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Corpus-based Critical Discourse Analyses

The past few years have seen an increasing number of corpus-based studies, either explicitly grounded in or inspired by, the tenets of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Corpus-based CDA studies can be seen as either associated with Fairclough's (2003) approach to CDA or the discourse-historical approach of the Viennese school (Wodak & Meyer 2009). The purpose of this paper is to review these studies, while at the same time raising key issues in the interpretation of corpus data.

Those studies inspired by Fairclough's analytical framework of a discursive event are often grounded in SFL theory, especially the Appraisal system for analyzing evaluative discourse (Bednarek 2006; Coffin & O'Halloran 2006). Work in the area of corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS) also falls within the Fairclough camp with its focus on dialogic positioning in political discourse (Morley & Bailey 2009). Handford's (2010) work on the language of business meetings can be seen as CDA-inspired with its focus on discursive practices and strategies. Those corpus studies taking a more discourse-historical approach tend to analyse text from a diachronic perspective and employ a multi-perspective analysis that goes beyond the linguistic elements of the text, encompassing a more contextual perspective (Baker et al. 2008).

However, in spite of the advances in discourse analysis afforded by corpus linguistic methodologies, corpus data do not show what is 'invisible' (de Beaugrande 2002). Moreover, it has also been pointed out that corpus data reflect the product and not the process whereby discourse is created (Widdowson 2004). These two issues will also be discussed with reference to the above studies.

References

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