

Bridging Micro and Macro Perspectives Through Critical Discourse Analysis

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Dartmouth - August 2016

Discourse

Discourse is “*a form of social practice*” employing language, as well as other tools for communication (Cameron & Panović, 2014)

Discourse(s) are “*ways of being in the world,*” including “*words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, social identities...*” that can be understood through linguistic analysis. (Gee, 2007)

The invisibility of discourse



Thanks to Ellen Cushman for reminding me of this metaphor!

Features of Critical Discourse Analysis

Awareness of social/political context

- Language as ‘**lens**’ for understanding the world
- Text as ‘**artifact**’ of power relations



Opportunities for agency/resistance

- Language as ‘**tool**’ for reshaping the world

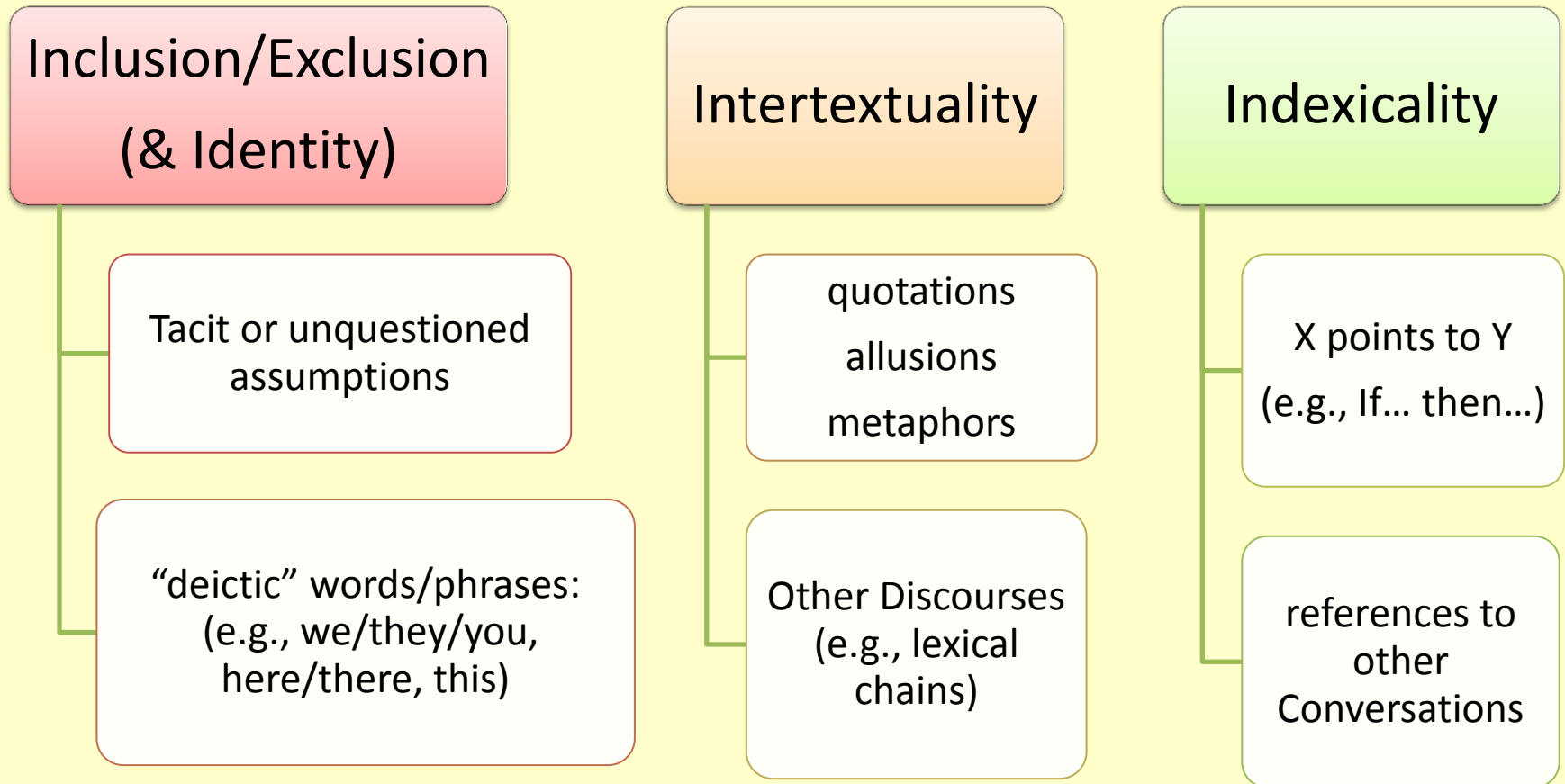
Critical Storytelling

“Like our economic and political worlds, stories too are defined by [power relations]. How they are told, who tells them, when they're told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power. Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it **the definitive story** of that person.”

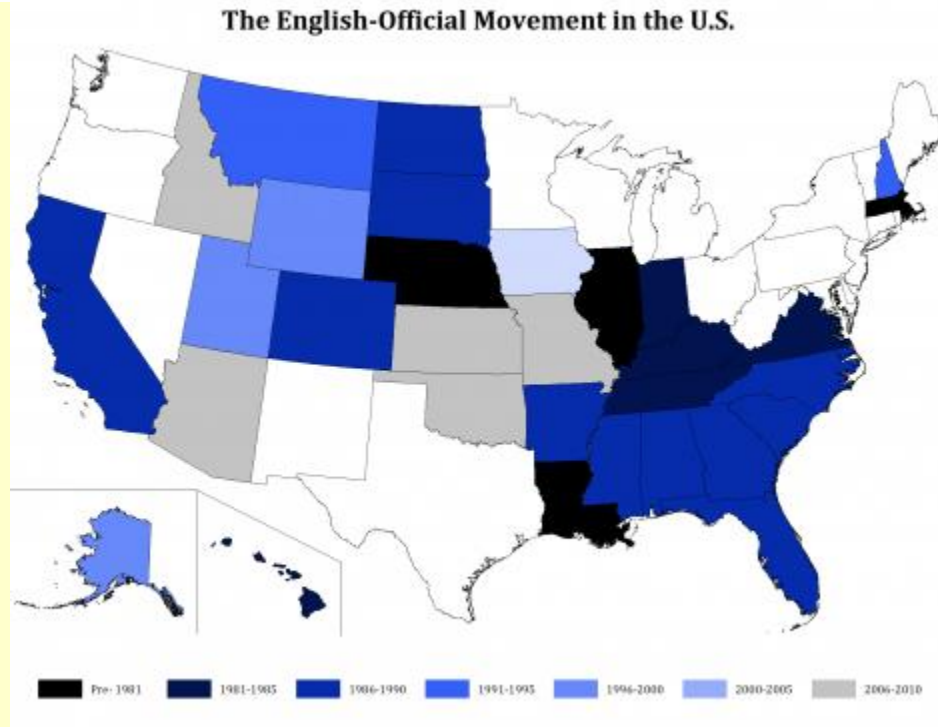


*This idea has also been referenced by Eric Leake, and other presenters here!

What does CDA research investigate? (a sampling)



Application: “Official English” in the U.S.



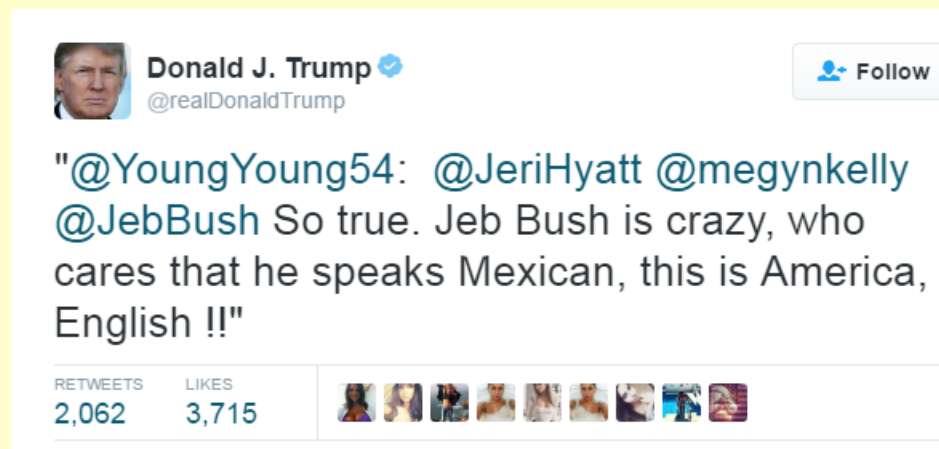
Source: [The Washington Post](#)

CDA-inspired questions

1. What is the “story” about language in the U.S.? (and about language in general?)
 - What’s *really* at stake? (Conversation)
2. Who is the “we/us” and the “they/them”?
3. Does the NCTE/CCCC statement offer an effective counter-story?

“We have a country, where, to assimilate, you have to speak English. And I think that where he [Bush] was, and the way it came out didn't sound right to me. We have to have assimilation--to have a country, we have to have assimilation. I'm not the first one to say this. We've had many people over the years, for many, many years, saying the same thing. This is a country where we speak English, not Spanish.”

- Donald Trump, CNN Debate, 9/16/15



...from the Director of ProEnglish

“America’s always been a melting pot with people who speak many other languages, but in order for America to work, we need a common bond of unity that brings people together to communicate in one common language. . . There’s always been an expectation that when people come to this country, they learn to assimilate and learn our language and our customs and I think the rise of, this push towards, multiculturalism is actually what’s divisive and taking away from our unity.”

[Think Progress](#) article- 9/3/15

NCTE/CCCC Position Statement

“Background: The National Language Policy is a response to efforts to make English the “official” language of the United States. This policy recognizes the historical reality that, even though English has become the language of wider communication, we are a multilingual society. All people in a democratic society have the right to education, to employment, to social services, and to equal protection under the law. No one should be denied these or any civil rights because of linguistic differences. This policy enables everyone to participate in the life of this multicultural nation by ensuring continued respect both for English, our common language, and for the many other languages that contribute to our rich cultural heritage.”

<http://www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/nationallangpolicy>

How I'm using CDA in my work

- The nature and impact of “master narratives” about refugee-background students
 - “[villians and victims](#)” in media discourse (Crawley et al, 2016)
 - “[deficit discourse](#)” in schools and media (Shapiro, *RTE*, 2014)
- Counter-stories put forth by these students
 - “Asset discourse” (Shapiro & MacDonald, forthcoming in *JLIE*)
 - Familial capital (Shapiro, in progress)

CDA and student writing

Najib's memoir

I have seen a lot of unjust, miserable, and terrible things in my twenty years. I have lived in three countries: Somalia, Kenya, and America. I lived for twelve years in two different refugee camps, Dadaab and Kakuma [. . .] I started my own business in the refugee camp at the age of eleven or twelve. I have always been extremely independent. I have always had a good mind for figuring things out. I always have been a problem-solver. I knew if I worked hard and put my mind to something, that I could make a difference. I was always a hard worker. I was a survivor.

Lingering questions

1. What does CDA add to our analytical repertoire?

- What does CDA offer in contrast with (or addition to) other tools for textual/rhetorical analysis?
- What linguistic knowledge is needed for systemic analysis of textual patterns?

2. What are the standards for rigor?

- What does a systematic approach look like?
- How can quantitative methods be integrated? (e.g., corpus analysis)

3. What are other possible applications and limitations?

References / Further Reading

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- Gee, J. P.** (2014). *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method*. Routledge.
- Huckin, T., Andrus, J., & Clary-Lemon, J.** (2012). Critical discourse analysis and rhetoric and composition. *College Composition and Communication*, 107-129.
- Shapiro, S.** (2014). “Words that you said got bigger”: English Language Learners’ lived experiences of deficit discourse. *Research in the Teaching of English*. 48(4), 386-406.
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- Wodak, R., & Meyer, M.** (Eds.). (2009). *Methods for critical discourse analysis*. Sage.

Thank you!!

For these slides and other resources, go to

<http://sites.middlebury.edu/shapiro>

Or email me directly:

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