

ON COMBINING CORPUS LINGUISTICS AND CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Saboviková A.

Department of British and US Studies, Faculty of Arts,
P. J. Šafárik University, Košice, Slovakia

Both Corpus Linguistics (CL) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) have been claimed to be quite new approaches to linguistic research by Baker [Baker et al. 2008] and Mautner [2009b]. Even though combining CL and CDA methodologies is not a new approach, Baker considers such studies to be surprisingly rather small in number [Baker et al. 2008: 274]. However, in recent times “awareness has been growing that corpus linguistic techniques can be harnessed profitably in order to uncover relationships between language and the social – one of the central concerns of discourse analysis generally and its ‘critical’ variety in particular” [Mautner, 2009: 32]. Mautner even declares CL and CDA to be “a natural match” [p.33] as they “can cooperate fruitfully and with mutual gain” since they are both concerned with “how language ‘works’ in social rather than merely structural terms” [p.32].

In addition, Baker [2006: 10-17] stipulates that combining CL and CDA, or “applying corpus methodologies in discourse analysis” [p.6], has its advantages, which he lists as follows:

- Reducing researcher bias - by using a corpus we should be able to restrict our cognitive biases even though we cannot remove bias completely;
- The incremental effect of discourse – a discourse is circulated and strengthened in society via language use and therefore a corpus may be useful in tracing the evidence of underlying hegemony by finding repeated patterns;
- Resistant and changing discourses – corpus data may reveal the presence of counter-examples (resistant discourse) and language change analysis may demonstrate that discourses are not static;

- Triangulation – thus using multiple methods of analysis which enables researchers to do validity checks of hypotheses, secure their findings with more interpretations and explanations, and respond flexibly to unforeseen problems of their research.

Koteyko [2006: 143] considers CL to be “a strongly data driven approach” and therefore as such “complementary for conducting discourse analysis” as its use should deflect the criticism of CDA related to data collection and representativeness of analyzed material. Thus discourse in the form of a corpus (usually tailored to tackle research questions) can be analyzed using the computer software which would reveal discursive patterns and provide quantitative part of the analysis. The qualitative side, on the other hand, would be typically provided by CDA, as by the use of methodology related to it, the analyst would try to interpret or put into context discursive patterns revealed by CL. Thus computer-based techniques provided by CL would be incorporated by CDA, whose studies are carried out traditionally in a more manual way, in order to render a facilitating tool for the study of large texts.

The most recent framework that combines both CL and CDA techniques, therefore reflecting the most recent trends, was introduced by Bednarek and Calpe who called it “a ‘discursive’ approach to news values” [2014: 135]. Their framework is intended especially for the analysis of news discourse as it “emphasizes the importance of news values for linguistic analysis and encourages a constructivist approach to their analysis” [ibid]. In their article [2014], the authors encourage both critical linguists and discourse analysts to use and apply their framework as it may help uncover the ideology since they propose that CL techniques “can identify conventionalised discursive devices that are repeatedly used in news discourse to construct and perpetuate an ideology of newsworthiness” [ibid.]. However, Bednarek and Calpe are not the first to introduce the concept of news values. Out of various books on news discourse that introduce news values, the quintessential examples are van Dijk [1988b] and Fowler [1991]. The former understands news values as constraints that “have a cognitive representation” [van Dijk,

1988b: 121] and these constraints underlie the production of news. The latter sees news values as socially constructed “intersubjective mental categories” [Fowler, 1991: 17] therefore as culturally and socially constructed rather than ‘neutral’ [p.13-15]. Both van Dijk and Fowler understand news as having discursive, social and cognitive dimensions. Additionally, Bell [1991: 156] emphasizes that news values are “not neutral, but reflect ideologies and priorities held in society”. On the whole, it can be said that many researchers, not just linguists, have accentuated the ideological nature of news values.

A more recent view on news values is offered by Richardson [2007: 91] who sees them as “the criteria employed by journalists to measure and therefore to judge the “newsworthiness” of events”. Bednarek and Calpe define news values as “the ‘newsworthy’ aspects of actors, happenings and issues as existing in and constructed through discourse” [2014: 137]. Therefore, news values are responsible for the structure and selection of news stories since based on them some events may be judged more newsworthy than other ones. These values are understood to mirror social beliefs and attitudes, and be shared by both producers and the audience of news media [Bell 1991, van Dijk 1988a, Bednarek 2006]. Even though news values have been defined variously, one common feature is that they are understood to determine what makes an event or ‘something’ newsworthy. For Bednarek and Calpe, news values are related to the events reported in news stories. However, in their framework they offer tools for analysis of how news values are discursively constructed in text or “how an event is ‘sold’ to us as news(worthy)” [Bednarek and Calpe, 2014: 139]. They propose that it is necessary to identify how news values are constructed for the audience through language, layout, typography or even images.

On the whole, CL approach allows analysts to work with a large amount of texts in order to provide quantitative data while CDA approach provides a close-up on linguistic data with its qualitative view. In the words of Baker et al. [2008: 297] “[t]he combination of methodologies traditionally associated with CDA and CL in research projects [...] seem to benefit both CDA and CL”.

Literature

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Summary

This paper addresses the framework of combining Corpus Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis and the reasons for such a combination of methodologies especially

when a large amount of texts is being analysed. Moreover, it also presents the most recent framework within this field of study and lists advantages that might inspire researchers to use such framework.