

Communication Studies as Critical: CDA and Poststructuralism

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CDA should be open its analysis to different theoretical discourses which construct the problem in focus in different ways. ... The items are as follows: colonisation/appropriation; globalisation/localisation; reflexivity/ideology; identity/difference. There are two pervasive concerns within this agenda which cut across items and are therefore best not included themselves as items: power and hybridity. Given the orientation to problems, power and struggle over power are constant concerns for CDA (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999, p.93).

But the work of Jakobson, like that of Saussure himself, wanders like a ghost in the machine of poststructuralism, constantly informing and being challenged by a tradition that is deeply philosophical and not linguistic at all. It is from this emergent paradigm of work in Paris in the 1960s and 1970s that the categories now so familiar as poststructuralist – *subjectivity, conscious/unconscious, gender, race, embodiment, intertextuality, myth, narrative, discourse, writing/reading/re-writing, deconstruction, iterativity, performativity* – emerge as a new metalanguage (a language/theory for talking about language) for the human sciences. In this process almost no

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element of the earlier Saussurean/structuralist model of communication remained intact (Threadgold 2000, p.41 [emphasis in original]).

Introduction

This paper advances my argument for a more critically informed configuration in Japanese universities of the field of communication studies. My intention in this paper is to survey various forms of critical textual analysis which are relevant to my general concern with power and authority. This paper maps out a foundation which allows me to later demonstrate the benefits of combining the close reading strategies of earlier versions of critical discourse analysis (CDA) with the wider concerns of textual production and reception of cultural studies and film studies. Poststructuralist concerns with the linguistic representation of reality and the analytical approaches of CDA, cultural studies and film studies all underpin current theories and practices associated with critical media literacy.

This paper is the second in a series of three papers. The series intends to provide a genealogy for critical media literacy, to outline the benefits of incorporating critical media literacy into the Japanese tertiary study of communication, and to give an account of the extent to which Japanese communication students were able to use approaches from critical media literacy.

The first paper of this series identified significant attempts to unify the

linguistic and the social in textual analysis. Various conceptions of language were examined in terms of a movement through and beyond different levels of language in use. While the integration of social theories and systemic linguistics by critical linguists gave research a more social orientation, the role of subjectivity in textual production, reception and analysis remained undertheorised.

This paper addresses this lacuna by surveying poststructuralist analysis that integrates these concerns with the textual, the social and the subject. Poststructuralist analysis strengthens the foundations of critical media literacy because considerations of subjectivity are sometimes absent from early CDA versions of textual analysis. As the interests of CDA merge with wider social issues in cultural studies, analysis oscillates between the linguistic and the social. Although subjectivity is often left unexplored as a possible point of entry to textual analysis in these swings from the local to the global, it is my contention that subjectivity is important for textual reception practices. The conviction that subjectivity is implicated in textual analysis can not be sustained from within the largely positivist configurations of communication studies in Japanese universities. Moving beyond structuralist models of communication allows the legitimacy of various forms of authority to be interrogated.

Linguistic representations of reality: subjectivity, metafunctions

With the collapse of the unified self (Goffman 1956) and other related Cartesian notions like objectivity (Kuhn 1970), poststructuralists

conceptualise the self as being constructed through ideology (Althusser 1984), discourse (Foucault 1987) and language (Lacan 1977). The subject is referred to as a context sensitive site, and stronger versions of this position deny the stable existence of an essential identity implied by 'I' (Derrida 1976). As theories of subjectivity and identity formation emphasise the self as both process and product (Lee & Poynton 2000b, Mansfield 2000), textual theories have moved beyond the constraints of the dominant readings versus resistant readings framework into questions of the role of discourse and sociocultural practices in defining the limits of interpretation (Lee & Poynton 2000a). These cultural studies based arguments for multiple readings of various cultural forms tend not to address the role of context-specific multiple subjectivities.¹

I would now like to address the move to more critical forms of textual interrogation which are performed at the intersection of philosophical and linguistic traditions. In contrast to the largely non-critical examples surveyed in a previous paper, the critical tradition of discourse analysis goes beyond merely describing discursive practices. There is a wider concern with the relationship between texts and their institutional contexts made visible through a three dimensional model: the primary text analysis, the secondary analysis of the processes of text production and interpretation, and the third level of the social analysis of discourse events (Fairclough 1992). The systemic linguistic framework developed by Halliday

¹ In future work I would like to explore how attention to the multiple identities of textual consumers might address certain theoretical issues arising from how film studies and cultural studies frame their respective objects of study.

(1985) in Australia is widely acknowledged as a significant component of an ongoing project to integrate close linguistic analysis of spoken and written texts with more expansive concerns with ideologies. Significant aspects of social theory that have often been employed in the effort to link close analysis with ideologies include Foucault's genealogy (1972), Bourdieu's field and habitus (1993), cultural imperialism (Said 1993) and the socially situated self as gendered (Poyton 1985, Benhabib 1992, Butler 1997).

Halliday's proposal that language could be studied in terms of three functions, textual, relational and ideational, brings into view a set of analytical possibilities significantly different to those accessed by the transformational-generative grammar model. This required moving away from the idea that the meaning was best analysed at the word or clause level to demonstrate that text could be considered the basic semantic unit.² The existence of mutually constitutive processes was essential to Halliday's functional grammar. The clause was argued to be constituted by grammatical systems (ideational, interpersonal, and textual) corresponding to the three metafunctions, and these metafunctions and the grammatical structures which realised them both were shaped and influenced their context. The assertion that "language constitutes context as well as simultaneously being constituted by it" (Poynton 2000, p.31) was incorporated in reader practices of intertextuality (Kristeva 1986) and interdiscursivity (Pêcheux 1982), all justified by "There is no outside to this

² "Its [systemic-functional linguistics] particular heresies were its view of text (not word or clause) as the basic semantic unit and its understanding of text and context as profoundly, and constitutively, interrelated"(Poynton 2000, p.30).

text" (Derrida 1976, p.158). While Halliday may have been soft-peddling when he emphasised that the attention to the totality of language posed no challenge to the formalist paradigm (Halliday 1978, p.36), his distinctive conception of grammar as " 'meaning potential' ('what *can* be said') rather than a set of rules ('what *must* be said')" (van Leeuwen 1996, p.32) created a space for later theorists to explore how ideologies set limits for the sorts of choices which shape texts. This attention to the ideological inflection of textual production and reception in turn allows texts to be examined in terms of how they are implicated in the three constructive effects of discourse: the identity function carries the formation of what are variously referred to as social identities, subject positions, or social subjects; the relational function carries the formation of social relationships between these social subjects; and the ideational carries the formation of knowledge systems which provide a degree of social coherence between and among groups.

If the linguistic analysis of texts deals with both Fairclough's second level concerns of text production, interpretation and distribution and third level attention to discourse events, then the effects of competing ideologies and their bounded areas of power-knowledge on individual subjectivity and group identities and attitudes become subject to analytical scrutiny.

Significant developments in the implementation of these three levels of analysis include Pêcheux and critical linguistics work on the role of transitivity processes in the representation of reality. While Pêcheux addressed language as being a material form of ideology, his linguistic analysis obscured the organisational features of texts by breaking them

into clauses and pursuing a semantic focus on key words at the sentence level. In terms of Halliday's three metafunctions, he addressed the ideational aspect but the interpersonal functions of identity and relations were more fully explored by examining how the process of articulation facilitates the linguistic construction of subjectivity. In making these criticisms, Fairclough (1992) also noted a set of shortcomings shared with those working at the University of East Anglia in critical linguistics (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975, Sinclair 1992, Sinclair & Coulthard 1992). Analysis proceeded on the basis of an assumption about the top-down nature of power, and because meaning was reified, discourse was seen to be static and not a site of ongoing contestation. For these reasons, Fairclough calls for more attention to the contexts of textual production and interpretation. Like Fowler (1996) Fairclough recognises a need for a more incisive methodology which clarifies the relationship between ideology and language. This was a necessary step in the movement away from the simplistic rendering of attributing particular ideological effects to certain texts (Fairclough 2000). The problem which needed to be addressed was the tendency of ideologies to naturalise key attitudes and ways of experiencing the world, and the possible consequence that textual consumers tend to be oblivious to discursively shaped assumptions. Fairclough notes that agency (Giddens 1986), and its limitations in textual interpretation, were not addressed. What needed clarification here were two issues: the interpreter as agent, and the reflexive issue of how this writing subject represented as "knower as known" is implicated in the process of interpretation. With this reflective turn, we have clearly gone beyond the largely positivist configurations of communication studies in Japanese universities.

Having outlined some of the analytical possibilities of using the three metafunctions to interrogate the linguistic representation of reality, I would now like to consider Foucault's contribution to debates on the discursive formation of agency. Foucault's work on the constitution of the social through the interpersonal functions of language reveals how the social world is constituted. Foucault's shift from his archaeological concern with how discursive formations generate rules that constitute legitimate areas of knowledge (1972) through his genealogical work on power-knowledge (1979) to his exploration of his ethical self as the subject of moral actions (1987) resulted in discourse being marginalised. Despite Foucault's problematic relationship with disciplinarity as a consequence of its institutional location, his archaeological notion of discourse tended to loosely correspond with the fault lines of the academy's disciplines, subject to complex interdiscursive and intertextual relationships which sustained relational, rather than absolute, distinctions.

Readings of Foucault that advance "beyond the linguistically reflected power exchanges between persons and groups to an analysis of the structures within which they are deployed" (Shapiro 1981, p.162) may lose the sense that it is possible to learn how to change social practices linguistically (Cross 1996). The cautiously optimistic among critical social scientists occupy this territory where language is one considered point of entry into countering the daily experience of injustice, subject to the limitations of being embodied and enmeshed in contradictory sets of supportive and coercive social relationships (Fay 1987, 1996). Less utopian commentators were more sceptical of a privileging of language: "It is

difficult to see, however, how an exclusively linguistic agenda might be used proactively to imagine effectively, much less bring about radical social change. This is in spite of the sophistication of the understanding of discourse practices and discursive formations that it has become possible to bring to bear retrospectively on the present" (Poynton 2000, p.37). It is around these wider questions of the relationship between language and the social that practitioners of CDA sought to integrate the theoretical insights of social science with close textual analysis of the linguistic structure of injustices in the creation and transformation of economic, cultural and symbolic capital (Caldas-Coulthard & Coulthard 1996).

Against a background of raising dissatisfaction across a range of disciplines with the behaviourist paradigm, including feminist critiques of the myth of objectivity leading to arguments for an epistemology based in feminist viewpoints (Hartsock 1983, Harding 1986), and the reduction of science's self representation as the means of discovering truth to the normative ideology of a closed community (Kuhn 1970), educational theorists were attempting to implement a double dialect of theory and practice (Carr & Kemmis 1983). The impulse was to move beyond the impositions of dehumanising tendencies of positivist research and the failure of interpretative social science to reconfigure the theory-practice relationship in a manner that did more than merely offer a conservative argument that silenced discontent with social injustice. This development became the foundation of critical social science and part of a pedagogy of liberation (Freire 1971, Horton & Freire 1991). As the notion of false consciousness became problematic (Fay 1987), in part because it was seen to

be reintroducing an objectionable element of positivist social science, the privileged status of the external expert, there was a quiet retreat from this grandiose rhetoric of liberation as the panacea of ideologically distorted self understandings. Power was no longer being seen as something possessed; in Foucault's productive model, power circulated and was more dialectical or in stronger versions, circular, as notions of agency and structure were also seen to be constituted by power (Dyrberg 1997).

Critical pedagogy and critical media literacy

Having gestured towards the action research tradition and the notion of a reflective practitioner, I would now like to introduce the body of literature associated with critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy is relevant to my concern with the contrasts between linguistic and poststructuralist versions of discourse analysis because it began the task of integrating dense social theory with accounts of social inequity as the basis for praxis, considered social intervention. Critical pedagogy drew on developments in conversational analysis that were emerging in ethnomethodology as portable tape recording technology helped blur the distinction between talk and text. Once spoken text was transcribed into the fixity of written text, this written representation of speech which tended to elide both the expressive "grain of the voice" (Barthes 1977) and the embodied participation of the speakers could be analysed in a number of ways. This includes positioning transcriptions of speech as both a specific example of language in use and as a model of how an abstract language system developed regional adaptations, and other sociolinguistic concerns; for example, how

power and gender are affecting turn taking and control of the floor (Tannen 1993). Concerns with the reflective improvement of teaching practices and the quest for a closer relationship between values espoused (what is said) and values in use (what is done) in educational sites (Kemmis & McTaggart 1981) fuelled demand for entry level methodology handbooks introducing the basic concepts and goals of classroom based research (Hook 1981). These activities drew on and extended the reflective practitioner tradition (Deakin University 1988, van Manen 1990). In turn, textual analysis practices centred on classroom discourse and their institutional context made issues of curriculum content topics of public debate and anticipated the emergence of literacy as a critical notion that should be taught to primary, secondary and tertiary students. Taking the assumption of texts as being constructed by a range of choices that tend to suggest a certain limited range of reading positions (Kress 1985, Hodge & Kress 1993, Kress & van Leeuwen 1996), students were shown how to explore the ways in which factual writing and other genres transform representations of 'truth' and at best partially reproduce as they construct an ideologically shaped version of reality (Scholes 1985, Mellor, Patterson & O'Neill 1991, Potter 1996).

In terms of making this three dimensional model comprehensible to secondary and tertiary students of critical media literacy, Fairclough offers this instructive set of questions designed to address multimodal texts:

[I]t ought to be an objective of media and language education to ensure that

students can answer four questions about any media text:

1. How is the text designed, why is it designed this way, and how else could it have been designed?
2. How are texts of this sort produced, and in what ways are they likely to be interpreted and used?
3. What does this text indicate about the media order of discourse?
4. What wider sociocultural processes is this text a part of, what are its wider social conditions, and what are its likely effects? ... We might add to the four questions so far a fifth question suggested in Luke et al. (1994):
5. *What can be done about this text?* (Fairclough 1995, p.202, 205[emphasis in original])

While proponents of film studies and cultural studies may be inclined to criticise strategies of this kind for their programmatic nature, both fields would benefit from the impulse to finely read practices of textual consumption, production and distribution in terms of their historical specificity. The inclusion of the final question from Luke makes the activist agenda of Fairclough obvious.

In terms of positioning my own work on how tea practices and texts are implicated in the aesthetic strategies of imperialist agendas as critical communication studies, these five questions provided a useful foundation from which to engage the literatures of subjectivity, autoethnography and cultural studies. These literatures have been framed by poststructuralist concerns with overlapping questions organised around the themes of identity (the instability of the performed categories of sexuality, gender, ethnicity), and textuality (readerly versus writerly texts, corporeography,

situated knowledges). Arguments for the impossibility of poststructuralist versions of discourse analysis refer to the ongoing deep engagements of practitioners with Husserl, Nietzsche, Hegel and Kant which predate the patriarchal status of Saussure for practitioners of linguistic discourse analysis. These contentions remain conscious of an unavoidable paradox: "when we practice poststructuralist discourse analysis we inevitably need to do some of the same things that older structuralist and linguistic methodologies also do, albeit with a different understanding of why we do them" (Threadgold 2000, p.40). I will proceed by summarising Threadgold's outline of the points at which significant understandings exist as one way of framing the later account of how discourse analysis is reconfigured in social research and cultural studies.

The most concise paraphrasing of Threadgold's reconfiguration of poststructuralism's philosophical genealogy as an archaeological search unconcerned with a beginning is a list of the conventional binaries that have been destabilised and reversed by social theorists including Derrida (1976), Foucault (1988), Kristeva (1986), Butler (1990) and Spivak (2000): "*subjectivity, conscious/unconscious, gender, race, embodiment, intertextuality, myth, narrative, discourse, writing/reading/re-writing, deconstruction, iterativity, performativity*" (Threadgold 2000, p.41 [emphasis in original]). This coupling of theorists and themes is not a definitive inventory and could conceivably contain the previously cited research agenda for CDA: "globalisation/ localisation; reflexivity/ ideology; identity/ difference" (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999, p.93). Working from a linguistic perspective Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) mine the

territory of late modernity by principally referring to Harvey, Giddens and Habermas before engaging the services of postmodern and feminist theorists.

Threadgold's strategy of putting Saussure under erasure is a deft deployment of Derrida that compliments Poynton's contrasting construction of Saussure as having established the text versus talk opposition. Against the "specific hierarchy of values in which speech is seen as innocent and primary and writings as violent and secondary" (Threadgold 2000, p.43) implied by the certainty of the *langue/parole* distinction, Derrida's conception of polysemia rejects any attempt to fix absolute meanings to signs. By attributing an arbitrary flow to the relational system of language, hegemony's gambit for closure, "the attempt to impose logic (sameness) on difference (otherness)" (Salemohammed 1999, p.120), is denied because of the inherently slippery and potentially subversive excess of discursive meaning.

It is the privileging of language by Saussure (1974) and Jakobson (1971) over other expressive systems of communication that Derrida takes issue with when introducing his grammatology as that which "*inscribes* and *delimits* science ... it *marks* and at the same time *loosens* the limit which closes classical scientificity" (Derrida 1996, p.223 [emphasis in original]). This wider concern with other channels of communication anticipates the multimodal semiotic analysis pursued in CDA (Kress & van Leeuwen 1985) and cultural studies (Morris 1999): "we say 'writing' for all that gives rise to an inscription in general, whether it is literal or not and even if what it

distributes in space is alien to the order of the voice: cinematography, choreography, of course, but also pictorial, musical, sculptural 'writing'" (Derrida 1976, p.10). He problematizes the speech/writing binary to the extent that it collapses: "Speech is a form of what he is calling writing" (Threadgold 2000, p.44), and glosses this new concept of writing as "*gram* or *differance*" (Derrida 1996, p.216 [emphasis in original]). This concern with writing as "an instituted *trace*, the *arche-trace*, and *arche-writing*" (Threadgold 2000, p.44 [emphasis in original]) becomes a powerful tool to analyse texts in terms of absences which may be ideologically, historically or institutionally structured. The invisible other can be foregrounded analytically.

Although this account of the emergence and proliferation of CDA lacks Poynton's sweep through an intellectual history of life in Europe from the eighteenth century onwards as an erudite explanation for specific developments in analytical traditions, and makes little use of either a sustained survey of grand, middle and local versions of late modernity (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999) or the application of discourse analysis as a social psychological method (Potter and Wetherell 1987), it has shown that the incremental steps taken towards a critical analysis of discourse were accompanied by a resurgence of the reflective practitioner movement. It should also be noted that despite this incidental association with reflexive understanding, little attention was given to the analyst as a specifically located advancer of contingent claims. This reference to the relative absence of the subjectivity of the analyst is important for conceptions of communications studies because it highlights the need to integrate CDA with the

eclectic sorts of poststructural analysis performed under the cultural studies umbrella.

Conclusion

A central concern of this paper has been to mark out at the philosophical and linguistic developments that made attempts to unify the linguistic and the social in textual analysis possible. With the integration of social theories and systemic linguistics by critical linguists giving research a more social orientation, the role of subjectivity in textual production, reception and analysis assumes most significance in reflective variations of poststructural analysis. The following paper brings to ground these questions of textual analysis by examining critical readings made by Japanese students of communication.

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