

INTRODUCTION

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Cultural discourse studies (CDS) concerns itself with human communication, parallel to communication studies (CS) broadly conceived. That is, it takes as its object of study social interaction in which people use linguistic symbols and other means purposefully and consequentially in historical and cultural context and seeks to describe, interpret and critique it. In this view, communication is a social process which encompasses multiple elements and dimensions (e.g. language, gesture, technology, channels, time and place). As such, communication functionally constructs reality, exercises power and changes the world.

And yet crucially different from many common forms in CS whether they are rhetorical, conversational, textual or media analysis, CDS considers human communication, not as universal or culturally neutral, but as a global system composed of culturally diversified and competing **discourses**. Here the term discourse refers to a *culturally* particular form of communication, real or potential, of an ethnically and geopolitically characterised community, say the Chinese/Asian/Developing/Third World or American/Western/Developed World. So **culture** in this context refers to the set of ways of thinking, speaking and acting, often involving concepts, norms, values, rules, language, ethnicity, religion, traditions, as well as material artefact, that are embodied in and so characterise the discursive practice of such a community as just mentioned. In other words, culture is the defining feature of a discourse—hence *cultural discourses*—and of communication more generally. To study a discourse, then, is also to study a discursive community's culture.

Cultural discourses are not just different from one another. Very importantly, in the globalising world, they are in an interactive relationship and, consequently, relations of *power*—domination, exclusion, resistance, cooperation, etc.—saturate the process.

It may be stressed here that cultural discourses in general and culture in particular are not to be taken essentialistically, as if they were homogeneous, reified or fixed. Rather, they should be understood in *differential*, *dialectic* and *dynamic* terms: They have dissimilarities both within and without, they are interdependent and they are subject to change.

It may be pointed out, too, that any given community's discourse, or any particular cultural discourse, has its own system—**discourse system**. By this is meant the underlying, constitutive configuration of (a) *communicative institutions* (community, organisation, platforms, media technology, etc.—“the motor system”) and (b) *communicative know-how* (concepts, values, theory,

information, principles, tactics, etc.—“the nervous system”) which combine to enable, organise and sustain a community’s discursive practice at different levels of abstraction (e.g. the Developing World/Asian/Chinese) and fields of action (e.g. political, economic, scientific, artistic). It is the communicative competence of a given community and so can have profound impact on the outcome of its communicative practice. Therefore, it is crucially important to study the discourse system of a cultural community, as a whole and at its various social domains.

For practical research purposes, CDS categorises a cultural discourse into six interlocking components; they are communicators, act, medium, purpose, history and culture (CAMPHAC). Specifically, **communicators** imply discursive actors as cultural organisations and members for investigating who is (not) speaking and acting, in what position and capacity and with what characteristics (e.g. world views, ways of thinking, character, past experiences). **Act** is relevant verbal and nonverbal (inter)actions for studying what is (not) said and (not) done and how, how it is responded to and what social representation and relation result. **Medium** is the use of symbols, channels and other tools (e.g. specific languages, conventional and new media; occasion; time; place) for studying what means are (not) used and how (also in relation with language use) and why. **Purpose** is the causes, intentions, goals, effects and consequences for studying why the discursive activity in question has taken place, why it has done the way it did and what impact has resulted. **History** is the processes involving the aforementioned discursive categories for studying the nature, change and (ir)regularity of the discourse in question. **Culture** is the sum of features in all the previous categories, but in dialectic, differential and power relations to other relevant discourses, for studying the identity, distinction and intercultural relation and standing of the discourse in question. Depending on the particular research purposes and conditions of the data at hand, these categories may be mobilised either in part or as a whole. As should be reminded, too, since these categories are dialectically interconnected, a form of synthesis on the basis of their analyses is required in order to reach a comprehensive and so practically productive conclusion.

Immediately, it should be cautioned that, just like the notion of cultural discourse, these analytic categories must not be used as universal tools, either. They are proffered as heuristics, starting points, for studying specific cultural discourses. For, just as the diverse cultural discourses of the communication system may not have the same nature or shape, so do the analytic categories proposed here. Therefore, they are to be utilised subject to readjustment and reconfiguration according to the specifics of the particular discourses under investigation.

Profoundly concerned with cultural diversity, dynamic and division of contemporary communication, CDS is designed and dedicated to directing and practicing *locally-grounded and globally-minded, culturally conscious and critical* study of cultural discourses with a view to fostering *cultural innovation in scholarship* on the one side and facilitating *cultural development, harmony and prosperity in society* on the other side. Locally-grounded, here, means drawing on native wisdom and scholarship; globally-minded means learning from foreign knowledge and expertise. Culturally conscious means being attentive to cultural difference and coherence of communication, whereas culturally critical is being supportive of cultural harmony and resistant to cultural hegemony. It is in these senses that CDS is *culturalist* in stance: It is an intellectual form of cultural politics.

To achieve the broad objectives set out here, a spate of interrelated tasks that CDS practitioners may and should be taken up are provided. These are, to name but a few more urgent and badly needed ones, as follows:

- (1) **To highlight and deconstruct ethnocentrism in the communication/discourse field with a view to rebalancing and reforming it.** To that end, research questions could revolve around:

How does the field of CS constitute ethnocentrism (i.e. cultural domination, prejudice and exclusion), e.g. who are the dominant speakers/gate-keepers and who are excluded? Whose cultural scholarship (theory, concepts, values, methods, topics, questions, etc.) is being universalised and whose marginalised? What is the current order of scholarly communication flow like? What does scholarly ethnocentrism imply for academic innovation and societal development? How are we to transform the current unbalanced order of CS discourse in favour of cultural-intellectual diversity and creativity for CS?

- (2) **To (re)construct and apply the frameworks of cultural discourses of the world's diverse communities, but especially those unfamiliar, repressed or otherwise disadvantaged ones, with a view to reclaiming identity and regaining voice, thereby enlivening, expanding and enriching communication/discourse studies.** To accomplish this task, efforts may be made to query such questions as: What are the worldviews, ways of thinking and acting, norms and values, etc.—the identity and distinctions—of a discourse community concerned like? How are we researchers to (re)construct culturally conscious and critical frameworks of cultural discourses, such as the Asian, African, Latin American or of the developing world as a whole, which have hitherto been under-theorised and understudied? What should be the agenda for their scholarship in CS like? What are the philosophical, theoretical, methodological and topical assumptions for researching their discourses? What are the properties, problems and potentials, not just of the culturally dominant discourses, but especially of those that have hitherto been misunderstood, misrepresented or silenced? How have the disadvantaged discourses been evolving? How are they related and compared with their historical past? How are they related and compared with their cultural others? How are discourses of cultural cooperation, mutual learning and shared benefit constructed?
- (3) **To compare and critique relevant cultural discourses in terms of commonality, difference and interrelations, with a view to enhancing intercultural empathy, equality and cooperation.** This means that research may be rendered into such questions as: What are the common grounds, similarities, equivalences, linkages, differences and contradictions between particular cultural discourses concerned, if any? What are the possible or actual discourses of complementation, cross-fertilisation, sharing, helping, collaboration, synergy, solidarity, and otherwise domination, demonisation, coercion, prejudice and exclusion like? How are such discursive acts enabled, formed or changed? How may those positive ones be recreated or promoted and negative ones undermined, reduced, transformed or otherwise prevented?
- (4) **To craft new discursive strategies for the world's cultural communities to come together to confront common, pressing issues and crises facing humanity, with a view to ensuring a future world of security, peace and prosperity.** To do that, researchers should endeavour to come up with answers to questions like: What are the real, important and urgent problems facing humanity (what about poverty, climate change, nuclear threat) where communication has a role to play? What should the world's diverse communities do in order to ensure continued, egalitarian and sustainable communication? How could communication/discourse studies contribute to solving those existential problems? With the fast scientific and technological advancement (say artificial intelligence [AI]), what would happen to society and to human communication and so what preparation must be made?

These tasks may of course be taken up separately, in tandem, in parallel or as an ensemble according as the particular research aims are chosen and the specific research conditions allowed.

To come to terms with human-communicative, or more specifically, cultural-discursive, richness and complexity, and more particularly, to accomplish the research tasks, CDS develops a comprehensive and integrated, though still evolving, system of explicit approaches, as follows.

Intracultural Analysis: To search for identity, distinction, particularity or peculiarity of a cultural discourse, through description and explanation of the relevant discursive components and their relations in the data at hand (e.g. self-image, concepts, values, major themes, strategies of meaning-making); because there is no parallel comparative analysis, the results do not guarantee any cultural uniqueness.

Transcultural Analysis: To search for incursion by, influence from or fusion with aspects of relevant other cultural discourses by discovering borrowings, transfusions or recreations of concepts and ideas, norms and values, topics and expressions or else responses and reactions of some sort in the discourse under study.

Cross-Cultural Analysis: To search for differences, variations, contrasts as well as ambivalence between cultural discourses in question through comparison of relevant discursive components or aspects so as to discover differential representations of the ‘same’ reality, variable attitudes towards the ‘same’ issue, contrary actions, unique features, etc.

Pancultural Analysis: To search for commonalities, similarities, equivalences and interconnections between different cultural discourses in question by analysing all relevant discursive components or aspects (e.g. types of communicators, ways of thinking, conceptions, values, objectives, shared experiences).

Intercultural Analysis: To search for and make sense of self and other representations by and processes of interaction between different, and by implication multiple, cultural discourses in question and so also the resultant identities, actions performed, penetrations, relations of power (e.g. domination, exclusion, marginalisation, resistance, cooperation, synergy) and changes of situation.

Axiocultural Analysis: To offer evaluations over aspects or properties of a cultural discourse(s) in question and propose new ways and norms of communication in order to enhance cultural development, unity and prosperity. In this regard, CDS has its own cultural-political criteria, global and local. Namely, while the global criterion, subject to continuing dialogue within our discipline, is whether and to what extent a discourse is in favour of cultural flourishing—development, unity, prosperity—the local standards are contingent upon the specific needs, aspirations and traditions of the communities concerned, whether or not they impinge upon sovereignty, security or socio-economic advancement.

It may be added that these methods may be employed selectively or in combination, depending on the goals of research and the nature of data at hand.

Finally, to ensure the attainment of the culturalist ideal and the accomplishment of these outlined tasks, a set of rules applies as to the practice of CDS. They may be classified into two kinds, one positive and one negative: On the one hand, (a) to give due attention to local context (e.g. its relevant norms, values, habits), (b) to be conducive to native wishes and concerns, (c) to tap into native intellectual resources (e.g. wisdom, knowledge, scholarship), (d) to take into consideration international, intercultural and global interests, (f) to be mindful of history and progress (e.g. new media, AI, ChatGPT) and (g) to be modest and open to dialogue (e.g. by continuous and cultural-mutual learning); on the other hand, (a) not to monopolise or dominate in scholarship (e.g. not to universalise one’s own culture), (b) not to ignore, disregard or marginalise foreign intellectual traditions and (c) not to be blind to inequality and repression.

This handbook is organised in four parts or at four levels—philosophical, theoretical, methodological and empirical—so the comprehensive research system or paradigm of CDS is presented to the reader.

Part One has five chapters; it critically reflects on the relevant fields, defines the object of study and highlights its character, projects research directions and stipulates appropriate approaches of CDS. Thus, Chapter 1 outlines the contours of CDS in terms of its background, scope, directions, paths and rules. Chapter 2 identifies and critiques sociological and epistemological forms of colonialism in discourse studies and suggests ways of transformation. Chapter 3 proposes what is called Asiacentricity as metatheoretical impetus for steering culturally productive investigations into Asian discourses. Chapter 4 excavates the historical complexity and diversity of intercultural communication research, exposing its current parochialism, ethnocentrism and nationalism thereby. Chapter 5 argues from a non-hierarchical perspective for the re-merger of the discursive and the material in the study of discourse. All in all, the reader is proffered a road map for doing CDS.

Part Two contains seven chapters and canvases various levels and domains of cultural discourse theory. Thus, Chapter 6 brings the reader to a central issue in CDS—power struggle—and offers an analytic concept that highlights its assemblages and operations. Chapter 7 sheds light on multiple cultural dimensions and aspects of communication, outlining a broad and multifaceted theory thereby. Chapter 8 shows the importance of understanding bicultural identity and, by implication, multicultural identity as well as their formative processes in the study of communication in general and of discourses in particular. Chapter 9 propounds Asiacentric womanism as an alternative framework that resists the hegemony of Eurocentric feminism, redefining emancipation and empowerment for women within and without Asia as a result. Chapter 10 presents an integrated research system for contemporary Chinese discourse, complete with philosophical, theoretical, methodological and topical components. Chapter 11 offers an account of ethnic media and journalism in the less explored milieu of Russia. Chapter 12 reconstructs European science as a cultural discourse by teasing out the history of European scientific discourse, uncovering intellectual imperialism in the process. Chapter 13 focuses on basic, important concepts of social life and highlights their differences cross culture and history.

Part Three is composed of five chapters and provides tool kits for exercising CDS. So Chapter 14 introduces and advocates a new notion of spirit as epistemological prompt for CDS intellectuals to expand their horizons of sensing, feeling, thinking and creating in the continuing Power/Other dialectic and dialogue. Chapter 15 provides a methodological framework for multimodel cultural discourses. Building upon the tradition of the ethnography of communication, Chapter 16 explicates how cultural discourse analysis can serve as an effective tool for investigating intercultural contact and mobility. In association with the same tradition, Chapter 17 spells out the new analytic categories of discursive hubs for identifying and specifying identities, actions, feeling and many other elements in cultural discourses. Chapter 18 recommends Freire's interrelated perspectives on marginalised groups and literacy as crucially important strategies for the study of cultural discourses.

Part Four is the largest of all with ten chapters; together they showcase a diversity of cultural forms of communication under empirical and practical lenses. Thus, through using a notion of speech-action nexus, Chapter 19 identifies two divergent versions of an ideology within the Israeli discourse that underlines trust in language. Proceeding from a decolonial perspective, Chapter 20 shows that hate speech is rendered in Argentina through the language of prejudice couched in common sense. Chapter 21, similarly, engages with right-wing discourse in Argentina by scrutinising its intragroup competing self-representations. Chapter 22 brings into sharper relief the Western political priorities that sustain global inequality and discord by examining document design and photography in the websites of voluntary carbon markets. Chapter 23 looks at Chinese social

media on popular culture with a view to discovering transcultural tensions. Chapter 24 explores local and global interaction in the Argentinian discourse of space and place. Chapter 25 critiques the populist styles of impolite discourse by reflecting on its impact on democracy at both local and global levels. Through a cross-cultural study of Chinese and British business discourses, Chapter 26 highlights the role of industrial norm in corporate communication in the age of globalisation and digitisation. Chapter 27 provides a critical reflection on an educational initiative conducted in Brazil that aims to expand cultural perspectives of university students. Finally, Chapter 28 recounts an African experience in the production and use of harmonised orthography for African languages in favour of socio-economic development.