical Linguistics often chooses the perspective of those who suffer, and critically analyzes the language use of those in power, who are responsible for the existence of inequalities and who also have the means and opportunities to improve conditions. (p. 10)

Another third thread, yet strong enough to be noted was the focus on interactions in classrooms in the studies reviewed which produced significant discussions of the role of critical discourse studies in learning (Rogers, 2002b).

In the corpus of studies in the review, gender issues relevant to language use were also significantly analyzed from a CAL or CDA perspective. Gender issues, however, received more weight regarding research endeavors in CAL and CDA than race and ethnicity issues (See for instance, Bergvall & Remlinger, 1996; Pitt, 2002; Young, 2000). Some researchers ascribed these phenomena to the observation that race issues were politically and educationally silenced in formal academic research settings (Greene & Abt-Perkins, 2003; Tate, 2003).

An Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis in Education, a book by Rogers (2004), provides a collection of empirical chapters that illustrate how CDA can inform learning theory and practice by studying shifts in discourse practices across time and contexts.

### ***Role of researchers in the corpus of studies***

The role of the researchers in the studies reviewed shows a high level of researcher self-reflexivity as a significant characteristic of CDA and CAL research. This requires a heightened self-awareness in discourse analysis. In this light Bucholtz (2001) shows that “the analyst’s choices at every step in the research process are visible as a part of the discourse investigation, and critique does not stop with social processes, whether macro-level or micro-level, but rather extends to the analysis itself” (p. 166).

In this review, researcher self-reflexivity spans three features that describe the role of the researcher: the participatory construction of the research design, reciprocity, and turning the analytic frame back on the researcher. However, this reflexivity is determined by the scientific spirit of rigorous researchers which tans this research with a colour of the scientific method that stresses the ideological nature of “monitoring” one’s own thoughts and actions, their reflexive intention is to “strengthen the epistemological moorings” of the research (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 46).

Reflexivity is also elemental to critical linguistics and critical discourse analysis especially in educational research settings (Ailwood & Lingard, 2001; Anderson, 2001; Barnard, 2001; Bloome & Carter, 2001; Fairclough, 1993; Johnson & Avery, 1999; Luke, 1997; Pitt, 2002; Thomas, 2002). In some studies in the review, the researchers positioned themselves mainly as text analysts, even though they

were clearly the data collection instruments (Anderson, 2001; Baxter, 2002; Corson, 2000; Hinchman & Young, 2001; Peace, 2003; Nichols, 2002; Hughes, 2001; Stevens, 2003).

### **Conclusions**

The present review covered many studies that utilized multiple analytic methods. It appeared that the methodological approaches and instrumentation were homogeneous and uniform in how researchers developed and made use of their analyses.

It also appeared that much of the research which used critical applied linguistics and critical discourse analysis had run a gamut of approaches in educational research environments.

It also appeared that many of these studies relied heavily in their theoretical foundation on Fairclough’s approach—rather than on the approaches of van Dijk, Wodak, Kress and Van Leeuwen, and other founders of the disciplines.

Research reviewed shows little or no relationship identified between linguistic resources and social practices. Some researchers detailed linguistic interactions and related them to some social phenomena, but they failed to highlight the connection between grammatical competence or linguistic competence and performance represented in social practices.

Little research addressed the micro-linguistic aspects of discourse from a critical perspective. This research failed to explain how language practices were connected to social practices.

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