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- interdisciplinarity
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Including methodologies to assist those undertaking their own critical research of discourse, this Handbook is key reading for all those engaged in the study and research of Critical Discourse Analysis within English Language and Linguistics, Communication, Media Studies and related areas.

John Flowerdew is Emeritus Professor at City University of Hong Kong and a visiting professor at Lancaster University. He has authored and co-authored several books including: Advances in Discourse Studies (with V.K. Bhatia and R. Jones, 2008), Critical Discourse Analysis in Historiography (2012), Discourse in English Language Education (2013) and Discourse in Context, (2014). He serves on the editorial boards of a range of international journals, including Critical Discourse Studies, Journal of Pragmatics, Journal of Language and Politics and Journal of English for Specific Purposes.

John E. Richardson is a Reader in Critical Discourse Studies at Loughborough University. He is Editor of the international journal Critical Discourse Studies and has authored or edited several books including: Analysing Media Discourses (2011), Analysing Fascist Discourse (2013), Advances in Critical Discourse Studies (with M. Krzyżanowski, D. Machin and R. Wodak, 2014) and British Fascism: A Discourse-Historic Analysis (2017).
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Critical discourse analysis and politics

Laura Filardo-Llamas and Michael S. Boyd

1. Political language

*Because Selma shows us that America is not the project of any one person. Because the single-most powerful word in our democracy is the word ‘we.’ We the People. We shall overcome. Yes we can. That word is owned by no one. It belongs to everyone.*

– President Barack Obama, 7 March 2015

The quote above can serve as a starting point for a discussion about language and politics. First of all, it is illustrative of the issues that CDA embraces when investigating political discourse (PD), i.e., “the semiotic dimensions of power, injustice, abuse, and political-economic or cultural change in society” (Fairclough, Mulderrig and Wodak 2011: 357). The dimension of power is clearly reflected in the dominant role of the speaker – the president of the United States. Yet, the same speaker, as a representative of the historically oppressed, and excluded, Black minority, has also been, seemingly, a victim of a power system and discourse dominance that perpetuated injustice and abuse against a minority group. The quote (and the entire speech) focuses on political and cultural change among African Americans in US society over the past 50 years. The speech, then, could be seen as an example of a discourse practice that aims to further transform social practices. At first glance, the quote might appear rather different from those in many CDA-inspired investigations in that the speaker is not producing or reproducing social inequalities, but rather he is extolling the virtues of the civil rights movement and the transformation of a formerly dominated minority group into a dominant one. However, the text is no less salient for our purposes, being an example of what van Dijk (1997: 11) calls “resistance and counter-power against such forms of discourse dominance.” We cannot forget that Obama is exploiting his prominent and powerful position in order to spread the perception of a changed status quo among African Americans. We might also argue that Obama is reshaping social practice through discourse practice, and, more specifically, the commemorative speech genre.

As with most CDA investigations, we need to consider the immediate and wider contexts which define the text. This includes the co-text, situational context as well as socio-cultural
Critical discourse analysis and politics

and historical context, because such features, “particularly those such as socially defined role, location, timing, are pivotal in the definition of political discourse” (Chilton and Schäffner 2002: 16). The excerpt is taken from a 32-minute speech given on 7 March 2015 to commemorate one of the pivotal moments in the US civil rights movement: when some 600 marchers who were attempting to leave Selma on their way to the Alabama State Capitol in Montgomery to demand equal voting rights for African Americans were attacked on a bridge by state and local police with clubs and tear gas. Both the location Obama chose for his speech, the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, and the timing, the 50th anniversary of one of the central events in the civil rights movement, are crucial in defining the immediate and wider contexts. Furthermore, as part of the wider historical context we need to understand that these violent events sparked further protests, which culminated on 25 March 1965 in the final march of some 25,000 protesters, led by Martin Luther King, to the capitol. The events surrounding Selma led to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which banned unfair practices in voter registration. As noted by Combs (2013: 6), the events that began on 7 March 1965 represent a watershed moment for the American civil rights movement.

If we return to the text, Obama refers to the events – metonymically and metaphorically – simply as “Selma,” strategically recontextualising one part of a greater historical event as a turning point for African Americans. The metaphor is expanded to include all Americans, and specifically those who support – to cite another line from the speech – “the idea of a just America and a fair America, an inclusive America.” In the short excerpt above the first person plural pronoun is used eight times and, for the most part, with a shifting meaning, from the inclusive “shows us,” “glorious task we are given,” and “this great nation of ours” to the historically recontextualised examples “We the people” from the preamble of the US Constitution, “We shall overcome” from the song widely used in the Civil Rights movement, and “Yes we can” from Obama’s own PD. The general effect of the first-person plural pronoun is textual and pragmatic cohesion that reinforces group identity and unity (Boyd 2013; Filardo-Llamas 2015). Cohesion is further strengthened through the recontextualisation of various discourses: from Obama’s own discourse and, on a more historical level, those drawn from the events at Selma and the civil rights movement. Such “relocation” of discourse (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999) can be a powerful tool in itself, allowing for the transformation of social or discursive practices and creating new ones (Busch 2006: 613).

While this short discussion has allowed us to introduce some of the most salient aspects of PD analysis, we have not yet addressed the important question of what exactly PD is. No one would doubt that the excerpt above is political because it is uttered by a politician in political circumstances, but we may still wonder where one needs to draw the line between political and non-political texts. First, we might consider the many other “official” participants in PD: “political institutions, governments, political media, and political supporters operating in political environments to achieve political goals” (Wilson 2001: 398). But what about citizens and voters who watch or listen to a political speech on YouTube, or those who read about politics in the media, namely, the recipients of political communication? The latter also need to be considered as active subjects who “reconstruct […] the text as a system of means which may be more or less congruent with the ideology which informs the text” (Fowler 2009: 275). Such a view embraces all participants in the political process (van Dijk 1997: 13), who form a complementary relationship of production and reception. Thus, any (critical) analysis of PD needs to consider both “official” texts and speakers and the public that has to make sense of them, which occurs more and more through new media. Such media, as we shall see below, make political texts and actors more widely available to the public.
We may further ask if PD should be defined solely on the basis of its participants. In other words, how might we delimit the field of politics by relying on the nature of activities or practices accomplished by a political text? van Dijk (1997:16–18) discusses a number of issues that may determine whether a text is political or not, such as whether it relates to political systems and/or shared values and ideologies typical of different political systems, whether it can be related to political institutions, organisations or groups, whether political relations are established, or whether it is part of the political process. While it may not be possible to answer all of these questions when confronted with an ostensibly political text, they can help us to better categorise certain types, or genres, of political communication. Reisigl and Wodak (2009: 91) categorise political genres on the basis of eight different political functions: lawmaking procedure, formation of public attitudes, party-internal formation of attitudes, inter-party formation, organisation of international relations, political advertising, political executive, and administration and political control. One important aspect missing from all of these categorisations, however, is the notion of persuasion, which Chilton (2008: 226) sees as an integral part of PD, including “persuasive rhetoric, the use of implied meaning, the use of euphemisms, the exclusion of references to undesirable realities, the use of language to rouse political emotions, and the like.” The double understanding of persuasion as an intention or as an effect determines the division of political genres we provide below, which is based on two overarching categories: political participants or possible political effect.

Taking the notions mentioned above as a point of departure, it is the objective of this chapter to provide an account of the different possibilities for doing critical analysis of PD. Through an analysis of several examples of PD, we intend to go through most of the aspects that have been covered in previous CDA studies while trying to show the wide array of methodological approaches that have been followed.

2. Literature review

PD analysis saw its boom in the late 20th century, even though its origins can be traced back to classical rhetoric and authors such as Aristotle or Cicero (Pujante 2003: 37). Making an analogy with Hart’s (2014: 2) description of CDA, two main approaches to the study of PD can be found throughout history: PD Studies and PD Analysis. Although both focus on the role that language has in shaping – and being shaped – by politics, the former takes philosophy, sociology, political science, and social-psychological approaches as their point of departure, whereas the latter is characterised by its use of applied linguistics.

Two significant aspects should be taken into account within the scope of PD Studies. First, Michel Foucault’s (1981) description of discourse as a social practice performed through language and organised in terms of power relationships contributed to introducing the notion of “text” into the debates about PD. Second, social and psychological approaches have tried to achieve descriptive precision of the study of language in PD through the study of political myths and symbols and the use of quantifiable and empirical accounts of political utterances in their analysis (see the first section of chapters in Kaal, Maks and van Elfrinkhof 2014).

More interesting to the present discussion is PD Analysis, which in Europe can be traced back to Critical Linguistics, one of the first disciplines to focus on the relationship between language and ideology (Fowler et al. 1979). Highly influenced by generative-transformational grammar and informed by a strong belief in language as a tool through which behaviour could be changed, this body of work tried to uncover the persuasive power of specific syntactic forms. As such, Critical Linguists tried to reveal instances of misrepresentation and/or discrimination in public discourse through a process of “defamiliarization and conscious-raising” (Fowler 2009: 273).

The main distinguishing feature among all these representatives arguably lay in the aspects which acquire a mediating role between language and politics, which are, in sequential order, history, discourse practice, social cognition, cognitive processing, and conceptual metaphor theory.

Acknowledging this mediating entity is of key significance if we wish to interpret and explain (Fairclough 1989) the relationship that is established between textual choices and their use – and effect – in political contexts. This is why a number of these elements, such as history (and intertextuality), the use of discourse practices (and expected PD genres), and the cognitive processing of discourse, are crucial for the analysis proposed in this chapter.

3. Methodological approaches

What follows has been organised as an attempt to convey the different perspectives that have been followed when doing PD analysis, particularly by taking into account their possible relation to the three-stage approach to CDA (Fairclough 1989). Chilton and Schäffner (2002: 25) argue that three main perspectives should be considered when analysing PD: textual features, interaction, and representation. These, in turn, are inextricably linked to Halliday’s (2004) metafunctions of language: textual, interpersonal, and ideational. Likewise connections can be established with the notions of text and context (understood both as situational context and background knowledge), and the three stages in CDA: description, interpretation, and explanation. Below we will briefly discuss how each of these stages can be exploited for PD analysis.

3.1 Analysis of text-related features: genre

Linguistic choices reflect not only how a text is constructed, but they are also related to all the major social functions of language (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 50), transmitting the three metafunctions. Their analysis is essential not only for the study of textual construction but also for understanding how a text may disseminate ideological beliefs and the social effect this may have. In this stage, however, we are particularly concerned with the relationship that can be established between textual features and their role in helping a text to adjust to social expectations. In a broader understanding of Halliday’s (2004) textual metafunction – usually concerned with explaining how texture is achieved through cohesion and coherence – we are, at this point, interested in the textual choices which help in making a text fulfil social expectations about what PD should be like. Thus, instead of adopting a purely descriptive view of the textual choices characterising different types, or genres, of political texts, we shall also try to explain the social role that those choices have in different social contexts.

Genres can be defined as “global linguistic patterns which have historically developed in a linguistic community for fulfilling specific communicative tasks in specific situations”
They are broadly determined by discourse communities, i.e., the groups of individuals whose membership is related to their social role and who inter-communicate with a text. According to Fairclough (1989: 29–37), each social domain has an associated “order of discourse” (Foucault 1981) – or a structured collection of discursive practices connected with particular social domains (Fairclough 1989: 29–37). The socio-political struggle for power is reflected in changes in the order of discourse, which attest the dominating ideology of the time. CDA is particularly interested in the role that certain genres play “in the exercise of power and influence [and. . .] in the very definition of politics and political institutions” (Chilton and Schäffner 2002: 21). It is this shifting nature of political genres that makes it necessary for them to be constantly adapted and redefined.

An example of the “fluid and shifting character” of (mediatised) political genres (Cap and Okulska 2013: 6) can be found in blogs. In her study of Polish and UK official political blogs, Kopytowska (2013: 381) sees such mediatised blogs as an emerging genre in PD that breaks down “the ontological divisions between the public and the private.” Her analysis considers the importance of mediatisation and proximisation which combine to reduce the distance between (political) blogs and their audiences through the creation of a virtual community. This is similar to what happens when speeches (Boyd 2011) and other political genres, such as debates (Boyd 2013) and interviews, are broadcast on YouTube as short fragments or in their entirety (Reisigl 2008: 259), often leading to the reshaping of these genres (Boyd 2011, 2014a, 2014b; Cap and Okulska 2013: 8–9). Thanks to new media, political genres are now more widely accessible and, importantly, the reception factors have been altered significantly by new communication paradigms such as text and video commenting, sharing, or liking, which encourage different forms of user-mediated interaction (Boyd 2011, 2014b). Cap and Okulska (2013: 9) question the actual role of “authorship” (production) as a defining feature of political genres due to the “intensity of migration” into new media. All of this implies a “re-imagining” (Fairclough 2010) of the political genres, as their distinguishing features are arguably now less clear-cut, and their textual construction shall be analysed not only by looking at a unitary text, but also by considering the “genres and combinations” new media genres and texts draw upon (Fairclough 2006: 33). In Figure 21.1 we have tried to capture this distinction by proposing a non-exhaustive list of some possible political genres and dividing them according to van Dijk’s (1997) dichotomy between political participants/possible political effect.

Intertextual relations between different types of genres are of key importance for understanding how political genres can evolve, and how this can affect other socio-political practices. Some examples can be seen in the recontextualisation of Barack Obama’s “Yes, we can” speech into a song in the 2008 presidential election campaigns (Filardo-Llamas 2015), in the representation of political events in murals and commemoration plaques in the streets of the main Northern Irish cities (Filardo-Llamas and González-Cascos 2014; Filardo-Llamas 2012), or in the relation that can be established between the multiple political genres that can be part of one single political campaign. This may happen, for instance, as a consequence of the use of deliberate polysemy, as we can find with the use of the word “deal” by the Democratic Unionist Party in 1998 to imply both the political meaning of agreement and the metaphorical meaning of economic negotiation as a means to delegitimise the peace agreement that had been signed in Northern Ireland (Filardo-Llamas 2014). Even if the double political and metaphorical meaning was the most common use, the word was visually recontextualised, and a new type of “deal” was referred to in one of the political manifestos produced by the same party five years later, during the election campaign for Northern Ireland’s Assembly (Figure 21.2).
Figure 21.1  Sample of possible political genres

Figure 21.2  Cartoon distributed by the DUP at the 2003 Assembly elections
3.2 Analysis of representation: ideological beliefs

According to Chilton (2004: 46) “representation is one of the obvious functions of discourse,” since through language we usually present a given view of reality. This resembles Halliday’s (2004) ideational metafunction, which explains how we interact with the world surrounding us when we communicate. When politicians use language, they try to imbue their view of society with an objective veil by relying on evidence, authority, or truth (Chilton 2004: 23), but, as much as they try, we cannot neglect that their view of reality is quite frequently determined by ideological beliefs (van Dijk 1998).

The notion of representation – understood as the creation of a mental space stimulated by a text (Chilton 2004: 50) – advocates in favour of incorporating a cognitive dimension within the study of PD. As argued by Hart (2014: 9), it is by studying how discourse is cognitively processed that we may understand “the effects of ideological or perspectivized language use on hearers’ mental representations and evaluations of reality.” This is, in fact, what should be done in CDA’s interpretation stage of the analysis.

Two notions are important to explain representation. First, perspective (Filardo-Llamas, Hart and Kaal 2015) – and its ideological implications – is vital for understanding how PD works, as it is the logical consequence of “bringing the viewer’s body into particular alignments with elements in the scene depicted and prior universal embodied experiences” (Hart 2014: 83). To understand this, it is necessary to do an analysis of the discourse worlds that are spread in each instance of discourse and how these interact with the deictic centre. A discussion of all the linguistic categories that may result in a perspectivised text is well beyond the scope of this chapter, but further information can be found in Chilton (2004), Hart (2010, 2014), and Filardo-Llamas (2013, 2014, 2015).

Likewise context, defined as a construct of “socio-cultural conventions from which the online pragmatic processing of language takes its bearing” (Widdowson 2004: 54), is also important. As many as four levels of context have been identified in the CDA literature, including the co-textual context, the intertextual and discursive relation with other texts, the context of situation, and the broader socio-political context (Benke and Wodak 2003: 225). All of them have a bearing on how discourse is processed as they belong to what is known as the speaker’s common ground, which is regulated by what van Dijk (2008: 54) calls the “K-device,” i.e., the knowledge that both speaker and recipients share. Different types of knowledge may influence the construed mental representations, including personal, interpersonal, group, institutional, national, or cultural knowledge (van Dijk 2005: 77–90).

At the basis of this is lexical representation, as mental models lie at the core of lexical selection. Lexical items serve both for cohesion at the level of co-text and coherence with the wider context and, when taken together, can create “a common underlying metaphorical schema” (Chilton and Schäffner 2002: 29) as well as “emphasize or de-emphasize political attitudes and opinions, garner support, manipulate public opinion, manufacture political consent, or legitimate political power” (van Dijk 1997: 25). Yet how do we study such (lexical) phenomena within a wider context? Are lexical phenomena a manifestation of the speaker’s recurring discourse? Some tools from Corpus Linguistics (CL) may indeed represent “a powerful heuristic tool helping clear pathways to discovery,” allowing for the analyst to “look beyond the text proper in order to unearth socially meaningful interpretations that can then be enlisted to do socially transformative work” (Mautner 2009: 124; see also Baker et al. 2008; Baker, this volume). CL tools can also provide twofold quantitative and qualitative analytical methods for “direct empirical evidence about the connotation of words” (Stubbs 1996: 121), thereby demonstrating the link between textual-related features and representation. In our analysis,
they will allow us to filter various discourse strands in a large amount of data to determine
the relationship between a specific political speech and, on the one hand, other texts and, on
the other, user-generated discourse based on the original text in the form of comments, ulti-
mately demonstrating how genres are being “colonized” (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999)
by new actors (new media users) and new discourse practices (text commenting).

3.3 Analysis of interaction: political stance

Chilton and Schäffner (2002: 32) explain the analysis of interaction as reflecting how the
speaker – and the audience – are positioned in relation to the communicative situation and
to their “interlocutors, their physical location, the point in time of the ongoing utterance
and where they are in the ongoing discourse.” If we adapt this definition to Halliday’s inter-
personal function, political stance is arguably equivalent to evaluation (Hart 2014: 7), or “the
way that speakers code or implicitly convey various kinds of subjective opinion in discourse and
in so doing attempt to achieve some intersubjective consensus of values with respect to what is
represented” (Hart 2014: 43, our emphasis). These are, in our view, the two most significant
elements of stance.

When looking at evaluation, CDA has traditionally focused on modality. Consequently, it
can be argued that the two elements of stance, epistemic and affective (Chilton and Schäffner
2002: 31), correspond to the traditional modal uses: epistemic and deontic. The former refers
to the evaluation of the propositional content, reflecting the speaker’s “commitment to the
truth of a proposition” (Chilton 2004: 59). Even if this is implicitly evaluative, it can be argued
that striving for epistemic control may serve in managing how beliefs and ideologies are
spread discursively (Marín-Arrese 2015: 2), i.e., it influences how via PD reality is represented.

Deontic modality is linked to normativity, understood as a way of (de)emphasising
the speaker’s authority (Chilton 2004: 59). Applying a narrow definition of Halliday’s interper-
sonal metafunction, the interaction dimension can be understood as the one explaining the
relationship between speaker and audience. In institutional settings, such as those characteris-
ing PD, this interpersonal metafunction becomes a status function which carries “deontic
powers” (Fairclough and Fairclough 2012: 72). This is a direct consequence of the human
ability to impose functions on others and regulate what others do. The analysis of deontic
modality becomes, thus, particularly important for study of PD, as it is through it that inter-
subjective consensus may be achieved: when the required political actions are based on a
group of shared beliefs between speaker and audience, the social rightness of those actions is
legitimised. This final effect of PD may be manifested in the audience’s reaction, something
that has often been neglected in CDA approaches to PD. Exceptions to this can be, however,
found in studies about comments in new media (Boyd 2011, 2014a, 2014b; O’Halloran 2010,
2014).

4. Case study

In this section we will briefly apply selected aspects of the methodological overview in sec-
tion 3 to the analysis of Obama’s “A More Perfect Union” (2008), delivered during the 2008
primary election in the United States. This speech attempted to address criticism of Obama’s
relationship with his controversial former pastor, Jeremiah Wright, and, more generally, the
issues of race and racism that had hitherto been lacking in the campaign. As a campaign
speech, however, it was also meant to promote Obama’s own political position and help him
to achieve power and influence among the other Democratic primary presidential candidates.
Both the genre and situational context of the speech influence the justification strategies Obama adopts for the discursive formation of the text. This is used especially “in the narrative creation of national history” and “to justify or relativise a societal status quo ante by emphasising the legitimacy of past acts of the ‘own’ national ‘we’-group which have been put into question” (Wodak et al. 2009: 33).

The speech also tests the importance of new media, and its various YouTube versions, which generated a significant number of often lengthy and relatively positive text comments (Boyd 2009, 2011, 2014b). Furthermore, the impact and effect of new media, together with its recontextualising capability, in the case of Obama has been demonstrated (Harfoush 2009; Castells 2009; Filardo-Llamas 2015). As we have already argued, new media have become an integral part of modern politics and political campaigns, and YouTube, in particular, has become an important means of (re)distributing PD and its various genres.

To understand people’s reaction to this speech, we need to identify first the linguistic features salient to the text and the representation triggered by them. Closely related to the justification strategy is Obama’s use of person deictics. Specifically, the first-person plural we is widespread, and its meaning depends on the speaker/hearer’s “deictic positioning” (Chilton 2004: 204) in context. As we can see in the examples and Figure 21.3 below, “we” may have a shifting indexing scope, thus allowing the speaker to address, and create a bond with, an increasingly wider audience.

1 I am married to a black American who carries within her the blood of slaves and slave-owners – an inheritance we pass on to our two precious daughters.
2 This was one of the tasks we set forth at the beginning of the campaign – to continue the long march of those who came before us.
3 For the African-American community, that path means embracing the burdens of our past without becoming victims of our past.
4 This is where we are right now. It’s a racial stalemate we’ve been stuck in for years. [...] I believe deeply that we cannot solve the challenges of our time unless we solve them together – unless we perfect our union by understanding that we may have different stories, but we hold common hopes; that we may not look the same and we may not have come from the same place, but we all want to move in the same direction – towards a better future for our children and our grandchildren.
5 We the people, in order to form a more perfect union. (Obama 2008)

A close analysis of the examples can help us to see how the high indexical value of the pronoun “we,” and its possibility for acquiring meaning in context, include an increasingly widening audience within its referential scope. Particularly interesting are the inclusive uses of the pronoun, addressing both the African-American community and/or all Americans (examples 3 and 4). Two linguistic strategies can be identified. On the one hand, the indexed community may be made explicit through the use of noun phrases such as “African-American community” (3), or adjectives such as “all”, “one,” or (4) “together.” On the other hand, ambiguity may be exploited through the co-textual lack of a referential expression to identify the indexed group, thus making the speech – and its content – appealing to both communities. This is particularly useful since Obama is trying to make a global appeal by dealing with the topic of race, which is generally divisive.

The main effect of these shifting pronominal uses is that Obama’s speech – and implicitly his role as future president – becomes universalised. Through this, combined with intertextual uses of other socio-political texts such as the speeches by Martin Luther King or the US Constitution
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(Example 5), he manages to associate the first person plural pronoun with a new meaning which reflects historical, social, and personal change (Boyd 2009; Filardo-Llamas 2015).

The idea of inclusiveness can be also seen in the increasingly widening scope of the spaces indexed throughout the speech: spaces occupied throughout Obama’s personal narrative, or by other people related to him (such as Rev. Wright or his family), and spaces occupied by common people. The plethora of individuals’ stories accounted for in the speech show that Obama relies on a strategy of individualisation combined with categorisation (van Leeuwen 1996: 48–54), which is also seen in the references to “the barbershop,” “the church,” “the street,” “rural communities,” or “urban black neighborhoods.” All of these places have a metonymic relation with the overarching term “this country.” A pictorial representation similar to Figure 21.3 could be made, and parallel widening scopes could be established for the first person plural pronoun and space deixics.

Inclusiveness is further encouraged through metaphors, particularly those based on the conceptualisation of governing as creating, and politicians as builders (Charteris-Black 2005: 141), mainly triggered through the lexical items “build” and “rebuild.” Particularly interesting is the latter as the use of the prefix “re-” implies the need to change what is implicitly considered faulty. This idea permeated Obama’s speeches during the 2008 election campaign, justifying his constant call for change, something that also emerges in our corpus-based analysis. This change is to be seen in the resulting building: “a powerful coalition of African Americans and white Americans.”

A corpus-based analysis allows us to measure both recontextualisation of certain linguistic phenomena in Obama’s discourse in general and interaction with the original speech by text receivers. First, it helps to determine general discourse practices (of Obama in the 2008 primary campaign) over a large set of data representing different texts, genres, and discourses, allowing us also to check some of the observations made in the qualitative analysis above.

A comparison of eight of Obama’s campaign speeches (OCSC, 26,701 words) to a 14 million-word reference corpus of political speeches (CORPS, Guerini, Strapparava and Stock 2008) pointed to a high incidence of pronominal use and nominalisation, indicators of the interpersonal metafunction, as we can see in the simplified keyword list provided in Table 21.1.

The pronoun “we” and the lexical items “dream” and “change” are interesting. The widespread use of the first-person plural is reconfirmed, providing empirical data for Obama’s personal discourse style. Likewise, subsequent concordance analysis demonstrated that, for the most part, the selected terms were used as nouns (dream 96%, change 61%). Further analysis

Figure 21.3 Shifting uses of Obama’s first person plural pronoun
indicates a high frequency of nominalisation also with hope and struggle. These findings not only confirm the representation evoked by this speech, but also stress the importance of the words “change” and “hope” in Obama’s discourse (cf. Filardo-Llamas 2015). Thus, Obama’s political stance is related to the demand for the audience(s) to react to the need and desire for change.

To examine the audience’s reaction to this, we have studied discourse practices among text receivers on YouTube with tools taken from CL. Boyd (2014a) analysed some 11,000 comments (400,000+ tokens) to gauge the extent to which users adopt different forms of generally positive recontextualisation practices in their textual reactions to Obama’s “A More Perfect Union.” Even though at first sight most of the comments posted on YouTube may appear as antagonistic and overtly racist, a corpus-based analysis demonstrates that many are indeed positive in nature. A frequency list of the comments corpus was compared with the Open ANC (Ide and Suderman 2007) reference corpus to flesh out lexical items that might be indicative of positive and negative presentation and recontextualisation. The search was, thus, limited to items with a strong referential value, pronouns, examples of web-speak, and other terms related to Obama and his discourse practices. A simplified keyword list is provided in Table 21.2.

Table 21.1 Keywords OCSC vs. CORPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword</th>
<th>Freq</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Keyness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WE</td>
<td>905</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>440.4139709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DREAM</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>194.6068726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THEY</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>133.7588196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>131.1374207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLACK</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>126.1341858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COST</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>103.1677246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HE</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>78.46833638</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 21.2 Keywords comment corpus vs. Open ANC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword</th>
<th>Freq</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Keyness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HE</td>
<td>5470</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>8896.984375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMERICA</td>
<td>1640</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>6849.742188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOTE</td>
<td>1352</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>6020.510254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPEECH</td>
<td>3289</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>5591.123535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRESIDENT</td>
<td>1906</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>5403.819336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOPE</td>
<td>1123</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>4529.97168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COUNTRY</td>
<td>1193</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>3311.304443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIM</td>
<td>1616</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>3022.231689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RACE</td>
<td>683</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>2442.638916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPEECHES</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>2273.41626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GREAT</td>
<td>1106</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>2268.198975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMAZING</td>
<td>489</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>2174.72998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE</td>
<td>933</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>2092.111816</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interestingly, most of the terms appear to be positive in nature and two of them, “hope” and “change,” might be seen as recontextualisation of Obama’s own discourse. In contrast to the keywords in Table 21.1, the top item is the third-person singular pronoun “he,” pointing to a high degree of referentiality to Obama and the speech, which is reconfirmed by the items “speech/speeches,” or “president.” The adjectives “great” and “amazing” generally collocate with “speech(es)” indicating even more positive recontextualisation, and a positive reaction to Obama’s demand. While a full discussion of all of the items in Table 21.2 is beyond the scope of this study, we should also note the high frequency of the first-person singular pronoun, which Boyd (2014a: 260) sees as “personal participation and commitment on behalf of the commentators.” In general, however, the striking thing about these data are that they are generally of a positive character and would appear to indicate a high degree of recontextualisation demonstrating that it takes places on multiple textual and contextual levels.

5. Conclusion

After a short review of different trends and methodological approaches for the study of PD throughout time, in this chapter we have presented a short sample of what could be considered PD Analysis: following a comprehensive, and linguistic, methodology for the study of PD. While we have necessarily limited our analysis to selected items and only a few specific genres have been mentioned, the approach proposed here is meant to be applicable to any political genre. Still, the analysis shows the importance of adopting interdisciplinary tools which can help us to explain the complex relation between language and PD. Thus, we have embraced aspects of Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics, Cognitive Linguistics, and Corpus Linguistics when describing textual features. However, if the analysis of PD is to be made within the CDA paradigm, the notion of critique should be incorporated. This can be done by paying special attention to the interpretation – which types of knowledge are activated by the speech? – and explanation stages – what is the effect of the speech? Does it adjust to social expectations? Have these expectations changed throughout time?

The texts we have chosen for the introduction and the analysis prove another point: any political text is worthy of critical analysis. Indeed, CDA-inspired research of political texts need not be limited to texts that (re)produce social inequalities, rather any text uttered by a political actor or with political consequences beckons further study due to the very nature of politics itself. This leads us to another important aspect, that of text production and reception. In today’s Internet-dominated world, in which political texts can reach the masses by means of the latest cutting-edge technology, text receivers not only have more immediate access to political texts but also more and more ways to react to them. All of this undoubtedly plays a defining role in politics and PD practices, and no critical account of PD should ignore the power of “technologically-mediated spaces” (Wodak and Wright 2006).

Notes

1 This research has been partly funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (project FFI2013–40934-R: “Constructivist rhetoric: Discourses of identity” [RECDID]). The authors discussed and conceived of this chapter together. Parts 1, 3, and 5 were written by both authors in equal part; L. Filardo-Llamas was mainly responsible for section 2 and 3.2 and M.S. Boyd for 3, 3.1, 3.3. In Part 4, L. Filardo-Llamas dealt mainly with the parts focusing on qualitative analysis, while M.S. Boyd dealt mainly with the parts focusing on quantitative (corpus) analysis.
2 The transcript and commentary can be found at https://medium.com/@WhiteHouse/president-obama-s-speech-in-selma-8336cede3c7c, while the video is available on YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=gvAlvaughQGQ

3 See Chilton and Schäffner (1997: 207–211), Wilson (2001: 399–400), and Blommaert (1997: 3–7) for a more comprehensive description of the different disciplines that have dealt with the study of PD.

4 This list is by no means exclusive, and more PD studies could be named. In this brief description we have only included those authors who either describe themselves or are generally grouped with CDA practitioners.

5 A wider and more comprehensive account of examples of PD analysis within CDA can be found in Wodak and de Cillia (2006).

6 More elements, such as appraisal theory, have been recently incorporated to the study of evaluation in CDA. See Hart (2014: 43–46; 59–65) for a more comprehensive account.


8 Boyd (2014a) reports an average of 38.4 words per comment in a 400,000+ word corpus of text comments of two different YouTube versions of the speech.

9 Although the participants described in the stories are apparently individualised, the everyday actions they do turns them into categories that can be used to describe society as a whole.

10 Other metaphorical uses include the conceptualization of politics as a journey or the use of religious language.

11 Both the qualitative and corpus analysis have also indicated a high incidence of modality which will not be discussed here due to space limitations.

12 Keywords are those words that exhibit a higher frequency when compared with a larger reference corpus (Scott 2006).

Further reading


This chapter addresses the linguistic nature of political discourse. To do so, the authors review some of the linguistic principles governing the behaviour of discourse in politics, such as speech acts, the cooperative principle, politeness theory, or validity claims. Some instruments for the analysis of political discourse are also offered.


This book provides the authors' description of their approach to the study of political discourse. The authors establish a link between the analysis political discourse and CDA/CDS by relying mainly on the notion of argumentation. After presenting their rationale and methodological proposal, the authors apply it to the study of different types of political genres.


In this chapter the author attempts to outline a definition and an explanation of what political discourse is. An overview of the different domains of politics and their relation to discourse is provided, and a proposal of the different discursive strategies that can be analysed in the study of political discourse is presented.


In this chapter the author provides an overview of what political discourse is. Several approaches to the study of political discourse are collected in it, including aspects such as the study of syntax, the importance of relevance theory, or the study of phonological aspects in political discourse.


In this chapter we find a historical overview of the different approaches that have been adopted in the study of political discourse. Aspects like the notion of language planning and language policies are also included in the review of the field presented. In the second section of the chapter, an overview of current approaches to the study of political discourse is presented.
References


