

CHAPTER 7

‘Discourse analytic approaches to text and talk’

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Abstract

This chapter explores the different ways in which discourse-analytic approaches reveal the ‘meaningfulness’ of text and talk. It reviews four diverse approaches to discourse analysis of particular value for current research in Linguistics: Conversation Analysis (CA), Discourse Analysis (DA), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Feminist Post-structuralist Discourse Analysis (FPDA). Each approach is examined in terms of its background, motivation, key features, and possible strengths and limitations in relation to the field of Linguistics. A key way to schematize discourse-analytic methodology is in terms of its relationship between macro-analytical approaches, which consider how broader social processes work through language, and micro-analytical approaches, which examine the finer detail of linguistic interactions in transcripts (Heller, 2001). This chapter assesses whether there is a strength in a discourse-analytic approach that aligns itself exclusively with either a micro or macro strategy, or whether, as Heller suggests, the field needs to find a way of ‘undoing’ the micro-macro dichotomy in order to produce richer, more complex insights within linguistic research.

Introduction

In the last two decades, there has been a sea change in the field of linguistic research. Today, the study of real samples of speech and writing as evidence of the way in which

people in the world use language in a range of social contexts is manifestly the business of Linguistics. But it wasn't always so.

Historically within linguistic research, the study of 'text' (written discourse) or 'talk' (spoken discourse) was not considered worthy of serious research (see Litosseliti and Sunderland 2002, for a discussion of terms). A key strand of linguistic research evolved from the writings of Noam Chomsky (1965), who argued that the goal of Linguistics should be to study underlying 'linguistic competence': the rules that inform the production of grammatical sentences. For Chomsky, the focus of study was the abstract system: the underlying structure of language. Actual utterances were regarded as disorderly, chaotic and of no value in offering an understanding of language as a system. A significant challenge to Chomsky's theories was made by the applied linguist, Del Hymes (1972) who offered the term 'communicative competence' in deliberate contrast to 'linguistic competence'. As Hymes observes, a person who has only linguistic competence would be quite unable to communicate – a 'social monster' producing grammatical sentences disconnected from the context in which they occurred. This notion of a communicatively competent speaker and writer, who knows the rules of how to communicate appropriately in different social settings, has had a profound effect on linguists with an interest in the field of discourse analysis (see below). For the conversation analyst, Harvey Sacks (1992), ordinary, mundane speech exhibits an exceptional level of orderliness, and apparent instances of non-fluency are not viewed as the product of mistakes or speech errors, but have a meaning and a purpose. This chapter will look at the different ways in which discourse-analytic approaches have re-evaluated the 'meaningfulness' of text and talk within Linguistics.

In terms of conducting research more broadly, there is a clear distinction between analysing text or talk (hence, 'discourse') as a means to an end, and analysing it as an end in itself. Many non-linguists — sociologists, psychologists and researchers in education, cultural studies and media studies — draw upon language as just one of many sources of evidence about their research subjects. Interviews, focus group discussions and observation data all involve verbal interactions that must be transcribed and analysed. In

short, many non-linguists view discourse as data. For some, the language itself becomes a source of fascination, but for others, it is often seen within a ‘realist’¹ paradigm as a transparent medium to external reality, or as a direct index of subjects’ feelings and meanings (see also Edley and Litosseliti, this volume, for a discussion).

Alternatively, many linguists view ‘data as discourse’ (Cameron, 2001: 145) alongside ‘discourse as data’. According to Wooffitt (2005), whenever we produce a description or refer to a place, object, event or state of affairs in the world, we invariably select from a range of possible words and phrases. Consequently it follows that ‘discourse can never be taken as simply descriptive of the social action to which it refers, no matter how uniform particular segments of that discourse appear to be’ (Gilbert and Mulkey, 1984: 7). Language is not simply a neutral medium for generating subject knowledge, but a form of social practice that acts to constitute as much as to reflect social realities (Silverman, 2000). Indeed, some post-structuralist linguists (e.g. Barthes, 1977; Baxter, 2003) go further than this in advocating that the language of research is a textualising practice which requires analysts to be constantly self-reflexive about the constitutive power of their linguistic data.

In line with the post-structuralist view, different discourse-analytic approaches, situated as they are within different epistemological paradigms, are likely to produce varying sets of accounts of the same data. The chapter will review four approaches to discourse analysis considered to be of particular significance for current research in Linguistics: namely, Conversation Analysis (CA), Discourse Analysis (DA), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Feminist Post-structuralist Discourse Analysis (FPDA). This is a small selection of a rich and diverse range of analytic approaches in the field that also includes Speech Act Theory, Interactional Sociolinguistics, Ethnography of Communication, Pragmatics, Variation Analysis, and Discursive Psychology.

A key way to schematize discourse-analytic methodology is in terms of its relationship between macro-analytical approaches, which consider how broader social processes work through language, and micro-analytical approaches, which examine the finer detail of

linguistic interactions in transcripts (Heller, 2001). The four approaches have been selected here not only because they have become highly influential in the field, but also because they manifest interesting differences and contrasts between micro-analytical or ‘bottom up’ approaches (CA); macro-analytical or ‘top down’ approaches (CDA); and methods which aim to combine (DA), or indeed challenge aspects of both (FPDA).

Over the years, applied linguists such as Heller (2001) have suggested that the macro/micro dichotomy may not be the most helpful way in which to understand how the observable dimensions of linguistic interaction are linked to more durable structures which lie beyond the control of individual speakers and writers. Heller’s (2006) own work in minority language education leads the way in showing how a ‘big picture’ approach which aims to identify larger issues can be interwoven with the fine detail of action research data in order to make sense of a significant linguistic problem. This chapter will consider whether there is a strength in a discourse-analytic approach that aligns itself exclusively with either a micro or macro strategy, or whether, as Heller suggests, the field needs to find a way of ‘undoing’ the micro-macro dichotomy in order to produce richer, more complex insights within linguistic research.

Four approaches to discourse analysis

The term ‘discourse’ is itself a contested term, which has generated a lot of debate among scholars about what it means and how it should be used. The most straightforward definition – and the one that is still routinely used in Linguistics textbooks – is that of ‘language above the sentence’ and refers to a sequence of sentences or utterances that constitutes a ‘text’ (Cameron, 2001). The second is its more functional and sociolinguistic definition as ‘language in use’, or ‘language in social context’, which is typically the implication of descriptive labels such as ‘media discourse’, ‘legal discourse’, ‘educational discourse’, and so on. This definition seems to cohere with Fairclough’s (1992: 3) description of discourse as the ‘situational context of language use’ involving ‘the interaction between reader/writer and text’. Finally, linguists whose

work overlaps with post-structuralist and critical theory (as indeed, Fairclough's does) are also likely to understand discourse in the plural – as discourses. Such a usage reflects the influence of cultural historian, Michel Foucault, who famously defined discourses as 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault, 1972: 42). In simpler terms, discourses are more than just linguistic: they are social and ideological practices which can govern the ways in which people think, speak, interact, write and behave. Cameron (2001) gives the example of discourses on drug use, which can take multiple forms as dominant and resistant social attitudes, ways of speaking, formulaic behaviours, government policies, laws, anti- and pro-drug literature, and so on. The three definitions of discourse(s) above will be apparent in the discussion of the four approaches that now follow.

1. **Conversation Analysis (CA)**

Of the four approaches to discourse analysis, CA takes the most decisive departure from Chomsky's view that 'linguistic performance' is of little relevance to the linguist. Indeed, proponents of CA would posit the reverse: that 'talk-in-interaction' provides extraordinarily rich evidence of the underlying rules of how language works.

The field of ethno-methodology with its interest in 'the study of methods used by a group of people' is a strong source of inspiration for CA. Its most famous pioneer, Harvey Sacks (1992) had been exploring a corpus of phone calls to the Los Angeles Suicide Prevention Centre, and noticed that, while members of staff were required to elicit callers' names during the course of the conversation, the callers themselves would use a range of strategies to avoid revealing their identity. Sacks began to wonder 'where in the course of conversation could you tell that somebody would not give their name' (Sacks, Vol. I: 3). With this examination of talk-in-interaction, Sacks raised the possibility of investigating utterances as social actions which speakers use to get things done (or to avoid getting things done) in the course of a conversation with others.

Increasingly linguists and social scientists are recognizing that the social world is pervasively a conversational one in which an overwhelming proportion of the world's activities are conducted through spoken interactions, whether it is taking part in a meeting, arranging an appointment, sealing a deal, making a complaint, enjoying a family meal, or simply negotiating day-to-day relationships with people. In short, CA considers that ordinary conversations construct social realities. Through the use of audio or video recordings produced as transcripts, analysts can examine directly how talk organizes the world within specific social settings.

So, what are the key features of the CA approach? We shall consider the following:

- Orderliness in talk-in-interaction: Ordinary, everyday speech exhibits a high level of regularity or orderliness. This orderliness is not governed by innate cognitive structures of language (although grammatical features clearly inform the structure of utterances), but reflects a socially organised structure of interpersonal action. This orderliness, known as 'the speech-exchange system' is apparent in the pattern of sequential turn-taking, which, in Sacks *et al*'s (1974) view, characterises most spoken interaction. The following extract involves a conversation between three friends and Deborah Schiffrin, the researcher:

1 Henry: Y'want a piece of candy?
2 Irene: No.
3 Zelda: She's not on a diet=
4 Debby: = who's not on [a diet
5 Irene: [I'm on- I'm on a dietⁱⁱ
(from Schiffrin, 1994: 62)

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Despite the apparent 'messiness' of this snatch of casual conversation, there is, nevertheless, an orderliness conducted by means of 'adjacency pairs': the question-

answer sequence in ll.1-2, and the statement-response sequence of ll.3-4, and ll.4-5. In each adjacency pair, the second part of the pair becomes the first part of the next pair of exchanges, which produces a 'chain' of turns. In this way, the answer in line 2 is also the statement to which Zelda orients and responds in line 3, and so on.

- A data-centred approach: CA has a primary interest in transcript data and what these data reveal. With spoken rather than written data as the central focus, CA is a micro-analytic approach. Cameron (2001: 89) describes CA as 'putting a snowflake under the microscope to examine its complexity and detail'. In order to enhance the quality of micro-analysis, Jefferson (1984) evolved a detailed transcription system to help analysts provide a characterisation of how meaning is produced through verbal, vocal, prosodic and paralinguistic means.
- A neutral and objective stance: Analysts are discouraged from bringing any theoretical or philosophical presuppositions to the data, in order to allow these to 'speak for themselves'. A priori speculation in terms of speaker 'orientations', motivations and identities, social settings, cultural norms, are regarded as distracting and irrelevant. Factors 'external' to the data, such as gender inequalities or cultural misunderstandings may be 'made relevant' by the participants in the transcript data. It is on this basis alone that external factors become available to the analyst for comment and interpretation.

Overall, the quest in most CA studies is to understand how turn-taking within a stretch of talk is negotiated between participants, in order to produce some form of social action or 'reality'. The turn-taking system provides a basic framework for the organization of talk, since it allows participants to interact in a co-ordinated way, rather than simply to make random, disconnected contributions. Interaction is often structured around pairs of adjacent utterances, or statement-response structures. Thus, if the first utterance is a question, the next utterance will usually be heard as an answer.

In one renowned study of news interview interaction by Heritage and Greatbatch (1991), clear patterns were discovered in the use of adjacency pairs leading to an ordered sequence of interactions. The interviewer was commonly found to use a preface, such as a statement of apparent fact, and then a question, which was routinely followed by an answer from the interviewee:

Interviewer: hhh the (.) price being asked for these
letters is (.) three thousand pou::ds (.)
are you going to raise it (0.5)

Interviewee: at the moment it..... (continues)

(from Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991: 99)

What emerges from the study is that, however combative the participants or adversarial the interview, participants tacitly expect this pattern within the interaction. In other words, it is a normative arrangement which confers expectations and obligations on the participants in different ways. Participants 'orient' to the obligation to produce questions and answers, and they orient to expectations about the way the activities within a news interview should be carried out.

Despite its name, therefore, CA does not concern itself only with social conversation. The approach has also been applied to talk in professional and workplace settings (Drew and Heritage, 1992), to political speeches (Atkinson, 1984), media genres such as radio phone-ins (Hutchby, 1996), and to understanding neighbourhood disputes (Edwards and Stokoe, 2007). Drew and Heritage (1992) have argued that there are structural differences between formal and informal settings. For example, within institutional talk, participation is focused on particular tasks and outcomes; the order of participation is fairly rigid; and the kind of turns expected of participants is relatively limited and to a certain extent, pre-allocated.

So, what is the contribution of CA to the field of Linguistics? Primarily, the approach continues to demonstrate that fundamental rules govern the patterning of talk-in-

interaction. Just as we can theorize the rules that underlie grammatical and syntactical choices, so we can make reasoned predictions - based on our knowledge of turn-taking rules and the ways these are occasionally broken or 'violated' - of the ways in which participants typically construct conversations within given social contexts. Schegloff (1997: 184) has posited that CA satisfies the need for a systematic form of discourse analysis that offers linguists an 'Archimedean point' which is 'internal to the object of analysis itself'. In other words, CA's data-centred approach possesses its own internal rule system, which allows linguistic data to be analysed neutrally and a single, reliable interpretation to be reached. CA focuses on what linguistic data reveal, rather than upon external, sociological theorizing, and additionally offers what it regards as a reliable set of instruments by which to describe, analyse and interpret spoken discourse within the field of Linguistics. By the same token, CA can be deployed by researchers as an invaluable 'stand-alone' tool in cross-disciplinary studies. For example, Ehrlich (2006) uses CA as her analytical tool to examine question-answer sequences in a US courtroom rape case, in her discussion of gender identities and power. Kitzinger (2002) has also evolved a version of CA known as Feminist Conversation Analysis whereby the methodology is harnessed to identify exactly how participants 'do' power and powerlessness, oppression and resistance within gendered contexts.

By using methods of micro-analysis, working from the bottom-up, CA attaches a very special value to the linguistic data itself and regards itself quasi-scientifically, as a caution against 'the relativisation and perspectivisation of cultural analysis' (Schegloff, 1997: 183). However, not all linguists using discourse analysis would agree that such a quest for neutrality or objectivity is attainable or even desirable, as we shall now see.

2. Discourse Analysis (DA)

Discourse Analysis (DA) has a strong focus on studying language in its own right, although it is often appropriated as an analytic tool by researchers from other disciplines. Like CA, this approach in its diverse strands recognises that there is an orderliness, logic

and meaningfulness to linguistic performance. The hallmark of DA however, is its recognition of the variability in and the context dependence of participants' discourse. By far the most common sources of data for DA tend to be the accounts drawn from recordings of informal, spoken interviews between researchers and respondents, making it a popular, qualitative method of data analysis for linguists and social scientists alike (e.g. Laws, 1999; Widdicombe, 1993). However, it has also been used to analyse a variety of data such as formal academic journal writing (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984); newspaper reports and media interviews (Potter and Reicher, 1987), and accounts of journalists and politicians during a political controversy (Potter and Edwards, 1990).

Despite its clear focus on language, DA, like CA, has its origins in sociology. Social scientists Gilbert and Mulkay (1984) were investigating the sociology of scientific knowledge following a dispute in the field of biochemistry. Their analytic goal was to discover the systematic features of scientists' discourse but they came across strongly conflicting descriptions of experience. They had wanted to produce a single, definitive, sociological account of the social processes which were at work in the way this group of scientists resolved their dispute. The pair began to realise that accounts and descriptions cannot be treated as neutral representations of an 'objective' social reality but as linguistic constructions of a given experience (see also Edley and Litosseliti, this volume). In other words, they received a variety of different versions of ostensibly the same things: scientists' discourse in formal academic journals was systematically different from the discourse generated in informal interviews. The former appeared to be constituted through an 'empiricist repertoire', indexed by the use of formal language and terminology, a strict adherence to scientific procedure and its role in revealing an 'objective' reality, while the latter was constituted through a 'contingent repertoire', indexed by a more informal tone, biographical detail, personal comment and expression of feeling. In short, specific forms of language use were seen to construct different versions of reality.

So what are the key features of DA? Four are of interest to us here:

- Principle of variability: Language is used for a variety of functions and its use has variable consequences. The same phenomenon (such as a scientific experiment) can be described in a number of different ways according to audience, purpose and context, and thus there will be considerable variation in accounts. Accordingly, these will be received and interpreted in a range of contrasting but context-appropriate ways.
- Constructed and constructive nature of language: According to Gilbert and Mulkay (1984: 7), ‘discourse can never be taken as simply descriptive of the social action to which it refers, no matter how uniform particular segments of that discourse appear to be.’ Rather, any account of experience is a form of interpretation, constituting a new version of reality. Thus, the kinds of linguistic events that occur in interview data – descriptions, narratives, accounts, comments, jokes – are constructions that depend on the context in which they are produced and the purposes speakers wish them to serve. Indeed, the constructive and flexible ways in which language is used should themselves become a subject for study (Potter and Wetherell, 1987).
- Interpretive repertoire: Research accounts often provide evidence of regular, descriptive features or devices. The term ‘repertoire’ is used to denote ‘recurrently used systems of terms used for characterizing and evaluating actions, events and other phenomena’ (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 149). They are often signified by ‘a distinctive vocabulary, particular stylistic and grammatical features, and the occurrence of specific features of speech, idiomatic expressions and metaphors’ (Wooffitt, 2005). There is some equivalence between the concept of ‘repertoires’ and the Foucauldian concept of ‘discourses’ (see p.00 above).
- A combination of macro and micro-analytical approaches: Macro and micro approaches work together to produce an analysis within DA. Its main conceptual tool, interpretive or linguistic repertoires are used to identify linguistic features in the data such as idioms, metaphors, figures of speech and professional terminology, which may identify wider patterns of language use. These in turn provide evidence for speculating about the role of contingent psychological, social or political factors that may inform the speech or writing of research

participants. However, unlike CA, DA does not offer the same degree of formal methodological procedure (Wooffitt, 2005).

Overall, DA has principles in common with the Saussurian view that language constructs social realities through its use of culturally agreed sign systems. But DA takes issue with the positivist and empiricist basis to much traditional linguistic research that treats language data as available to objective or indeed, scientific forms of inquiry. Unlike CA, DA works from a hermeneutic, interpretive or social constructionist stance, which challenges the idea that there is a single 'Archimedean point' from which linguistic data can be analysed neutrally and a single, reliable interpretation reached. This positivist principle which underlies CA has been further challenged by the work of social psychologists Potter and Wetherell (1987), who argue that ideologies are embodied in, and reproduced through everyday discourse practices. In their DA study of the racist discourse of white New Zealanders (1992), they draw upon methods of micro-analysis to identify the textual evidence for linguistic repertoires which, they argue, signifies the macro-structuring role of dominant ideologies such as racism and unequal class relations.

What is the contribution of DA to the field of Linguistics? Certainly, DA has evolved into a theoretical framework that potentially threatens tenets of Linguistics as a 'science'. For many applied and socio-linguists working in inter-disciplinary ways with various forms of cultural analysis, DA's social constructionist and interpretive stance is likely to make more epistemological sense. DA combines micro-analysis of language with macro-level discussion about how versions of social reality are constituted, and thereafter made resistant to criticism by the use of specific rhetorical strategies. This makes it a particularly effective method for deconstructing the linguistic accounts of political and media figures (e.g. Potter and Edwards, 1990). But Wooffitt (2005) argues that DA is limited by its lack of a formal apparatus by which to conduct such micro-analyses, and tends to borrow methods eclectically from a range of fields such as speech act theory, literary criticism and indeed, CA. More recent versions of DA have become more closely associated with Discursive Psychology (e.g. Harré, 1995), which in turn has some links with Critical Discourse Analysis (e.g. Billig, 1997).

3. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

CDA is useful to linguistic scholars because, like CA and DA, it analyses real, and often extended, samples of spoken and written discourse. However, unlike CA in particular, CDA adopts a macro-analytical view of the world in that it takes the notion of discourse in its widest sense (see p.00, above) to be the essential unit of communication. Thus CDA research specifically considers how language works within institutional and political discourses (e.g. in education, organisations, media, government), as well as specific discourses (around gender and class), in order to uncover overt or more often, covert inequalities in social relationships.

CDA does not regard itself as a coherent theory, a sub-discipline of discourse analysis or as a methodological approach like CA and DA. Rather, it views itself as a ‘critical’ perspective, or programme of scholarship which can be combined with other approaches and commissioned by scholars working in a range of disciplines related both to linguistics and to the social sciences more generally (van Dijk, 2001). CDA evolved formally in the early 1990s as a perspective applied by a network of scholars with shared political concerns about social inequalities in the world but with widely differing interests in areas such as literature, politics, media studies, genre studies and information technology (see below). Since then, various branches of the movement have emerged. Among these, Critical Linguistics (e.g. Fowler et al, 1979) is the forerunner of CDA and looks closely at how features of grammar work ideologically within individual texts to undermine oppressed groups. French Discourse Analysis (e.g. Pecheux, 1982) looks at the ideological effects of discursive formations in positioning people as social subjects but does not emphasize practical applications of theory. Social Semiotics (e.g. Hodge and Kress, 1988) explores ways of analysing multi-modal texts and practices of reading and interpreting. Socio-cognitive studies (van Dijk, 1991) focus on the reproduction of inequalities such as racism and ethnic prejudices in discourse and media communication, linking cognition with wider social processes. Lastly, the Discourse-historical method

aims to ‘integrate systematically all available background information in the analysis and interpretation of the many layers of a written or spoken text’ (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997: 266). Whether analysts with a critical perspective prefer to focus on micro-linguistic features as in the case of Social Semiotics, or macro-linguistic features as in the case of French Discourse Analysis, or combine the two as the Discourse-historical approach aims to achieve, a common reference point for all approaches is primarily a linguistic one: that of Halliday’s systemic functional grammar. Halliday (1970: 142) stressed the relationship between the grammatical system and the social and personal needs that language is required to serve, through three meta-functions of language that are continuously interconnected: the ideational, the interpersonal and the textual. Hence, in Halliday’s view as a linguist, text and context are inextricably linked in a dialectically constitutive relationship.

With its historical origins in mind, as well as its theoretical diversity, which key features are central to CDA’s ‘critical perspective’? The following are suggested here:

- Language as social practice: Language use in speech and writing is seen as a social practice, which ‘implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s), and social structure(s) which frame it’ (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997: 258). Thus, in this two-way relationship, discourse is considered to be socially constitutive as well as socially shaped.
- Relationship between language and power: since discourses are so influential, they can help to produce and reproduce unequal power relations between different ethnicities, social classes, genders, ages, and professional groups.
- A committed, emancipatory agenda: van Dijk (2001: 96) has used the term ‘critical’ to mean ‘discourse analysis with attitude’. Working from the opposite pole to CA, CDA starts from ‘prevailing social problems, and thereby chooses the perspective of those who suffer most, and critically analyses those in power, those

who are responsible, and those who have the means and the opportunity to solve such problems' (van Dijk, 1986: 4).

- Text and context: CDA largely draws upon a 'solid linguistic basis' (van Dijk, 2001: 97) in that it examines textual features such as sentence structure, verb tense, syntax, lexical choice, the internal coherence and cohesion of discourse and so on. However, it places such micro-analysis first, within a 'critical perspective', and second, within the contextual frame of the 'production' and 'consumption' of discourses. In practice this means the ways in which historical and cultural processes/ structures give rise to the production of a text and the ways subjects within these processes/ structures 'consume', or interact with texts. This implies a dialectical relationship between the reading of a particular text and the context, institution or social structure that frames this reading (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997).
- Self-reflexivity: given CDA's commitment to an emancipatory agenda, an important self-correcting principle is that of self-reflexivity: the need for discourse analysts to be explicitly self-referential about their a priori assumptions, motivations and values systems in conducting linguistic research. Such value systems are often informed by Marxist critical theory, which in turn is viewed - in a curious reversal of CA logic - as offering analysts an objective reference point on social reality (Blommaert, 2005).
- Interdiscursivity/ intertextuality: Interdiscursivity involves the ways in which one discourse is always inscribed and inflected with traces of other discourses. Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999: 136) give the example of feminist political discourses which have 'internalised Marxist and poststructuralist discourses, incorporating some of their concepts, but appropriating them in ways which accord with their own logic'. This same principle is part of intertextuality where one text bears traces of a series of preceding texts, thus reinforcing historical presuppositions. Fairclough (2001: 127) gives the example of a magazine article

on a royal wedding, which presupposes reader knowledge about participants, situational context and implicit power relations ('royal family are more important than readers').

- Deconstruction: CDA is concerned to unravel exactly how binary power relations constitute identities, subject positions and interactions within discourses and texts, and thus create social inequalities. One example is Wodak's deconstructive analysis of a series of interview narratives with Members of the European Parliament in order to ascertain whether gender mainstreaming policies were genuinely producing structural changes in equalising gender roles (Wodak, 2005).

With its diverse range of theoretical approaches, no single research study can be considered prototypical of CDA, although common to many studies is an interest in institutional discourse and the language of the media. However, van Dijk's (1993) study of racism and political discourse contains some useful illustrative elements. The topic – the transcript of a speech made by a British Conservative Member of Parliament defending articles written by a right-wing head teacher from Bradford, UK, on multicultural education – is in keeping with CDA's aim to show how discourse enacts and reproduces the power of dominant groups. In this study, van Dijk's elaborate series of interpretive procedures is also fairly typical of the CDA tendency to produce complex, hierarchical models of linguistic analysis. Working from a top-down perspective, he first examines features of the broader context such as matters of access, setting, and linguistic genre. He moves on to look at discourse dimensions of the speech itself, and then turns to 'macro-semantics': ways in which the debate is formulated, and the argumentative propositions within the speech. This leads finally to micro-analytical matters of 'local meaning and coherence', involving the examination of lexical and grammatical features such as the use of words like 'mob' or 'Trots' to characterise the speakers' opponents (see Wooffitt, 2005: 142-3).

What is CDA's contribution to the field of Linguistics? It is fair to say that 'the jury is out' in terms of how the field of Linguistics has received CDA. On the plus side, CDA

has been of immense value to researchers looking at institutional discourse, where differentials in power relations are often systemic. As we have seen, different theorists have provided models of analysis and sets of analytical tools with which to deconstruct public and media discourse. On the negative side, linguists have criticised CDA in terms of the vagueness of its method, methodology and analytical approaches; as well as in terms of ‘its biased interpretations of discourse under the guise of critical analysis’ (Blommaert, 2005: see p. 31 for a full discussion). For those linguists who continue to assess their subject primarily as a science governed by a positivist model of research, CDA will beg all sorts of questions about ‘representativeness, selectivity, partiality, prejudice and voice’ (ibid.). For those linguists whose research has already embraced hermeneutic, interpretivist or social constructionist principles, CDA will be appreciated for its readiness to declare its principles and to marry ideological commitment to the pursuit of rigorous, replicable and retrievable research methods.

4: Feminist Post-structuralist discourse analysis (FPDA)

Like CDA, FPDA has its roots in DA approaches but more exclusively draws from poststructuralist theory (e.g Bakhtin, 1981; Derrida, 1987; Foucault, 1972). Rather than taking a ‘critical’ perspective on the data based on Marxist social theory, it has embraced a ‘feminist post-structuralist’ perspective.

FPDA can be defined as:

...an approach to analysing intertextualised discourses in spoken interaction and other types of text. It draws upon the poststructuralist principles of complexity, plurality, ambiguity, connection, recognition, diversity, textual playfulness, functionality and transformation.

The feminist perspective on poststructuralist discourse analysis considers gender differentiation to be a dominant discourse among competing discourses when analysing all types of text.

(Baxter, 2008: 245)

FPDA originated from Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis (PDA); (see Baxter, 2007)). PDA adopts exactly parallel methods to its partner, but without the focus on a feminist perspective where gender differentiation is key. *FPDA* evolved as part of an ethnographic case study of teenage school children's assessed talk in a British classroom. During the long-term process of observing how these students interacted during a course module on public speaking, Baxter (2003) discovered that the ways in which children's talk was assessed as part of their GCSEⁱⁱⁱ examination depended as much on the interplay of four ethnographically identified, dominant 'discourses' – in the widest sense of this term (see above) – as upon any formal assessment criteria. The discourses were labelled gender differentiation, peer and staff approval, fair play and a model of collaborative talk, which were seen to 'position' individual students in different and competing ways, at times as relatively powerful, and at other times as relatively powerless. Thus, Baxter's (2003) research evidence revealed that students who were awarded the top 'A' grade were not necessarily the most proficient speakers in the class. Rather, these students were more consistently positioned as powerful subjects among their classmates within and across the four discourses, which in practice meant that they tended to be male, popular with their peers, liked by their teachers, given more turns in class discussions, and able to use both presentational and collaborative forms of talk reasonably effectively. These positions of power were inscribed by hegemonic educational and social practices which appear to approve the ascendancy of males, the role of 'high status' students, and the abilities of speakers rather than listeners.

FPDA does share with CDA a number of defining features in keeping with its social constructionist origins: the idea of language as social practice; the relation between language and power; the importance of the self-reflexive researcher, the principle of intertextuality; and the role of deconstruction in conducting discourse analysis (see pp.00-00 above). However, FPDA is not simply a sub-branch of the multi-disciplinary and accommodating CDA, because it operates within a contrasting yet 'supplementary' theoretical paradigm (Derrida, 1987).

So, what are the key defining features of FPDA, which distinguish it from CDA? We can summarise these as follows:

- Not an emancipatory agenda, but a ‘transformative quest’: In line with its poststructuralist origins, FPDA does not support an emancipatory agenda to discourse analysis because this is ‘a will to truth’ leading to ‘a will to power’, which will ultimately transmute into its own ‘grand narrative’ (Foucault, 1972). Alternatively, FPDA supports small-scale, bottom-up, localised social transformations that are vital in its larger quest to challenge dominant discourses (like gender differentiation, or indeed, an institutionalised method of linguistic analysis such as CDA.)
- The diversity and multiplicity of speakers’ identities: For FPDA, many power variables construct speakers’ identities such as regional background, ethnicity, class, age, though among these, gender is viewed as a significant force. According to context or moment, some of these variables are more or less salient in constructing identities through spoken interaction. FPDA also has the potential to analyse the multi-voiced dimensions of written discourse, but as yet there is little such work in the field (for an example, see Warhol, 2005).
- Complexity rather than polarisation of subjects of study: FPDA challenges binary thinking that tends to structure thoughts in oppositional pairs, placing one term over the other. Significantly, it takes issue with CDA’s tendency to polarise subjects of study into two categories — the more powerful: those (people, groups, systems) who wield power over others, and the less powerful, or those who suffer its abuse (Baxter, 2007). So, for example, FPDA argues that most females are not helpless victims of patriarchal oppression, but that gender identities are complex, shifting and multiply located, continuously fluctuating between subject positions of powerfulness and powerlessness.

- An interplay between micro and macro-analysis: FPDA draws upon both levels of analysis, or rather, an interplay between the two. The micro-level looks at the construction of meaning within localised or context-specific settings such as classrooms, board meetings and T.V talk shows. Within these, it examines linguistic data in terms of turn-taking, sentence structure, verb tense, lexical choice, the internal coherence and cohesion of discourse, aspects which help analysts to pinpoint the exact moments in discourse when a speaker shifts between states of relative powerfulness and powerlessness. Using these data as evidence in a continuous interplay, dominant discourses are identified synchronically within individual transcripts, and diachronically, over time. Macro-analysis, drawing on the identified, dominant discourses, helps to explain how discursal relationships produce sudden and or more subtle shifts in the power relations between speakers within particular interactions and contexts (see p. 00 above).

What is the contribution of FPDA to the field of Linguistics? While it is the newest and least established of the four approaches, FPDA is arguably a necessary antidote to the other three, in that it offers a ‘supplementary’ approach, simultaneously complementing and undermining other methods. Within Linguistics, there is much value to be gained from a multi-perspectival approach that combines different methodological tools in a functional way as befits the task in hand. The textual interplay between competing terms, methods and sets of ideas allows for more multiple, open-ended readings of a piece of analysis. Thus while CDA in principle (e.g. van Dijk, 2001) seeks to deconstruct hegemonic power relations inscribed within texts, and in so doing, may produce a single, oppositional reading that may eventually become authoritative, a post-structuralist, supplementary approach encourages the possibility of several competing readings. This means that no single reading of a text is regarded as fixed, but that every reading can be reviewed and perhaps contested in the light of competing perspectives or methods of analysis. Much exciting and challenging work within Linguistics is being carried out by scholars prepared to experiment with multi-perspectival and multi-method approaches. For example, Kamada (2008) combines discourse analytic approaches including FPDA with Bourdieu’s (1977) theories of cultural analysis to explore the linguistic construction

of ethnic identities among six Japanese-Caucasian girlfriends. Castaneda (2008) makes FPDA his central approach for analysing the speech of pre-schoolers in Colombia, but also draws upon CA approaches to micro-analyse sequences of conversational turns, as well as applying a CDA critique. In sum, it is the quest of FPDA to act as a kind of ‘agent provocateur’ to other more established approaches to discourse analysis, constantly questioning their status as ‘grand narratives’ (Baxter, 2008: 243) which may **serve to impede** new ways of thinking.

What are the possible limitations of FPDA? The first may lie in its warrant for identifying, naming and analysing significant discourses within classroom and other contexts. There are times when it seems that both CDA and FPDA are capable of randomly generating new discourses to suit their ideological (CDA) or epistemological (FPDA) purposes. CA, in contrast, bases its own warrants on a systematic methodology: any larger patterns it claims to detect in its micro-analysis of ‘talk-in-interaction’ can always be located, turn by turn, within specific speech exchanges. Secondly, FPDA may need to devise more linguistically distinctive methods of analysis. At present, its ‘denotative’ approach to analysis relies on eclectic methods more associated with Interactional Sociolinguistics, literary criticism and CA. The attribution of a rigorous and reliable method of analysis – a distinctive brand – still remains the preserve of CA.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the chapter has explored four approaches to analysing discourse that are of particular value to the field of Linguistics. First, CA is a micro-analytical approach which offers a theoretical framework, a terminology, and a systematic modus operandi for analysing spoken discourse in particular. Furthermore, CA is a perfect instrument for linguists of any theoretical persuasion who are looking for a ‘stand-alone’ set of analytical tools in order to examine spoken interaction in relation to a clear model of the ‘rules’ of turn-taking. Secondly, DA offers linguists a bridge between micro and macro-analytical approaches in its key concept of the ‘interpretive’ or ‘linguistic repertoire’. It

works ‘above the sentence’ in its exploration of how highly conventionalised patterns of language, constructed by characteristic stylistic features, help to construct different accounts of social reality. However, it does not offer such a clear and accessible ‘stand-alone’ approach as CA. Thirdly, CDA has always refuted that it is, in fact, a discourse-analytic approach. Linguists attracted to the use of CDA are likely to share the critical perspective that macro-societal concerns, such as processes of inequality, transcend a scientific interest in ‘language for language’s sake’. In the last ten years, CDA exponents have done much to counter the charge that their top-down approach fails to ‘explain how their perspective might apply to what is happening right now, on the ground, in this very conversation’ (Wetherell, 1998: 395), but their research work has tended to result in higher level modelling of linguistic and social processes (Wodak, 2001; van Dijk, 2001), in preference to data-centred studies. Finally, FPDA aims to demonstrate that the notion of a contradiction between micro and macro-analysis is irrelevant. It has shown how its approach can ‘undo the macro-micro dichotomy’ (Heller, 2001), by analysing transcripts micro-analytically within a given time and space, and using these as a reference point for identifying how larger-scale discourses produce significant shifts in the power relations between speakers during a stretch of discourse.

Overall, linguists have a rich fund of discourse-analytic resources at their disposal, each of which challenges the Chomskyan shibboleth that ‘linguistic performance’ teaches us nothing about how language works.

Further reading

Baxter (2003)

This introduction to FPDA shows how the discourse-analytic approach works in relation to the social contexts of classroom discussions, and senior management meetings.

Blommaert (2005)

This book develops a constructive critique of CDA, which is made relevant to students of linguistics, linguistic anthropology, and the sociology of language.

Cameron (2001)

Aimed primarily at students of Linguistics, this is a useful introduction to the theory and practice of CA, CDA and a range of other approaches to spoken, rather than written discourse.

Wooffitt (2005)

This book systematically analyses the close and complex relationship between CA and DA in academic research, particularly as these methodologies apply to Linguistics.

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Endnotes

ⁱ See Silverman (2000) for a critique of the 'realist' paradigm of social science and linguistic research.

ⁱⁱ Transcription conventions are based on Jefferson (1984)

ⁱⁱⁱ GCSE: General Certificate of Secondary Education, an examination for 15 to 16 year olds used in Britain and other English speaking parts of the world.

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