Applying critical discourse analysis

Research and intervention in health communication

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Overview

- An emancipatory agenda in CDA
- Impact beyond academia
- An example from my own work
- Professional practice
- Discussion points
An emancipatory agenda

to help increase consciousness of how language contributes to the domination of some people by others, because consciousness is the first step towards emancipation (Fairclough, 1989, p.1)

critical discourse scholars should ... be social and political scientists, as well as social critics and activists (van Dijk, 1993, p.253)

CDA ... intervenes on the side of the dominated and oppressed groups and against dominating groups, and ... it openly declares the emancipatory interests that motivate it (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p.259)

those who act as catalysts in the raising of consciousness ... must be people who have the theoretical background to enable them to act in this way, as well as sharing the experience of the oppressed to a sufficient extent for them to be accepted as catalysts (Fairclough, 1989, p.234)
An emancipatory agenda

Critical analysis aims to reproduce interpretations and explanations of areas of social life which both identify the causes of social wrongs and produce knowledge which could (in the right circumstances) contribute to righting or mitigating them.

(Fairclough, 2010, p.8; emphasis added)

Their [critical discourse analysts’] hope, if occasionally illusionary, is change through critical understanding. Their perspective, if possible, that of those who suffer most from dominance and inequality ... on of the criteria of their work is solidarity with those who need it most.

(van Dijk, 1993, p.252; emphasis added)
30 years on

- CDA (or CDS) has been institutionalised: study programmes, journals, academic positions etc.
- CDA has been taken beyond Europe: China, Middle East, South America, South East Asia
- Theoretical approaches have been developed, e.g. cognitive CDA
- New methodologies have been suggested, e.g. corpus-based CDA

“CDA researchers are fundamentally interested in analysing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control, as they are manifested in language ... to gain a proper understanding of how language functions in constituting and transmitting knowledge, in organizing social institutions or in exercising power in different domains/fields in our societies” (Baker et al., 2008, p.280)

“CDS is principally concerned with the communication and discursive construction of social ... knowledge, as well as with linguistic persuasion and manipulation ... to fully account for any links between language, legitimisation and knowledge, CDS needs to address the cognitive processes involved in text-production and text-interpretation” (Hart, 2011, p.1)
Applying CDA work beyond academia

Work by Ruth Wodak for federal and local government in Austria and Italy: e.g. comprehensibility of legal texts, guidelines on non-sexist language use, teachers’ handbook on language and antisemitism

Work by Paul Chilton for National Health Service and NGOs: frames-and-values analysis of public discourse

“I recently posted a message to a number of lists regarding (critical) discourse studies; a call for examples of how such studies have been applied or how researchers have intervened in the environments under study. There were only a few responses, although a number of people also expressed interest in any examples that were provided ... Clearly, CDA practitioners (if we want to use that term) have applied their research in a variety of ways, but these applications are rarely ‘talked about’ (at least in journal articles, monographs, conference papers and classes that introduce CDA).” (David Pask-Hughes)
CDA seems to have failed to promote emancipatory-knowledge. The knowledge it achieves, though aspiring to become emancipatory, has transformed itself in regulative-knowledge ... By ... devaluing its [common sense’s] positive aspects, CDA has failed to go beyond the dualisms that constrain modern reasoning.

Activist CDA ... must aim at transforming its emancipatory-knowledge into common sense ... that is, a prudent knowledge for a decent life ... based in principles of solidarity and the end of monopolies of interpretation, and in non-discriminatory practices that favour integration.

(Gouveia, 2003, pp.58-59)
The impact agenda

“Research Councils UK (RCUK) defines research impact as ‘the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy’.

Research impact embraces all the diverse ways that research-related skills benefit individuals, organisations and nations. These include:

 fostering global economic performance, and specifically the economic competitiveness of the United Kingdom
 increasing the effectiveness of public services and policy
 enhancing quality of life, health and creative output.”

Impact statements, toolkits, prizes, measures etc.

“Why make an impact? In recent years, the government has placed increasing emphasis on the need for evidence of economic and social returns from its investment in research. … Impact helps to demonstrate that social science is important – that it is worth investing in and worth using.”

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Data and informants</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Users</th>
<th>Beneficiaries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bringing up MMR vaccination rates in London*</td>
<td>news reports, focus groups with parents, letters from primary care trusts</td>
<td>Qualitative conversation, text and semiotic analysis</td>
<td>London-based sub-company of the NHS</td>
<td>young children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rebranding a cancer charity*</td>
<td>helpline calls, online forum posts, information material, meetings, interior design</td>
<td>Qualitative conversation, text and semiotic analysis</td>
<td>Prostate Cancer UK (formerly Prostate Cancer Charity)</td>
<td>African Caribbean and working-class men 50+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing a new metaphor for a drug*</td>
<td>focus groups with research &amp; development staff in a pharmaceutical company</td>
<td>Qualitative conversation analysis, metaphor analysis</td>
<td>company marketing the drug</td>
<td>company marketing the drug, health professionals, patients</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding the use of metaphor in end-of-life care</td>
<td>semi-structured interviews with, and online forum posts by, patients, family carers and health professionals</td>
<td>Qualitative text analysis, quantitative semantic corpus analysis</td>
<td>patients, family carers and health professionals</td>
<td>patients, family carers and health professionals</td>
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<td>Identifying the construction of disabled people in British public discourse 2011-13*</td>
<td>Political discourse: manifestos, speeches, blog posts, press releases, parliamentary debates, policy papers</td>
<td>Qualitative text analysis, quantitative lexico-grammatical corpus analysis</td>
<td>UK charity for disabled people</td>
<td>disabled people</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identifying patterns in language use by Parkinson’s patients and their spouses</td>
<td>semi-structured interviews with Parkinson’s patients and their spouses</td>
<td>Qualitative conversation analysis, metaphor analysis</td>
<td>Medical and nursing staff at Klinikum Bad Segeberg/Germany</td>
<td>Parkinson’s patients and their spouses</td>
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Projects listed with an asterisk (*) on the previous slide where carried out for consulting company Linguistic Landscapes.
Understanding the use of metaphor in end-of-life care

- How do members of different stakeholders groups (health professionals, patients and unpaid family carers) use metaphor to talk about their experiences, attitudes and expectations of end-of-life care (e.g. palliative treatment, preparations for dying, etc)?
- What does the use of metaphor by these stakeholder groups suggest about (a) the experiences and needs of the members of these groups and their mutual relationships, and (b) the nature of metaphor as a linguistic and cognitive phenomenon?

https://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/melc
Understanding the use of metaphor in end-of-life care

1.5 million words; 90,000 manual sample

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Patients</th>
<th>Carers</th>
<th>Healthcare Professionals</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semi-structured Interviews</td>
<td>100,859</td>
<td>81,564</td>
<td>89,943</td>
<td>272,366</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online forum posts</td>
<td>500,134</td>
<td>500,256</td>
<td>253,168</td>
<td>1,253,558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>600,993</td>
<td>581,820</td>
<td>343,111</td>
<td>1,525,924</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Understanding the use of metaphor in end-of-life care

- Manual intensive analysis of 90,000-word sample: MIP + elements of MIPVU

- Annotation using eMargin (http://emargin.bcu.ac.uk/)

- Automated analysis of 1.5 million words: Wmatrix + Broad Sweep searching (http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/wmatrix3.html)
  ~ a modification to Wmatrix especially developed to facilitate corpus-based metaphor analysis
  ~ allows us to see and explore all the semantic categories an expression can belong to, thereby capturing more metaphorical expressions
Understanding the use of metaphor in end-of-life care

We don't talk about... individuals ‘battling’ cancer (Prostate Cancer Charity, Key Messages 2011)

from the Department of Health’s End of Life Care Strategy (2008):
‘the patient journey’, ‘care pathway’, ‘steps’, ‘trajectories of decline’, ‘Bridges support service’
Hospice managers’ metaphors for a ‘good death’

‘being peaceful’, ‘being at peace’; ‘having peace’
‘being pain-free’, ‘being symptom-free’
(cf. Carpentier and van Brussel 2012)

Metaphors to do with movement and journeys
(cf. Lakoff and Turner 1989, Dempster 2012)

‘having open discussions’, ‘talking openly with the family members about what was happening’
Hospice managers’ metaphors for a ‘good death’: JOURNEY

“I think a good death is where the patient and the family have reached an understanding that the death is going to come and that they're where they want to be and that they're as comfortable as they can be erm and that that the death happens in a peaceful way.

[...] she [the patient’s daughter] was able to accept that it was the end so I think that's what you would call a good death. Where both the patient and the family have reached the stage of saying this is now where where it needs to end.
Hospice managers’ metaphors for a ‘bad death’

‘where there is some tension or discord and it almost gets amplified’

‘they've landed up there’; emotions and situation out of control

‘they haven't accepted yet that they're going to die’; help or support pushed away’;

‘you can't quite reach into the scared place to support them’; things hidden or in the background

‘for some people their life is a struggle or a battle or a series of conflicts that never quite resolve, and I suppose it's logical to say if their life's been like that, why would their death be any different?’; ‘can’t settle’;
there's that phrase that people die as they've lived. And for some people their life is a struggle or a battle or a series of conflicts that never quite resolve, and I suppose it's logical to say if their life's been like that, why would their death be any different? Erm so they are the deaths that I think that are psychologically difficult where somebody where somebody not only doesn't want to address it, cos people can die OK not having addressed it and be OK. But it's where they've not addressed it but actually there's a lot of fear in the background or a lot of battling in the background. And so you'd get this kind of horrible overlay of pretending it's not going on, but actually they're really scared and you can't quite reach into the scared place to support them, because they won't let you, but you know it's there. So I find those deaths really ... difficult, where the conversations that needed to happen haven't happened where the support's been pushed away or where you couldn't work out how to provide the support and you see people very very afraid in ... in the act of dying.
on government targets. I think sometimes if you go in armed with ammunition it strengthens your case. Even when he got the treatment though he seemed to handle it and not be so frightened forewarned is for armed as they say. Just wish you and the girls didn’t have to go through the treatment.

b - very glad to hear there may still be some weapons left in the arsenal for you. Wishing you all the very, very best possible - Julie </p>
I don’t intend to give up; I don’t intend to give in. No I want to fight it. I don’t want it to beat me, I want to beat it. Because I don’t think we should give up trying. It's a hard job but in the long run I hope to achieve [...] we’ll achieve something.
Aims: do research, communicate with research users, provide the potential for change within institutions as well as between institutions and their clients.
Professional practice

Emancipatory aim for researcher(s) and some clients: ethics and confidentiality

Pressures on researcher(s): to attract grant money, to acquire clients, to deliver to deadlines within often very short time spans

Data often collected and prepared by marketing research companies, not prepared for linguistic analysis, often very large amounts of data

Limited transfer between academic and consultancy contexts

So what’s in it for the researcher(s)? Career and financial gains, honing analytical skills, learning to communicate research findings to different audiences, seeing direct impact of work, having contributed to a change for the better
Discussion points

1. Students pay, and academics are paid, for CDA work
   Clients pay, and consultants are paid, for CDA work
   Research funding bodies pay, and academic institutions are paid, for CDA work:
   Is applied work for money a sell-out or a viable way to spread insights from, and
   principles of, CDA? How else could research be remunerated?

2. Should critical analysis be harnessed for the aims of powerful institutions
   (government, companies)? Should it help commercial and profit interests?

3. Interesting projects - but is it CDA?
References


