Review article

Critical Discourse Analysis and Cognitive Linguistics, by Kieran O'Halloran; 280 pp., Edinburgh University Press, 2003, ISBN 0 7486 1828 7 (paperback)

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I will start with saying that it is laudable for anyone to try and sit astride different fields and cross-fertilize them. Doing this is a tall order for anyone, and to do it well is difficult and requires in-depth knowledge of multiple fields. Kieran O'Halloran's book talks about the principles of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and relates these principles to cognitive endeavours emanating from connectionism and cognitive linguistics. In what follows I will first set out my own understandings of CDA before I address some points that I distilled from my reading of Kieran O'Halloran's book.

1. My own understandings and uses of CDA

CDA has had considerable impact not only on how discourse analysis is understood and done as a sub-branch of linguistics, but also on disciplines that have participated in the 'discursive turn', and that have needed guidance and legitimation for focusing on textual practices. Notable here are, among others, planning theory, public health, organization studies, media studies, and accounting. Particularly through publications like *Discourse and Social Change and Critical Discourse Analysis* (Fairclough, 1992, 1995), CDA has been able to provide a readily applicable approach to text analysis both for researchers who are and for those who are not initiated into the specifics of linguistic theory and analysis.

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It has enabled these researchers to analyse textual constructs as well as elaborate on the theoretical reasons supporting a critical stance towards textual or discourse analysis.

In doing so, CDA has become popular to the extent of becoming a bit of an orthodoxy, and this has not gone unchallenged (Widdowson, 1995), producing a rash of critiques and counter-critiques (Fairclough, 1996; Stubbs, 1997). CDA's analytical legitimations (largely anchored in Hallidayan linguistics) and its explicit statements of purpose (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997) have produced a rich body of work that is both sophisticated and complex, rendering its critique and deconstruction a challenging task. I myself have practised a modest rewriting rather than a fully-fledged reconstruction of CDA in my own work (Iedema, 2003a). This rewriting was motivated in part by how I saw Hallidayan linguistics being appropriated to do 'critical analyses' without close attention to issues surrounding the position of the analyst, practitioner-centred understandings of practice, or the heteroglossic and contested nature of meaning. I was not unhappy with the ways in which CDA researchers picked and chose their analytical tools, but here I confess I chose to read the CDA literature in a forgiving rather than polemic frame of mind. That said, the openly political intent of CDA did appear to me to produce at times rather black-and-white claims that were not sufficiently in touch with the complexities inherent in linguistic–semiotic meaning, with the often counter-intuitive logics and tacit bases of situated practice, and with the politics of their interpretation.

In my own work I therefore devise a variant of Hallidayan–Faircloughian-critical analysis that suits my practical purpose of communicating about and with clinicians about how they understand, organize and communicate their work. Since I spend much time analyzing spoken language and now increasingly also visual data of situated conduct (Iedema et al., 2004b), I have found it necessary to set greater store by the hermeneutic dimensions of analysis (Messer, Sass, & Woolfolk, 1990) and the complex logics of practice (Schatzki, 2002), at the expense of technical precision, analytical certainty and political determination. This is a result not only of becoming conscious of my own partial role as interpreter and researcher in the area of health care, but also of the inevitable authoritarian effect of presenting 'findings' (let alone technical ones) to my clinical colleagues ('the researched').

Central for me too here is that local knowledges tie in with practice-centred reasonings and understandings that textual analysis on its own—no matter how deeply hermeneutic or technically sophisticated—cannot grasp. This is because of the situated, contingent, dynamic and non-linear nature of practitioners' practices and reasonings, and these facets of discourse need to be taken into account by discourse analysts to ensure their own relevance outside of their elite group of discourse analysts. Finally, I have learned that it is not singular and final answers or findings that are most productive, but their multiplicity and multiplication. This means that it is precisely the richness of multiple answers and interpretations that appropriately acknowledges the complexity and dynamics of local discourse use (Iedema, Rhodes, & Scheeres, 2004a). On the other hand, the triumvirate of lenses mentioned above enables me to home in on and make explicit these complexities and dynamics, and, rather than produce singular or monological readings of language data (Grant, Keenoy, & Oswick, 2001), explore the variability of answers, interpretations and meanings that I am able to elicit with the help of my co-researchers and with those we research.

In coming to this position, I relied on the efforts of those who had settled for me the question about the place of cognition in what I was trying to do. Central here for me

are people like Taylor (1985a, 1985b), Shotter and Gergen (1989), and also Hallidayan theorists,[1] like Thibault (1986, 1991, 1997) and Lemke (1985, 1988, 1993, 1995) who were all concerned to challenge Cartesian views of language and cognition and speak about human conduct in terms of situated social-dialogical practice. This chimed in too with the work emanating in the wake of the publications in English of Vygotky's work (Vygotsky, 1986), much of which critiqued what came to be termed 'cognitivism', or the notion that the human mind is the entity par excellence where we should look for social explanations (Still & Costall, 1991). (The more recent fusion of language and brain studies is now producing interesting research that looks at the complexity of mental processes in relation to linguistic and semiotic phenomena, and Halliday's own work has been ground-breaking here (Deacon, 1997; Halliday, 2004; Williams & Lukin, 2004). This latter research operates in a way that is neither language-centric nor mind-centric nor materiality-centric, in that it targets the dynamics of neuro-semiological processes and of resultant semio-material practices.)

It is against this backdrop then that I read Kieran O'Halloran's book, *Critical Discourse Analysis and Cognitive Linguistics*. The book is well-crafted on a stylistic level, but confronted me with dilemmas on other levels. The book's main argument is that CDA does not take account of the kinds of findings produced by cognitive linguistics endeavours over the last two decades, and that CDA works with impoverished notions of interpretation and cognition. Examples are cited from the 'CDA' literature to argue that claims about what readers will understand from reading particular kinds of linguistic phenomena are flawed due to inadequate assumptions about readers' mental workings and inclinations. I put CDA in scare quotes in the previous sentence, because some citations are derived from earlier Critical Linguistics work by Fowler, Hodge, Kress, and Trew (1979) (Hodge & Kress [1979] 1993). The book's suggestion appears to be that there is an unproblematic continuity between these literatures, and that the difference in labels (CL, CDA) is a chronologic–geographic rather than an epistemic matter.

Instead of taking on the full range of issues that O'Halloran's book addresses, I will set out just three of the more prominent (for me) claims that it makes about CDA and about Halliday, and then raise some questions about these claims.[2]

Among other things, the book suggests that

1. CDA naturalizes its mode of interpretation and its kind of text analysis (p. 3).
2. CDA relies on a notion of syntactic transformation that is genealogically and analytically related to Chomsky's 'transformational grammar', rendering it 'syntacticist' ('syntax ueber alles'; p. 100), 'symbolicist' ('forms have pre-determined meanings and functions'; p. 78ff), and 'representationist' (language 'objectively and truthfully reflects the world out there' (Taylor, 1985a)).
3. CDA's contentions about the social force of linguistic meaning equate language with thought and ignore the complexities of readers' cognitions (p. 80).

I will address each of these in turn.

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[1] These authors may see themselves as embodying a richer set of traditions than merely the Hallidayan one.

[2] I will not go into all claims that O'Halloran makes or I would end up writing a book on the subject and this is not a subject I will write a book about!

1. The claim that CDA naturalizes its assumptions about interpretation and its mode of text analysis is understandable given the political expediency that characterizes its explications to use a Schegloffian term. I am less sure about whether CD analysis can be characterized as 'mystification analysis', for reasons I detail further below. On my reading, the emphasis in the CDA literature is on the need to question language use that sets limits to the parameters of a debate and that cements inequalities that readers 'reading for gist' might otherwise not be alerted to. 'Power' is the rallying cry for CDA, and unequal power is found to be evident from kinds of language use that appear to favour some actors over others. I deal with this problem on a daily basis myself, when some professionals succeed in structuring the terms of the debate over what is 'good care' and in doing so exclude others.

O'Halloran's insistence on the prominence within CDA of term 'mystification' is helped along by his conflation of what is called Critical Linguistics (CL) and the early (1970s) neo-Marxist intentions of Hodge, Kress, Fowler, and their colleagues. The term 'critical' here would have been important to address, I feel, because it situates Hodge and Kress's work in the 'critical theory' tradition, namely the one that sought to have social effect and challenge the ways in which society (and the way in which society was represented) was structured by agents and agencies with power (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1993 [1944]). It is intriguing that O'Halloran does not touch at all on the notion of 'power', seeing that it is such a prominent issue in not only the CL but also the CDA literature. The way in which the notion of 'power' was reconstructed along Foucauldian lines following the publication of Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1977) and *The History of Sexuality I* (Foucault, 1978) is not unimportant to understanding the 'epistemic' shift from CL to CDA in my view. If CL operated with neo-Marxist notion of power emphasizing the problem of dominance, CDA I understand to operate more with the Foucauldian notion of 'productive' power. Similarly, if CL books are being re-published, I read this not as signalling that this means that CL can be equated with CDA, but that Hodge and Kress had interesting things to say in their own right, and that these things are an important part of how the last 20–30 years of critical text analysis has unfolded. I do not 'read' these republications as saying Hodge and Kress' early enthusiasm for syntactic analysis and ideological critique can be uncoupled from the lack of application of linguistic analysis at the time (1970s) to critique social trends and phenomena. Hodge and Kress (and colleagues) were doing something at the time that no-one had done before, and their work is in that sense seminal, even if it yet had to join the 'Foucauldian revolution'.

This notwithstanding, Hodge and Kress' (1979/1993) analysis of how scientific discourse is recontextualized into pedagogic discourse and how this recontextualization (to use a Bernsteinian expression (Bernstein, 1971, 1973; Hasan, 1973)) elides causal relationships cannot be seen as a call for representations that more adequately reflect 'the real world', as O'Halloran's book appears to suggest (p. 61). What is at stake for Hodge and Kress I think is that 'cause' as a discursive construction is important (if not central!) in scientific discourse, and that its elision from its pedagogic recontextualized version is not going to be able to help students understand or wield 'real' scientific discourse any time soon. The issue here, as in other instances cited in O'Halloran's book, is how discourse is used to set

the terms by which we understand our world(s). The issue is decidedly not about how well discourse 'mirrors reality' (Rorty, 1980, 1994).

To return for a moment to the CL–CDA connection, I find it intriguing that O'Halloran does not touch on Fairclough's discussion of Foucault and of Foucault's rewriting of the notion of power (Fairclough devotes a considerable number of pages to the topic in (Fairclough, 1992)). This is surprising because Foucault's discussion of power and Fairclough's commentary on it show that Hodge and Kress's earlier CL stance on power as 'always already' domination can and should to some extent be redefined to focus attention on how speakers, writers and readers are 'always already' (ueberhaupt) implicated in the power structures and practices that are evident in social life, and on how their own ways of speaking and writing help structure particular social arrangements. Aside from instances of pure domination as can be found in Goffman's 'total institutions', people are often implicated in power because they are affiliated to greater or lesser extent to the practices of power, with language use being one such powered practice.

The word 'practice' is also not mentioned in O'Halloran's book, another omission I find curious, given its centrality to CDA and O'Halloran's presumably close reading of the literature he critiques. The notion of 'practice' signals that people's agency as languaging human beings is to some extent beholden to the social practices that they are implicated in, have identified with, have grown up with, and that are forced upon them, or that they try to exploit to their advantage. The close links between Basil Bernstein's work, CL, CDA as well as Hallidayan linguistics reinforce this point: since the 1960s these analysts were concerned to challenge the apparent fact that people and their identities were/are being naturalized into producing particular discourse practices rather than others, and thereby perpetuate the social structures that they embody/ied. Bernstein's concern with working class students and how they identified with discourses that were socially (considered to be) disadvantageous is an example, and his work attests to the importance of signalling that the ways in which we speak and write are not natural and necessary (and even 'authenticity' being highly problematic (Gilroy, 1996)). In so far as I understand it, the focus of the work in question here is on discourse practices and on how such practices appear to naturalize particular ways of representing the world, and that this focus realises an explicitly political stand.[3] 'Politics' however is another '*p*' term that does not feature in O'Halloran's book.

The absence of these '*p*' terms, power, practice, and politics, points to a reading on the part of O'Halloran of CL, CDA and Halliday that appears to be skewed towards raising some issues at the expense of others. For example, while the book seeks to establish connections between the logico-mathematical and positivist philosophies of Russell, Carnap and early Wittgenstein, none are explored between the bodies of work critiqued and the much less formalist and more hermeneutic and socially-sensitive philosophies of von Humboldt, Herder, Hamann, Heidegger and later Wittgenstein (Taylor, 1985a). It appears that O'Halloran either ignores or deliberately backgrounds these connections and terminologies and their importance for CL, CDA and Hallidayan linguistics, because they would undermine his argument about these latter bodies of work being symbolicist, having affinities with logical empiricism, and leaning towards 'gross internalism'.

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[3] At least one of the commentators mentioned used to have Communist connections.

It is further unfortunate that O'Halloran's book makes such claims because the work emanating from within Hallidayan linguistics could be of great interest and importance to cognitive linguistics. Elaborating on his earlier suspicion of approaches that sought to equate linguistic with mental phenomena (Halliday, 1973), Halliday's work has become quite explicit on the relationship between neurology and language (Halliday, 1992, 1995b, 1996; Hasan, 1995, 1999), and related work already cited earlier has also been clear about the anti-representationist, non-cognitivist principles inscribed into Hallidayan theory (Lemke, 1985; Thibault, 1986, 1987, 1991). If CDA has not been explicit about these issues, I suggest, it is because they do not problematize or call into question CDA's political work challenging the ways in which representational practices naturalize power relationships, social practices and associated productivities.

2. O'Halloran's concern is with how CL and CDA rely on the notion of transformation to do its analyses. Transformation derives from (neo) Marxist thinking in terms of its emphasis on 'how things could have been'. Transformation ties in with Halliday's systemic view of language according to which a particular structure/meaning is likely to exclude or displace others. Transformation is also relied on to make claims about the ways in which language uses change from 'more congruent' (simpler) to 'less congruent' (more complex) ways of meaning. Congruence is a relative concept that Halliday has shown to be relevant to how children develop ontogenetically (Halliday, 1975), to how texts unfold logogenetically (Halliday, 1993b, 1993c), and to how the English language has unfolded phylogenetically (Halliday, 1993a). As I understand Halliday's explanation of how young children 'learn how to mean', congruence is not absolute or definable in advance, and can therefore not be equated with 'canonical sentence structure' (Halliday, 1975, 1992). 'Congruence' is as much practice-bound as is discourse more generally (as Bernstein's work also attests). It is therefore not right to draw a parallel between 'representationism' (the view that language mirrors the world), or 'symbolicism' (the view that language phenomena have fixed and identifiable meanings), and Halliday's explanation of how language can transmogrify from 'more generic' towards 'more sophisticated and specialized'. Given CDA's familiarity with Halliday, Foucault, and people like Laclau and Mouffe (1985) (Torfing, 1999), it would appear unlikely also that CDA can be characterized as being 'representationist' or 'symbolicist'.

I find it somewhat unsettling and disappointing that O'Halloran has not taken the time to look for commonalities more than he has done, and instead perpetuate the polemic that started between Widdowson and Fairclough some time ago. I think that had O'Halloran started out with the intent to find commonalities between the various bodies of literature he discusses, he would have done so, and much to his and his discipline's benefit, and CDA's, even if there would of course have been points of difference to comment on. The tone of O'Halloran's book however is that he has 'an axe to grind'. This is evident from how O'Halloran reduces down the work of people like Halliday to less than a page, and makes quite unexpected claims about Halliday's views ("For Halliday language 'embod-ies' or 'encodes' a person's cognition", p. 80; see below).[4] As noted, the book devotes

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[4] O'Halloran coins the term 'interpersonal passivization' on page 18; a term I have not come across in Halliday's work.

some pages to Russell, Carnap and early Wittgenstein but says nothing about alternative language philosophers and their relevance for Hallidayan thinking and the critical analysis of discourse (Iedema, 1997).

To return to the issue of transformation, as far as I understand it, this term provides a means for calling into question 'what is' and for speculating about what could have been. I could have written this comment on a piece of paper in red pencil, but I chose the computer and a keyboard to do it, although I could have transformed my red pencil scribbles into a computer file (and I could have reflected on the implications of doing so (Iedema, 2003b)). Sometimes, the ways in which people do (say or mean) things has implications not only for themselves but also for what others can do (say or mean). It is this issue that is at the forefront of Halliday's and I think also of CDA's concerns. Let us look at what is before us and (re)negotiate about how we see it. The issue of reader/analyst positioning that comes into play here has busied people since Kress's discussion of this in 1985 (Kress, 1985), a book that O'Halloran cites but does not address in this regard. The issue of positioning has concerned people in CL, CDA and Hallidayan linguistics for considerable time, again largely because of Bernstein's focus on working class 'codes' (discourse practices), but also because of how more recent attention to 'interpersonal meaning' and Appraisal has made it evident that analysts' reading positions inform the way they approach 'what is there', how they see it, and what they find important to question (Martin, 1995, 2000).[5]

Finally, transformation is a device with which we can spot how language changes, how it is applied in some contexts but not in others, by some people and not others, or in some places and not others. Paradoxically, the analytical intent behind transformation is therefore not entirely unrelated to O'Halloran's 'co-text dependent prototypes' in so far that we try to establish what is typical in a particular discourse practice, and then hold it up to scrutiny. The notion of transformation differs from 'co-text dependent prototype' in two important ways however. First, it does not focus on stasis but on dynamics ('what is turned into what'). Second, it does not anchor itself to imputations of mentality, according to which 'prototypicality' as realized by specific linguistic phenomena becomes an argument about mental ease, eliding from view that the use of these linguistic phenomena (on a particular occasion) could equally have been motivated by social sanction, interpersonal constraint, coincidence, discursive decorum, or enforced habituation (p. 118).[6]

Finally, the conclusion that nominalization analysis means that CDA (and Hallidayan linguistics) make assumptions about how readers understand nouns and verbs cannot be drawn. As the discussion above bears out, nominalization is a dynamic and situated facet of discourse practice, not a road map to readers' views about syntactic categories, the quotes and interpretations of these quotes in O'Halloran's book notwithstanding. O'Halloran's book suggests that CDA works with fixed and simplified notions of how meanings and syntactic categories interact, but there is ample work that makes it clear that nominalization

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[5] Lemke's book is one that sets out explicitly what informs his interest in critically appraising, using a Hallidayan perspective on language and semiosis, how society structures opportunities for people (Lemke, 1995).

[6] And this goes to the heart of the problem with Lakoff's work in that it tries to ground meaning making in embodied semiosis, while then insisting that such semiosis can be exhaustively accounted for on the basis of a form of linguistic categorization (Lakoff & Johnson, 2001), leaving ways of meaning making that escape linguistic categorization unaccounted for.

is a dynamic and discourse-relative process, and that no simplistic relationships between cause or nouns on the one hand and 'reality' on the other hand are intended. In the literature I am familiar with, and the interpretation of CDA that I favour is that nominalization is posited as being one resource among others with which representation is achieved and contested.

3. To call into question O'Halloran's judgments about Halliday's position on the language-thought relationship I cite from early Halliday:

> . . .the behaviour potential associated with the contexts that Bernstein identifies may be expressed linguistically as a meaning potential. Some such step is needed if we are to relate the fundamental concepts of the social theory to recognizable forms and patterns of language behaviour. A word or two should be said here about the relation of the concept of meaning potential to the Chomskyan notion of competence, even if only briefly. The two are somewhat different. Meaning potential is defined not in terms of the mind but in terms of the culture; not as what the speaker knows, but as what he [sic] can do - in the special sense of what he can do linguistically (what he 'can mean', as we expressed it). The distinction is important because 'can do' is of the same order of abstraction as 'does'; the two are related simply as potential and actualised potential, and can be used to illuminate each other. But 'knows' is distinct and clearly insulated from 'does'; the relation between the two is complex and oblique, and leads to the quest for a 'theory of performance' to explain the 'does'. (Halliday, 1973, p. 52/53)

This citation supports the view that, far from being a 'symbolist' or a 'gross internalist' as OHalloran suggests, Halliday does not presume to be able to make any claims about mentality from looking at manifest language (Halliday, 1995a). One page on Halliday says:

> The meaning potential is the range of significant variation that is at the disposal of the speaker. The notion is not unlike Dell Hymes' notion 'communicative competence', except that Hymes defines this in terms of 'competence' in the Chomskyan sense of what the speaker knows, whereas we are talking of a potential – what he [sic] can do, in the linguistic sense of what he can mean – and avoiding the additional complication of a distinction between doing and knowing. (Halliday, 1973, p. 54)

Halliday is not concerned with the distinction between 'knows' and 'does' (as are Chomsky and Hymes), but is focused on 'can do' as cultural potential and 'does' as actual. Firth (Halliday's teacher) puts this issue more graphically still:

> If we regard language as expressive or communicative we imply that it is an instrument of inner mental states. And as we know so little of inner mental states, even by the most careful introspection, the language problem becomes more mysterious the more we try to explain it by referring it to inner mental happenings that are not observable. By regarding words as acts, events, habits, we limit our enquiry to what is objective and observable . . .. (Firth, 1957, p. 170)

The idea that manifest language accounts for a person's mental activity is incorrect for another reason too, namely that people are meaning makers relying on semiotic and not just linguistic means (Halliday, 1978, 1995a). That is, we are constituted as meaning

makers across meaning resources that encompass gesture, posture, gaze, kinesics, as well as things like dress and other facets of the whole social panoply that we decorate and distinguish ourselves with (Grosz, 1990, 1994), and not all of these resources are amenable to linguistic coding or manipulation. The concern with semiosis has recently been given increased impetus with the notion 'multi-modality' (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001), but that is not to say that semiosis is a recent entrant into thinking about people's meaning making potential and the role of language in this (Halliday's early work attests of this).

All this is to underscore that the main focus of Halliday's and CDA's attention has been on how the social produces and structures people, meaning and language (Hasan, 1999; Vygotsky, 1986; Wertsch, 1985). While O'Halloran's concern is with individuals' cognition, Halliday's and CDA's concerns lie with the production (another term missing from O'Halloran's account) and structuration (Giddens, 1981) of social life. The political intent behind CDA and Halliday's work is not emphasized here as an excuse for not paying attention to individuals' cognitive workings (the recent work targeting neuro-linguistic phenomena cited above is evidence of attention being paid to cognition). Rather, the political orientation of this work is emphasized as being the basis of its mode of engagement with what Schatzki calls 'the site of the social' (Schatzki, 2002); that is, its powers, practices, positionings, and productivities:

> . . . understandings cannot be construed as possessions of specific people. Rather, they are something carried in the practices that people perform. This is because action understandings, as a matter of fact (though not necessarily of necessity), are established, acquired, sustained, and transformed through the actions that compose these practices. (Schatzki, 2002, p. 135)

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