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A project can be daunting without a good grasp of design methods. For instance, I recall how overwhelmed I felt the first time I was asked to do some background reading on critical discourse analysis (CDA) and how it might be a useful tool for my language research. At that time, I didn't know much about it, and I remember questioning: Where is the best place to start my research on CDA? Who are the foundational scholars? What are the key things I would need to know or understand if I were to use CDA methodology in my research? How will I know if CDA is even the right approach for my research?

In this chapter, I use these questions as a guide to help you understand the main tenets of CDA, the value it might add to your project, and how you might use it in your own project to analyze data. I will later take you through a critical discourse analysis application sample as I examine the representation or lack thereof of minorities in a British Columbia's social studies text. As I go through this CDA of the text, I ask some critical questions: (1) Whose stories are being told in BC's social studies texts?, (2) What kinds of images are being used?, (3) What are the hidden messages?, (4) How is the language used? Finally, (5) Why do we continue to reproduce the same stories and images despite the push for more equitable learning?

What is CDA

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) emerged as a research methodology through the foundational work of Fairclough, Wodak, Van Van Dijk, and Gee in the early 1980s. Fairclough (1995) describes CDA as an "investigation into how social practices, events, and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power" (p. 132). The definition of CDA has shifted significantly since its inception, with some of its founders diverging in their interpretations. Wodak (2016), however, notes that most CDA work shares an interest in the dimensions of power, injustice, political, social or cultural change in our globalised world. van Dijk (2001) proposes that CDA studies the way ideology, identity and inequality are re-enacted through texts produced in social and political contexts. In this sense, the language, images, and other textual forms used are crucial in constructing and sustaining ideologies, which are used to maintain social structures and inequalities (Wodak, 2001). These definitions and framings will be helpful in my later exploration of the BC social studies textbook.

Why CDA

CDA enables graduate students to collect project data in various forms and modes, including publicly accessible speeches, blogs, policy documents, as well as texts such as newspapers, academic journal articles, books etc. (Hammersly, 1996; Wodak, 2016; van Dijk, 1993). Further, CDA can take place at the micro and macro levels. At the microlevel of discursive events, students analyze texts or other forms of discourse to provide rich description (typically taking account of content, structure, grammar, vocabulary, intertextuality, and rhetorical or literary devices (Waring, 2017). The macrolevel of social structures requires an understanding of the broader social context (including implicit and explicit rules, norms, or mores governing discourse and society (Hammersly, 1996; Wodak, 2016; van Dijk, 1993). It offers an analysis of educational discourses from the genre (ways of acting) to the ways of representing and being. It allows for consideration of the meaning,

perspective implications, presuppositions, interactions and actions guiding our everyday acts (Gee, 2014). As researchers, we often seek to deepen our understanding of participants, texts and events to challenge our worldviews. CDA provides opportunities for the graduate student researcher to consider what it really means to challenge pervading worldviews, our identities as researchers, and how we reproduce ideas through deep analysis of texts, speech acts, and other discourses. More importantly, Hammersly (2003) implores us to use CDA to ask pertinent questions in our research project, such as (1) who determines the discourse? (2) what rules or ideologies dictates how we speak, act and who creates the ideologies that assign power to one group, and (3) how do we investigate the hidden power relations that normalize social practice that privilege the dominant culture? As student researchers, these are critical questions to ask in developing your research project, and so we will use these as the springboard for the discourse analysis of the social studies text *Pathways: Civilization through Time.*

CDA as Methodology

When considering engaging with CDA methodologically, but this is also true of all projects, graduate students have to explicitly outline their own interests. It is crucial to self-locate right away. In self-locating, the student identifies self within the project and the lenses through which the data will be analyzed. For example, if I am doing a CDA on the representation of racialized people (more specifically those of African descent) in Canadian texts, I would self-locate as a migrant, Caribbean woman of African descent, researcher and teacher who has experienced marginalization within the Canadian education system. In contextualizing and positioning myself within the research project, I give the reader insights into my lens as the researcher. I would indicate that I have an insider's view of the project because of my migrant experiences, teaching in a Canadian school district and my familiarity with the school experience. However, as a migrant woman, I am on the periphery and an outsider to the creative processes of text and representations of racialized groups. That said, my positionality would not detract from the rigour of the project research analysis. As I engage in the critical discourse analysis of the source, I must engage in robust reflexivity to ensure the lenses through which I am viewing the data do not impose on my interpretation of the data. That is, I let the problem and research questions drive the analysis. I constantly reflect on what I am seeking to understand; what does the data/source reveal about this? What is the social story at play? In this sense, the process is iterative, adaptive, and flexible (Fairclough, 2010).

Steps in Engaging in CDA

There are some vital steps in engaging in CDA methodology that come after you have positioned yourself within the project.

Step 1: Identify the research questions

To begin, the graduate student needs to conceptualize and then indicate the research questions driving the project and the data collection. For example, in my CDA of the BC social studies text *Pathways: Civilization through Time*, I wanted to know:

1) How exactly do BC texts represent racial minorities?

2) What are the stories at play?

3) Whose stories are being told?

4)As a racialized Caribbean woman, am I a part of this story?

5)What do the discourses within the text tells me about underlying ideologies about racialized minorities within the school system?

Step 2: Select content for analysis

Now that the research questions have been established, I need to select the content to be analyzed. For me, this was sections of text and images from pages 365-397 in *Pathways: Civilization through Time*,
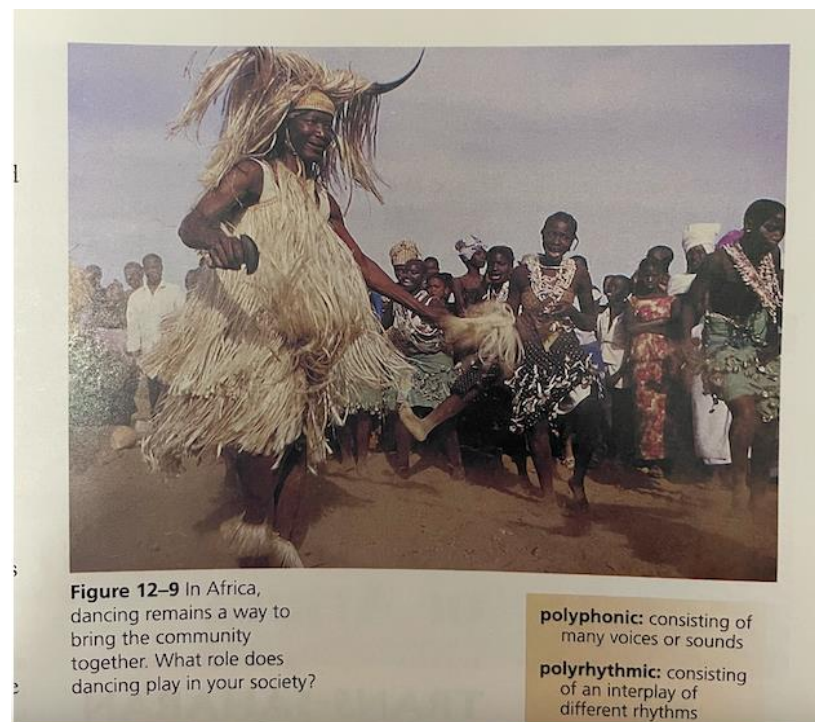

Figure 27.1. Pathways: Civilizations Through Time, p. 379

Step 3: Gather information and theory on the context

I now need to understand what is happening in BC schools that can inform my CDA of this text. A deeper understanding of the context will allow me to analyze the content more robustly. For example, in exploring the context of diversity in BC texts, I noted that Gulliver and Thurrrell's (2016) study found that Canadian texts often downplay racism or discrimination in Canada's past while constructing Canada as multicultural and diverse. Barker (2021) extends further to stipulate that the illusion of multiculturalism is carefully cultivated through texts and resources and curriculum planning that stamp the denial of racism in the minds of learners. The BC texts are unchallenged in schools and are the sites through which discourses of dominance enter classrooms. Barker (2021) iterates that discourses often position Canadians as redeemers while immigrants and culturally diverse groups are powerless and passive. As such, critical discourse analysis is important in an understanding of agency in text. Barker's (2021) reasoning also supports van Dijk (1992) argument that "If tolerance is promoted as a national myth… It is much more difficult for minority groups to challenge remaining inequalities, to take unified action and to gain credibility and support among the (white) dominant group (p. 96). In fact, van Dijk hypothesizes that racialized groups as more likely to be seen as "oversensitive, exaggerating

or over-demanding" (p.96). This context helps me to understand that the lack of representation in texts is highly problematic for many racialized students as my perusal of several of the BC social studies texts revealed little to no mention of Caribbean peoples or black minorities and their contribution to Canadian society.

Step 4: Analyze emerging themes and patterns

The third step for me is to analyze the themes and patterns emerging from the selected sections of text. This analytical process is iterative, and so I must shift between descriptive, interpretative, and explanatory activities at micro-, meso-, and macroscales of the CDA to produce cohesive, robust explanations of the phenomena of misrepresentation and omission of historical events (Johnson and Maclean, 2020). The researcher must think about how the text constructs diversity and positions students and teachers. Barker (2021) theorizes that many Canadian texts often orient students toward social practices that position Canadian culture as multicultural and embracing of diversity without challenging historical injustices. In many ways, oppression and marginalization are excluded from such texts. This is a reasonable argument given the lack of diversity and accountability in the Canadian socials texts I perused. For example, the text *Pathways* covers the slave trade in two pages with a focus on its origination in West Africa and the role of the Europeans in extending this trade.

In this excerpt from the text, the authors wrote:

European attitudes (to slavery) were different (from Africans). Slaves were considered to be possessions to be bought and sold. Most slaves were not able to buy their freedom. African slaves purchased by Europeans were shipped from their homeland to work as agricultural labourers in the Americas. Almost none ever returned (p. 391).

The discourse here is a relatively benign presentation of centuries of brutality imposed on a race of people. This narrative presents Europeans as mere possessors of slaves that absolve them in some ways of their brutality. Canada is not mentioned at all, which seems to relieve them of participation. This is problematic because textbooks influence students to reproduce, naturalize, and accept particular cultural logic and social identity forms (van Dijk,1993). As van Dijk theorizes, the texts model what counts as knowledge. He notes that power in discourse is reinforced through self-interest information or withholding relevant information about major events. These acts or repeated exposure to biased models of information, recipients of the discourse form equally biased socially shared attitudes. That is, if there is limited information on Canada and Britain's role in the slave trade in these texts, then students are likely to develop biased discourses around the issue. According to van Diijk limited or skewed information sets the precedence for firmly "established models of discourses, future perceptions and actions of dominant groups" (p. 101). Consequently, it is critical that the texts that students interact with in classrooms provide a factual depiction of events. One of the premises of the BC social studies curriculum is that students can explain different perspectives on past or present people, places, issues, or events, and compare the values, worldviews, and beliefs of human cultures and societies in different times and places (https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/social-studies/8/core). With this premise in mind, the resources and texts provided in schools should reflect different worldviews, perspectives and historical experiences.

It can be argued that it is challenging for students to develop different perspectives on past and present events without an honest presentation of such events. A significant part of the discriminatory practices enacted in texts is the exclusion of content. As such, Wodak

(2016) and van Dijk (1993) draw our attention to underlying structures of discourse and the implications for ethnic knowledge, opinions, attitudes and ideologies. The authors speak about the dangers of misleading or omitted content in discourse, leading to false assumptions. For example, in this excerpt from the text, the authors downplay British role in slavery.

> Slavery declined at the end of the 18th century for a number of reasons including the ending of slavery by the British in the early 19th century. The Oyo rulers were forced to raise taxes to make up for lost revenues. This led to civil unrest which caused the collapse of the Oyo kingdom (p. 391).

A grade 8 student could easily interpret the excerpt above as slavery being more beneficial for Oyo rulers than the British empire. The authors' highlighting of the economic benefits of slavery to the Oyo empire and the dismissal of the colossal profit to the British empire is a great example of coding discourse to create a mental impression of African societies as responsible for the death of millions of slaves across the Atlantic. Again, the omission of information is quite staggering as the British are presented as docile agents who ended slavery.

Step 5: Review the results and draw conclusions

In drawing conclusions from the findings, the graduate student should consider the speaker/author/creator's perspectives, implications of those perspectives, presuppositions, actions, speech acts, and interactions. For example, consider the author/s' perspective based on the choice of words in the selected text. One might assume the author(s) is from a dominant culture. Needless to say, those directly impacted by slavery would not describe the British involvement in the same manner. Taken into consideration the implications of such a perspective, it is surmisable that students might have been cultured into thinking slavery is not an atrocity instigated by the Europeans. This can play a role in the positive representations of British and even Canadian history in that they were not the enslavers; they simply facilitated the process started by the Oyo empire. It implies that the Oyo empire was largely responsible for slavery as they benefited significantly from its profits. These implied excuses for white nations are quite common, as evidenced in the work of several scholars (Barker, 2021; Gulliver, 2018; van Dijk, 1993).

In reviewing the results, van Dijk (1993) also encourages the discourse analyst to consider the information's level of description and degree of completeness. In discriminatory discourses, there are often lesser details on the negative acts of those in power and great details on the oppressed or minoritized groups. He reminds us that it is important to note what is given more or less prominence in a text and the reasoning for such occurrences.

Conclusion

Critical discourse analysis offers student project researchers many opportunities to unpack the nuances of textual, social and cultural discourses in education. The brief CDA provided in this paper makes explicit how the graduate student can use CDA in project work to challenge, redefine and delegitimize dominant discourses that misrepresent cultural, social, historical and educational experiences and events. Furthermore, it illuminates the need for more robust oversight of educational resources and practices that have been normalized through dominant discourses. The shared CDA steps are intended as a starting point for students who wish to engage in critical, thought-provoking and transformative project work that challenges a wide range of social phenomena. Whatever the project researcher's interest,

perspective or objectives, these steps will allow for a robust investigative framework that can unravel the relationships between discourse, power and ideology across many platforms.

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