

# Critical discourse analysis and politics <sup>1</sup>

*Laura Filardo-Llamas and Michael S. Boyd*

Literature review

PD (political discourse) 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 (Critical discourse analysis), two main approaches to the study of PD can be found throughout history: PD Studies and PD Analysis. <sup>3</sup> 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 behavior 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 consciousness-raising” (Fowler 2009: 273). With its strong interest in power and ideology, CDA (critical discourse analysis) naturally shares ground with politics and political actors, and a great deal of work in the field has been devoted to PD. Closely tied to this is the notion within CDA that language becomes more powerful when it is used by powerful people, who often make use of inclusionary and exclusionary strategies (Wodak and de Cillia 2006: 714). Different trends for the study of PD within CDA include Wodak et al.'s (2009; Cf. Wodak 1989; Reisigl and Wodak 2009) Discourse-Historical Approach, Fairclough's (1989, 2010) Dialectical-Relational Approach, van Dijk's (1993, 1997) Sociocognitive Approach, Chilton's (2004) Cognitive-linguistic Approach, or Charteris-Black's (2005) Critical Metaphor Analysis. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> 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.

# Critical discourse analysis and politics <sup>1</sup>

*Laura Filardo-Llamas and Michael S. Boyd*

## *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, 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 (political discourse) 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” (Chilton and Schäffner 2002: 19). They are broadly determined by discourse communities, i.e., the groups of individuals whose membership is related to their social role and who intercommunicate 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 (critical discourse analysis) 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 proximation 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 and other political genres, such as debates and interviews, are broadcast on YouTube as short fragments or in their entirety, 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. 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” 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).

# Critical discourse analysis and politics

Laura Filardo-Llamas and Michael S. Boyd

## *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, but, as much as they try, we cannot neglect that their view of reality is quite frequently determined by ideological beliefs.

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 (political discourse). 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 (critical discourse analysis) interpretation stage of the analysis.

Two notions are important to explain representation. First, perspective – 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.

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.

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:). 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, ultimately demonstrating how genres are being “colonized” by new actors (new media users) and new discourse practices (text commenting).

# Critical Discourse Analysis

Jaffer Sheyholislami

According to van Dijk (1998a) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a field that is concerned with studying and analyzing written and spoken texts to reveal the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality and bias. It examines how these discursive sources are maintained and reproduced within specific social, political and historical contexts. In a similar vein, Fairclough (1993) defines CDA as discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony. (p. 135)

To put it simply, CDA aims at making transparent the connections between discourse practices, social practices, and social structures, connections that might be opaque to the layperson.

## *Evolution of CDA*

In the late 1970s, Critical Linguistics was developed by a group of linguists and literary theorists at the University of East Anglia (Fowler et al., 1979; Kress & Hodge, 1979). Their approach was based on Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). CL practitioners such as Trew (1979a, p. 155) aimed at "isolating ideology in discourse" and showing "how ideology and ideological processes are manifested as systems of linguistic characteristics and processes." This aim was pursued by developing CL's analytical tools (Fowler et al., 1979; Fowler, 1991) based on SFL.

Following Halliday, these CL practitioners view language in use as simultaneously performing three functions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions. According to Fowler (1991, p. 71), and Fairclough (1995b, p. 25), whereas the ideational function refers to the experience of the speakers of the world and its phenomena, the interpersonal function embodies the insertion of speakers' own attitudes and evaluations about the phenomena in question, and establishing a relationship between speakers and listeners. Instrumental to these two functions is the textual function. It is through the textual function of language that speakers are able to produce texts that are understood by listeners. It is an enabling function connecting discourse to the co-text and con-text in which it occurs.

Halliday's view of language as a "social act" is central to many of CDA's practitioners. According to Fowler et al. (1979), CL, like sociolinguistics, asserts that, "there are strong and pervasive connections between linguistic structure and social structure" (p. 185). However, whereas in sociolinguistics "the concepts 'language' and 'society' are divided...so that one is forced to talk of 'links between the two'", for CL "language is an integral part of social process" (p. 189).

Another central assumption of CDA and SFL is that speakers make choices regarding vocabulary and grammar, and that these choices are consciously or unconsciously "principled and systematic"(Fowler et al., 1979, p. 188). Thus choices are ideologically based. According to Fowler et al. (1979), the "relation between form and content is not arbitrary or conventional, but . . . form signifies content" (p. 188). In sum, language is a social act and it is ideologically driven.

## *Further development of CDA*

Over the years CL and what recently is more frequently referred to as CDA has been further developed and broadened. Recent work has raised some concerns with the earlier work in CL. Among the concerns was, first, taking into consideration the role of audiences and their interpretations of discourse possibly different from that of the discourse analyst. The second concern has called for broadening the scope of analysis beyond the textual, extending it to the intertextual analysis.

# Critical Discourse Analysis

Jaffer Sheyholislami

*Van Dijk (Socio-cognitive model)*

Among CDA (critical discourse analysis) practitioners, van Dijk is one of the most often referenced and quoted in critical studies of media discourse. In his *News Analysis* (1988), he integrates his general theory of discourse to the discourse of news in the press.

By structural analysis, van Dijk posited analysis of "structures at various levels of description" which meant not only the grammatical, phonological, morphological and semantic level but also "higher level properties" such as coherence, overall themes and topics of news stories and the whole schematic forms and rhetorical dimensions of texts. This structural analysis, however, he claimed, will not suffice, for Discourse is a complex communicative event that also embodies a social context, featuring participants (and their properties) as well as production and reception processes (p. 2). By "production processes" van Dijk means journalistic and institutional practices of news-making and the economic and social practices which can be explicitly related to the structures of media discourse. Van Dijk's other dimension of analysis, "reception processes", involves taking into consideration the comprehension, "memorization and reproduction" of news information.

What van Dijk's analysis of media attempts to demonstrate is the relationships between the three levels of news text production (structure, production and comprehension processes) and their relationship with the wider social context they are embedded within. In order to identify such relationships, van Dijk's analysis takes place at two levels: microstructure and macrostructure. At the microstructure level, analysis is focused on the semantic relations between propositions, syntactic, lexical and other rhetorical elements that provide coherence in the text, and other rhetorical elements such as quotations, direct or indirect reporting that give factuality to the news reports. Central to van Dijk's analysis of news reports, however, is the analysis of macrostructure since it pertains to the thematic/topic structure of the news stories and their overall schemata. Themes and topics are realized in the headlines and lead paragraphs. Van Dijk claims that the headline and the lead paragraph express the most important information of the cognitive model of journalists, that is, how they see and define the news event. Unless readers have different knowledge and beliefs, they will generally adopt these subjective media definitions of what is important information about an event (p.248).

For van Dijk, the news schemata ("superstructure schema") are structured according to a specific narrative pattern that consists of the following: *summary* (headline and the lead paragraph), *story* (situation consisting of episode and backgrounds), and *consequences* (final comments and conclusions). These sections of a news story are sequenced in terms of "relevance," so the general information contained in the summary, the headline and the lead paragraph. According to van Dijk, this is what the readers can best memorize and recall.

Van Dijk (1995) essentially perceives discourse analysis as ideology analysis, because according to him, "ideologies are typically, though not exclusively, expressed and reproduced in discourse and communication, including non-verbal semiotic messages, such as pictures, photographs and movies" (p. 17). His approach for analyzing ideologies has three parts: social analysis, cognitive analysis, and discourse analysis (p. 30). However, what noticeably distinguishes van Dijk's approach from other approaches in CDA is another feature of his approach: cognitive analysis. For van Dijk it is the *sociocognition* - social cognition and personal cognition – that mediates between society and discourse. He believes that one who desires to make transparent such an ideological dichotomy in discourse needs to analyze discourse in the following way: a. Examining the context of the discourse: historical, political or social background of a conflict and its main participants b. Analyzing groups, power relations and conflicts involved c. Identifying positive and negative opinions about Us versus Them d. Making explicit the presupposed and the implied e. Examining all formal structure: lexical choice and syntactic structure, in a way that helps to (de)emphasize polarized group opinions.

## Critical Discourse Analysis

Jaffer Sheyholislami

Wodak (*Discourse Sociolinguistics*)

Discourse Sociolinguistics is one of the directions in CDA (critical discourse analysis) associated with Wodak and her colleagues in Vienna (The Vienna School of Discourse Analysis). Wodak bases her model "on sociolinguistics in the Bernsteinian tradition, and on the ideas of the Frankfurt school, especially those of Jürgen Habermas" (Wodak, 1995, p. 209). According to Wodak (1996, p. 3): *Discourse Sociolinguistics...is a sociolinguistics which not only is explicitly dedicated to the study of the text in context, but also accords both factors equal importance. It is an approach capable of identifying and describing the underlying mechanisms that contribute to those disorders in discourse which are embedded in a particular context--whether they be in the structure and function of the media, or in institutions such as a hospital or a school--and inevitably affect communication.*

Wodak has carried out research in various institutional settings such as courts, schools, and hospitals, and on a variety of social issues such as sexism, racism and anti-Semitism.

Wodak's work on the discourse of anti-Semitism in 1990 led to the development of an approach she termed the *discourse historical method*. The term *historical* occupies a unique place in this approach. It denotes an attempt on the part of this approach "to integrate systematically all available background information in the analysis and interpretation of the many layers of a written or spoken text" (1995, p. 209). The results of Wodak and her colleagues' study (Wodak et. al., 1990) showed that the context of the discourse had a significant impact on the structure, function, and context of the anti-Semitic utterances" (p. 209). Focusing on the historical contexts of discourse in the process of explanation and interpretation is a feature that distinguishes this approach from other approaches of CDA especially that of van Dijk.

In the *discourse historical method* approach it is believed that language "manifests social processes and interaction" and "constitutes" those processes as well (Wodak & Ludwig, 1999, p. 12). According to Wodak & Ludwig (1999), viewing language this way entails three things at least. First, discourse "always involves power and ideologies. No interaction exists where power relations do not prevail and where values and norms do not have a relevant role" (p. 12). Second, "discourse ... is always historical, that is, it is connected synchronically and diachronically with other communicative events which are happening at the same time or which have happened before" (p. 12). This is similar to Fairclough's notion of intertextuality.

The third feature of Wodak's approach is that of interpretation. According to Wodak & Ludwig (1999), readers and listeners, depending on their background knowledge and information and their position, might have different interpretations of the same communicative event (p. 13). Therefore, Wodak & Ludwig (1999) assert that "THE RIGHT interpretation does not exist; a hermeneutic approach is necessary.

Interpretations can be more or less plausible or adequate, but they cannot be true" (emphasis in original) (p. 13).

# Critical Discourse Analysis

Jaffer Sheyholislami

*Fairclough*

Fairclough's theory has been central to CDA (critical discourse analysis) over more than the past ten years. Fairclough, in his earlier work, called his approach to language and discourse *Critical Language Study* (1989, p. 5). He described the objective of this approach as "a contribution to the general raising of consciousness of exploitative social relations, through focusing upon language" (1989, p. 4). This aim in particular remains in his later work that further develops his approach so that it is now one of the most comprehensive frameworks of CDA (Fairclough, 1992, 1993, 1995a, 1995b; Chuliaraki and Fairclough, 1999).

For Chuliaraki and Fairclough (1999), CDA "brings social science and linguistics ... together within a single theoretical and analytical framework, setting up a dialogue between them" (p. 6). The linguistic theory referred to here is Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which has been the foundation for Fairclough's analytical framework as it has been for other practitioners in CDA (Fowler et. al., 1979; Fowler, 1991; Hodge & Kress, 1979). Fairclough's approach also draws upon a number of critical social theorists, such as Foucault (i.e. concept of *orders of discourse*), Gramsci (concept of *hegemony*), Habermas (i.e. concept of *colonization of discourses*), among others (Fairclough, 1989, 1992, 1995a, 1995b).

Chuliaraki and Fairclough (1999) claim that CDA of a communicative interaction sets out to show that the semiotic and linguistic features of the interaction are systematically connected with what is going on socially, and what is going on socially is indeed going on partly or wholly semiotically or linguistically. Put differently, CDA systematically charts relations of transformation between the symbolic and non-symbolic, between discourse and the non-discursive. (p. 113) In this approach of CDA, there are three analytical focuses in analysing any communicative event (interaction). They are *text* (e.g. a news report), *discourse practice* (e.g. the process of production and consumption), and *sociocultural practice* (e.g. social and cultural structures which give rise to the communicative event) (Fairclough, 1995b, p. 57; Chuliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 113). These closely resemble van Dijk's three dimensions of ideology analysis: *discourse*, *sociocognition*, and *social analysis* [analysis of social structures] respectively. What seems to be the main difference between Fairclough's and van Dijk's approach is the second dimension, which mediates between the other two. Whereas van Dijk perceives social cognition and mental models as mediating between discourse and the social, Fairclough believes that this task is assumed by discourse practices - text production and consumption (Fairclough, 1995b, p. 59). In this case, these two approaches of CDA, are "similar in conception" (p. 59).

The first analytical focus of Fairclough's three-part model is *text*. Analysis of text involves linguistic analysis in terms of vocabulary, grammar, semantics, the sound system, and cohesion-organization above the sentence level. According to Fairclough, any sentence in a text is analyzable in terms of the articulation of these functions, which he has relabeled *representations*, *relations*, and *identities*: 1) Particular representations and recontextualizations of social practice (ideational function) - perhaps carrying particular ideologies. 2) Particular constructions of writer and reader identities (for example, in terms of what is highlighted - whether status and role aspects of identity, or individual and personality aspects of identity) 3) A particular construction of the relationship between writer and reader (as, for instance, formal or informal, close or distant).

*Discourse practice* has two facets: *institutional process* (e.g. editorial procedures), and *discourse processes* (changes the text go through in production and consumption). For Fairclough, "discourse practice straddles the division between society and culture on the one hand, and discourse, language and text on the other" (p. 60).

The third part is "*intertextual analysis*" (1995b, p. 61). According to Fairclough (1995b), intertextual analysis focuses on the borderline between text and discourse practice in the analytical framework. Intertextual analysis is looking at text from the perspective of discourse practice, looking at the traces of the discourse practice in the text. (p. 16)

*Tatiana V. Larina*  
Peoples' Friendship University of Russia  
*Vladimir I. Ozyumenko*  
Peoples' Friendship University of Russia  
*Svetlana Kurteš*  
Texas A&M University at Qatar

## *I*-IDENTITY VS *WE*-IDENTITY IN LANGUAGE AND DISCOURSE: ANGLO-SLAVONIC PERSPECTIVES

The recent increase in popularity of identity studies from multidisciplinary perspectives is not just a coincidence. It is largely instigated by social factors, such as globalization, characterized, *inter alia*, by the increased incidence of intercultural encounters on a day-to-day basis in a variety of contexts and communicative domains.

Additionally, the ever-increasing mobility of the global workforce and other demographic groups (e.g. educational and retirement mobility tendencies, migratory movements instigated by adverse living and/or political conditions, etc.) contributes substantially to transnational diversity and heterogeneity in cultural, ethnic, religious and other terms. This is not only the case with regions traditionally perceived as immigrant (e.g. Western Europe, North America, Australia, etc.), but increasingly so with countries and regions whose demographic profile historically exhibited a higher level of cultural, ethnic and religious homogeneity (e.g. Eastern and South East Europe, Middle East, East Asia, etc.). Global migration processes initially seem to have triggered the need for a higher and more sophisticated level of intercultural and cross-cultural awareness and communicative skills in order to make daily interaction more effective and successful. Identity studies play a very important role in this process, deconstructing and redefining the complex concepts of Self and Other and aspects of their engagement and interaction.

Individually or collectively, humans routinely relate to each other and in order to do that meaningfully and consistently, they resort to a repertoire of identification. The repertoire is dependent upon socio-cultural conditions and expressed through a range of semiotic resources and modalities, including linguistic/verbal ones (cf. Kalyango and Kopytowska 2014; Kopytowska 2015). It may, therefore, be possible to identify the relationship between language, culture and identity and determine the specific nature of their inter-relatedness. Within these conceptualisations, two major universals could be distinguished, namely the *I*-orientation cultures (and their subsequent identities) on the one end of the spectrum, essentially drawing from the theoretical framework of Individualism (Hofstede 1991; Triandis 1995), and the *we*-orientation cultures (and their identities) on the other end, stemming from the Collectivist theoretical provenance and its further interdisciplinary characterizations (Hofstede 1991; Triandis 1995, etc.). A more systematic and taxonomic investigation into the matter should be expected to expand and refine our understanding of the intricate relationship between language, communicative behavior and identity and their interdependence and interrelatedness across cultures and disciplinary approaches.

In what follows we first briefly define the notion of identity, looking specifically into its relationship with language and discourse, then shift our focus onto discursive manifestations of *I*- and *we*-orientation cultures and their linguistic characteristics, taking specifically into account two distinctive representatives of each, namely the Anglo culture (Wierzbicka 2006), typifying the *I*-orientation, and the Slavonic-speaking cultures (Russian and Serbian in particular), characterizing the *we*-orientation. We put under scrutiny a selection of lexico-phraseological, morpho-syntactic, stylistic and discursive characteristics of these two communicative orientations, using a corpus-informed contrastive approach and drawing from the theoretical framework of the culture-specific communicative styles. The analysed data was collected through a number of approaches, including questionnaires, interviews and ethnographic observations.



*Tatiana V. Larina*  
*Peoples' Friendship University of Russia*  
*Vladimir I. Ozyumenko*  
*Peoples' Friendship University of Russia*  
*Svetlana Kurteš*  
*Texas A&M University at Qatar*

## **I-IDENTITY VS WE-IDENTITY IN LANGUAGE AND DISCOURSE: ANGLO-SLAVONIC PERSPECTIVES**

### **Identity, language and culture: generalities and specifics**

The notion of identity, understood in more general terms, refers to an individual's awareness of his or her belonging to a particular community, socio-cultural, professional, ideological, or otherwise. Based on a particular sense of belonging, an individual decides how he or she will engage with the community in question and determines the nature of the engagement. As already pointed out, humans resort to a repertoire of identification (Jenkins 2004: 7). The repertoire plays an important role in day-to-day interactions, verbal or otherwise, helping us to make sense of the world and of "who's who and what's what" (Jenkins 2004: 7). It is dependent upon sociocultural conditions and "forged out of shared experiences, memories and myths, in relation to those of other collective identities" (Smith 1992: 75). Identities are expressed through a range of semiotic resources and modalities, including linguistic/verbal ones.

One of the more prominent manifestations of identity, namely the ethnic one, derives from the sense of peoplehood within a group, a culture, and a particular setting (Phinney and Ong 2007: 271). It has been studied with reference to one's sense of belonging to an ethnic group, that is, a group defined by one's cultural heritage, including values, traditions, and language. Because ethnic identity is a multidimensional construct, no single measure can assess it in all its complexity. [...] [A]t the core of ethnic identity is a sense of self as a group member that develops over time through an active process of investigation, learning, and commitment. (Phinney and Ong 2007: 279)

Identity is, therefore, a multifaceted notion, defined as "far from being a simple set of static givens, [...] [but] now understood to be a highly complex, multi-layered and dynamic construct, whose many dimensions interact to constitute a variable whole" (Bugarski 2012: 220). One of those facets, namely the ethnic one, includes a number of dimensions and components, including values and beliefs, lying in the very foundation of a specific culture and having their particular language as a reliable and authentic medium of expression. Individuals acquire and develop their identity through their interaction with other members of the community (Ting, Toomey 1999: 26). The nature of this interaction appears to be reflected in language and the discourse characteristic of a particular speech community. In intercultural encounters these characteristics come to the fore, potentially triggering instances of miscommunication or misinterpretation of communicative intentions of the interlocutors (Larina 2009; Kurteš and Kopytowska 2015, etc.).

This is why we suggest that it is important to look into the matter in a systematic and taxonomic way, identifying key characteristics of the relationship between language, culture and identity universally and from an interdisciplinary perspective.

More to the point in this case, our intention is to suggest a possible research approach in identifying the specifics of the relationship between language, culture and identity. Our personal research focus is on two specific linguo-cultural traditions and identities they mirror, namely Anglo (encompassing the culture of the English-speaking world in historical and traditional terms, as defined by Wierzbicka (2006)) and Slavonic (focusing initially only on Russian and Serbian), which we investigate comparatively and contrastively. In an attempt to achieve our goal, we deconstruct identity characteristics of the representatives of the speech communities in question, primarily focusing on their socio-cultural aspects, that is to say on identifying the complexities and

commonalities of the individual engagement in and interaction with their immediate socio-cultural environment.

*Tatiana V. Larina*

*Peoples' Friendship University of Russia*

*Vladimir I. Ozyumenko*

*Peoples' Friendship University of Russia*

*Svetlana Kurteš*

*Texas A&M University at Qatar*

## **I-IDENTITY VS WE-IDENTITY IN LANGUAGE AND DISCOURSE: ANGLO-SLAVONIC PERSPECTIVES**

### ***I*-orientation vs *we*-orientation cultures and their discursive manifestations**

Depending on the cultural background, a person can perceive himself or herself either as an independent, autonomous individual, which is a prototypical characteristic of individualistic cultures, or as part of a group, typically recognized as the key characteristics of a culture belonging to the collectivist end of the spectrum (Hofstede 1991; Triandis 1995, etc.). The division should not be taken as dichotomous, with a clear-cut demarcation line, but rather as a continuum, with individual cultures exhibiting either of the characteristics to a various degree. Understanding these characteristics and being able to identify them is an important skill necessary for a successful interaction in intercultural encounters.

Instead of utilising traditional terminological designations “individualism” and “collectivism”, we propose to use synonymous labels: “*I*-culture” and “*we* - culture” (and their respective *I*- and *we*-identities), in an attempt to move away from a potential ideological baggage that the traditional terminology may now connote.

English culture, or, in more general terms, Anglo culture, is considered to be rather individualistic, or – as we are about to explicate – *I*-oriented. When it comes to the Russian and Serbian cultures, they have traditionally been located on the collectivist end of the spectrum, but recent socio-political developments of the societies in question are purported to have influenced this position, potentially moving them towards the individualist end of the spectrum (Larina et al. 2017). Nevertheless, we would like to argue that both cultures are still firmly anchored in the collectivist – or *we*-orientation – tradition, as it is deeply embedded in their very fiber, which our data persuasively show. Representatives of both linguocultural traditions still seem to identify themselves with values typically associated with the collectivist culture, such as camaraderie, sociability, interdependence, empathy and care.

We now shift our focus on the relevant examples illustrating tendencies towards *I*- or *we*-orientation cultures. We specifically observe Russian and Serbian linguo-cultural traditions, juxtaposing them with the relevant segments of the Anglo tradition in an attempt to identify major commonalities and characteristics. We look into the lexico-phraseological and morpho-syntactic and discursive-stylistic levels in particular, searching for evidence that identity is embedded in the very fiber of the language structure.

Thus, for example, alongside *kommunikaciya* (‘communication’), the Russian language has another word lexical item, namely *obschenie*, pointed out by Wierzbicka (2002) as one of the key words of the Russian language and culture. These words are semantically rather different. *Kommunikaciya* is mainly used as a term in communication studies, mass media etc., while *obschenie* refers to informal interaction and has a semantic component of warm relations and getting enjoyment of the process. The cognate words *obschat'sya*, *obschitel'nyi*, *neobschitel'nyi*, *obshchitel'nost'* also have their cultural specificity. The verbs given in dictionaries as the English translation equivalents of the verb *obschatsia* (‘associate’, ‘communicate’, ‘socialise’, ‘contact’, ‘liaison’, ‘mix’, etc.) do not entirely convey that specific meaning, as the semantic emphasis of the Russian word is not on the information exchange, but on keeping the interlocutor company. The

lexical and phraseological field representing the concept of *obshcheniye* is one of the largest in the Russian language, often referred to as a category of Russian communicative consciousness.