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CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND POSITIVE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS – COMMONALITIES AND DIFFERENCES

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Abstract: This study outlines an integrated new perspective on the relationship between critical discourse analysis (CDA) and positive discourse analysis (PDA). CDA typically attempts to unveil the uses of language and semiosis in the service of power and is best known for its foci on ideologically driven discrimination (gender, ethnicity, class, and related social variables). Yet, CDA has not offered accounts of alternative forms of social organisation, nor of social subjects, other than by implication (Kress 1996). Concisely, 'critical' in CDA does not equate to 'neutral critical thinking', but to negative criticism of the power/language relationship.

A different orientation is provided, among others, by Kress (2000) and Martin (2004). Martin's perspective on "language and semiosis […is] oriented not so much to deconstruction as to constructive social action, through PDA [2004:180-181]". Other instantiations of PDA, where the potential of linguistic and discourse analysis for facilitating positive intervention in social issues is considered, can be found in Macgilchrist (2007), Bartlett (2012) and Rogers (2017). More specifically, the former investigated strategies for propelling marginal discourses into the mainstream news media, while central notions in Bartlett's and Rogers's vision are to give voice and access to dominant discourses to less privileged, racialised social groups, and then to re-shape such discourses. Largely, topic selection makes the major difference between CDA and PDA: by selecting only discriminatory discourses to be deconstructed, there is no scope for positive critical thinking, whereas, from a PDA orientation, new transformative meanings can emerge.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis; dominant discourses; positive discourse analysis; transformative meanings; topic selection.

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Stories are the secret reservoir of values:
change the stories individuals and nations
live by and tell themselves,
and you change the individuals and nations.
(Ben Okri 1996)

1. Introduction and aims

This study attempts to outline an integrated perspective on the relationship between critical discourse analysis (CDA) and positive discourse analysis (PDA) in the light of some considerations on the notion of "*analysis*".

CDA typically attempts to unveil the uses of language and semiosis in the service of power and is best known for both its foci on ideologically driven discrimination and its quite ambitious aims to expose and ultimately resist social injustice. Apparently, "critical" in CDA does not equate to "neutral critical thinking" but to negative criticism of the power/language relationship. Predictably, this stance raised a prolonged critical debate (e.g., Stubbs 1997; Toolan 1997; O'Halloran 2003; Widdowson 2004, Blommaert 2005), which included accusations of choosing instances of discourse that could confirm the ideological orientations of the analysts resulting in them ultimately relying on one theory, e.g. systemic function linguistics (SFL), at the expense of others.

More relevantly to the purposes of this study, CDA has not offered accounts of alternative forms of social organisation, nor of social subjects, other than by implication (Cazden *et al.* 1996). In this seminal article, the New London Group showed how the multiplicity of communication channels and lingua-cultural diversity made it necessary to overcome the limitations of traditional pedagogies by re-designing approaches and modes of meanings in an inclusive way.

The different orientation towards PDA is provided, among others, by Kress (2000), Martin (2004) Martin and Rose (2003). Other instantiations of PDA, in which the potential of linguistic and discourse analysis for facilitating positive intervention in social issues is considered, can be found in the works of Macgilchrist (2007), Bartlett (2012, 2017), Rogers (2018), Stibbe (2017) and Hughes (2018), among others. This study considers aspects of, and notions in, this emerging research domain while also looking for both commonalities and variation between CDA and PDA, with attention given to the new potential transformative meanings which can emerge.

2. The CDA pathways

The interconnectedness of **discourse, power** and **ideology** is a founding tenet of CDA and can easily be traced back to the issue of discourse construction in connection with the dominating ideology, as described in depth in Roland Barthes's and Michael Foucault's works. More specifically, Norman Fairclough took his trajectory from the latter and from Pierre Bourdieu's vision in shaping his own comprehensive and influential approach to CDA. Indeed, the plural foci

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of CDA, ranging from the morpheme up to global social systems/realities and their transitions (e.g., to varying extents, from systemic functional linguistics and socio-cognitive discourse studies to the discourse-historical approach or corpus-based studies, as well as pragmatics and media studies, appraisal and evaluation studies, rhetoric, metaphor, education, multi-modality/mediality, ecolinguistics…), make it impossible to refer to its variety of approaches and applicability, including multimodal and multi-cross-media levels, in the present paper without unpardonable omissions[1].

Hence, concisely, we can say that CDA is best known for its attention to ideologically driven discrimination and gender, ethnicity/race, privilege, class and related geo-historical social variables. It aims at exposing normalised conventional social practices/structures that perpetuate inequality from a broadly libertarian perspective. In Fowler's words, such an analysis consists in

> a careful analytic interrogation of the ideological categories, and the roles and institutions and so on, through which a society constitutes and maintains itself and the consciousness of its members […] **All knowledge**, all **objects**, are **constructs**: criticism analyses the processes of construction and, acknowledging the **artificial quality of the categories** concerned, offers the possibility that we might profitably conceive the world in some **alternative way**. (1981: 25, my bold)

To give an overview of the social engagement and interdisciplinary agenda shared by many CDA researchers and practitioners, here follows a concise synopsis of CDA's primary concerns and notions, such as change in discourse[2].

Table 1. CDA – Norman Fairclough – an overview

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: THEORY, METHODOLOGY AND APPLICATIONS
THEORY
Discourse (or "semiosis", Fairclough, Jessop and Sayer 2004) is **an essential element of the social process** which is dialectically related to other elements (Harvey 1996). The **social process** as a whole **is construed in discourse**, and particular construals can, contingently, be "operationalized" in the social process as a whole, contributing to its social construction. […] Three important categories are: Discourses: ways of representing Genres: ways of acting (interacting, relating) Styles: ways of being (identities). […] The focus for analysis is *relations between* discourse and other elements of the social process—which entails discourse analysis within ***trans-disciplinary*** **research** [… These are as follows:] *Representation*—contributing to knowledge etc. *Misrepresentation* *Rhetoric*—discourse used to persuade you of a certain view of reality to legitimize e.g. policy choices

[1] For a comprehensive and in-depth discussion, see, among others, Jaworski and Coupland 2014, Flowerdew and Richardson 2017.

[2] Excerpted (verbatim) and much abridged both from Fairclough's seminars in Naples, Italy (February 20, 2007), at the Istituto Orientale di Napoli ("Global capitalism, terrorism and war: a discourse-analytical perspective") and the Università Federico II ("Critical discourse analysis: theory, methodology and applications") and from Fairclough 2005 (my bold).

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Ideology—discourse can contribute to the constitution, dissemination and reproduction of ideologies, which have a systemic function, sustaining relations of power
Social construction of social reality—discourse can generate imaginary representations of how the world will be or should be within strategies for change, which, if they achieve hegemony, can be operationalized to transform these imaginaries into realities […]
Dual focus in CDA
The relationship between **abstract social structures** and **concrete social events** is mediated by "**social practices",** relatively stabilized forms of social activity
CDA focuses on both **discourse** as an element of social events: i.e. "***texts***", and discourse as an element of ***social practices*** (institutions, organizations, fields): "orders of discourse"
An **order of discourse** is a social structuring of linguistic/semiotic difference, which is constituted as a relatively stable articulation of discourses, ***genres*** and ***styles***
One part of textual analysis is "**interdiscursive analysis"**—how discourses, genres and styles are articulated together in texts; the other is **linguistic** and other forms of semiotic analysis
Discourse and social change
Social change can be seen as changes **in boundaries** and relations between social practices and social structures
Social change *is* in part **change in discourse**
And changes in discourse can be "operationalized" (materialized, enacted, **inculcated in new identities**) in broader social change
Change in texts, and in the longer-term changes in orders of discourse, can be seen as changes in discourses, genres and styles, and in the *articulation* of discourses, genres and styles.
"Recontextualization" and re-articulation of discourses, genres and styles
Changes in discourse as part of social change involve the "recontextualization" of discourses—movement across boundaries from one context, one practice, to another (see Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 93-95 etc.)
Recontextualization is colonization *and* appropriation
As appropriation, the recontextualized discourse is worked into new relations with existing discourses (i.e. re-articulation, including **interdiscursive hybridity** in texts) and so transformed.
METHODOLOGY
Research topics
Not specifically/exclusively to do with language—topics in social research which have interesting semiotic aspects, and allow a semiotic "point of entry"
Examples: globalization, "transition", new public management, politics of Thatcherism or New Labour, the public sphere, immigration and asylum, global warming, gender identities… [and also "neo-liberalism", "information society", "knowledge-based economy" and "learning society". I shall focus here on the version of CDA I have been using in more recent (partly collaborative) work (Chiapello and Fairclough 2002; Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999; Fairclough 2000a, 2000b, 2003, 2004; Fairclough, Jessop and Sayer 2004)].
Constructing "objects of research" (Bourdieu)
The "construction of the object" is "no doubt the most crucial research operation and yet the most completely ignored". The conventional sociological **division between theory and methodology** as two separate instances should be "completely **rejected**": [… since] it is only as a function of a body of hypotheses derived from a set of theoretical presuppositions that any empirical datum can function as a proof or, as Anglo-American scholars put it, as *evidence* (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:225, italics in the original). [Through a **trans-disciplinary process**] CDA research projects

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construct objects of research, hypotheses/research questions, in dialogue with relevant theorists/researchers in fields of social research, or relevant bodies of theory/research, designed for a semiotic "point of entry" into the research topic.
Methods
Which methods of data collection and analysis are used (and which categories in textual analysis) depends on the object of research. **CDA** as such is best **not** regarded **as a method**, but **as a field of study with diverse approaches** which share certain broad principles […] My approach—general method:
Social analysis
Interdiscursive analysis of texts and interactions
Linguistic (visual-semiotic etc.) analysis of texts and interactions […]

Although CDA seems to leave open the possibilities of alternative representations of reality and of a positive/corrective action, its distinctive feature appears to be a critical attitude vs. the power-language relationship. As Martin and Rose (2003) commented, "the main focus of CDA work has been on hegemony, on exposing power as it naturalises itself in discourse and thus feeling in some sense part of the struggle against it (2003: 264)". In their view, CDA did not promote a complementary focus on success stories in the communities, hence, the need for PDA arose.

From a different perspective, the lack of alternative visions was also made clear by M. A. K. Halliday in his seminal *New Ways of Meaning: The Challenge to Applied Linguistics* (1990) with some effective examples. In his words,

> The grammar of "**big**" is the grammar of "**good**", while the grammar of "**small**" is the grammar of "**bad**". The motif of "bigger and better" is engraved into our consciousness by virtue of their line-up in the grammar. […] *Growthism* and *classism* are our two *major ideological menaces*; and ideologies are *constructed in language*. But the linguistic perspective suggests one further consideration: that we shall not solve one of these problems without also solving the other. (1990: 165, 170, my bold and italics)

Accordingly (and paradoxically), the lexical effect of an expression like "zero/negative population growth", which refers to a highly desirable phenomenon from the ecological perspective of sustainability, is not positive. Concisely, the motives of *growth* [good] vs. *shrinkage* [bad] are deeply "engrammatised",[3] as are the unboundedness of our material resources, the passivity of the inanimate environment (which is designated with the pronoun "it") and the uniqueness of humankind instead of our continuity with our environment. We (should) know that such resources are finite, but, apparently, we are less equipped to perceive slow-motion crises than sudden events or catastrophes. Yet, in our days, the connection between 'shrinkage' and sustainability is increasingly mentioned as a necessity, as, for example, in the article *To Take Climate Change Seriously, the U.S. Military Needs to Shrink* (De La Garza 2022).

[3] However, in specific domains, the connotations can change. For example, *petite, slim, tiny, small-sized* are compliments when referred to a woman and often preferred to big, robust, large, oversized...

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Therefore, anticipating the PDA views (see below), Halliday identified the need to promote linguistic change through a regular exercise of lexical choice at various levels, such as first and second language teaching, clinical linguistics, artificial intelligence, sociolinguistics, multilingualism, and language in relation to culture. This was a remarkable challenge for applied linguistics, which he considered to be socially accountable.

3. The questions of scientific neutrality and the scope of linguistic analysis

Indeed, CDA has a strong ideological foundation and a tendency to become engaged in societal issues, and among its declared goals are those of exposing inequalities and criticising the exercise of power that produced them from a liberal-progressive perspective. Since "critical" does not equate to "neutral critical thinking", this attitude may appear in contrast with the common scientific claim of objectivity:

> Scientific **objectivity** is a property of various aspects of science. It expresses the idea that scientific claims, methods, results—and scientists themselves—are not, or should not be, influenced by particular perspectives, value judgments, community bias or personal interests, to name a few relevant factors. (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2020)

Yet, apparently, it can be challenging for human minds to really achieve "objectivity". Cognitive and psychological sciences have investigated and proven in a variety of ways how emotions and bias affect judgement and decision-making (Beattie 2008; Han *et al.* 2007; Watson and Spence 2007). Additionally, "The ideal of objectivity has been criticized repeatedly in philosophy of science, questioning both its desirability and its attainability" (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2020). The issue is overwhelming, involving virtually all domains of human research, action, behaviour and choices. As we shall see, the domain of PDA is far from being free from ideological orientation or bias. Indeed, a strong ideological commitment, albeit from a different perspective and with different aims, is what defines PDA. For the purposes of the present study, it should suffice to say that although the selection of topics and discourses to analyse is driven by the interests and ideologies of the individual researcher, their research methods and the representation of their results can and should be "objective" or, in other terms, intellectually honest (Abbamonte 2018).

Another debated issue is how far the field of action of language/discourse analysts can extend. Of late, there is a growing emphasis not only on interdisciplinarity but also on the expected transitivity of the social commitment of linguists. It may be useful here to quote the cautious words of Ruqaiya Hasan:

> While in theory the relation of context of situation to context of culture seems clear, the description of the options in the context of culture has never been articulated in any detail. Perhaps **one is tacitly saying with Hjelmslev that, at this point, the sociologist and/or anthropologist will take over**. Certainly, linguists as linguists are not able to analyze—or are at

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> least limited in the extent to which they can analyze—the crucial properties of culture […]. Perhaps it is worth adding that, in a functional stratal theory of the type that I take SF to be, where the theoretical model attempts to model the permeability of human conditions of social existence and the system of verbal semiosis, **there will inevitably arrive a stage where the highest stratum would *not* be wholly describable in terms of language**. (1995: 267–268, my bold)

Furthermore, according to the sociolinguist and linguistic anthropologist Jan Blommaert, if discourse is considered as contextualised language, then discourse analysts should move from linguistics to "a social science of language-in-society" (2005: 235). More specifically, in relation to the potential issue of speciously biased readings and the limited range of characteristics selected for analysis, he also raised the question of *linguistic bias* in CDA, i.e. its nearly total reliance on SFL for lexico-grammatical descriptions, the selection of discourse/texts without considering the types of discourse that did not appear, and its inability to effectively account for both the social dynamics behind the production of the texts under analysis and the social consequences of their production.

Tentatively, we could agree that as appealing as the idea of linguists promoting change or successfully accounting for multi-layered ethno-socio-historic-cultural-economic dynamics (etc.) may be, one should consider that such outcomes can only come through interdisciplinary cooperation and/or tangible engagement in some kind of social action and/or political activism.

4. The need for PDA, or the search for new stories to live by

While CDA's engagement has mainly consisted in de-naturalising the uses of language/semiosis that perpetuate any form of discrimination without offering (productive) accounts of alternative forms and visions, what defines PDA is the ambition of producing change through discourse and discourse analysis.

Again, the need to promote change through language use was clearly formulated by **Halliday** (1990), who was convinced that linguists can make the difference through achieving a deeper comprehension of the potential of language for doing either good or bad. Based on the tenet that language evolved as the resource whereby human beings construe experience, he highlighted the need for managing language at certain times, i.e., when it has to take on new functions, by extending its power to mean in particular domains and/or types of social activity. Halliday was deeply sensitive to a series of societal issues, such as racism, sexism, classism, etc., and environmental issues with the consequent need to change human attitudes to sustainability:

> [T]he grammar presents them [the natural resources] as if the only source of restriction was *the way that we ourselves quantify them*: a barrel of oil, a seam of coal, a reservoir of water and so on—as if they in themselves were inexhaustible. […] *Production is a major semantic confidence trick*; […] we don't produce anything at all—we merely transform what is already there into something else, almost always with some unwanted side effects. (1990: 164, 169, my italics)

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Halliday was poignantly aware of how, through pollution and by steadily increasing our population, humankind was (is) consuming resources, such as agricultural soil and fresh water supplies, rather than producing something desirable, to the (predictable) point of destroying the planet. Thus, he turned to language (to the English language, to be precise) as a powerful medium and means to produce change. In his systemic-functional perspective, the lexico-grammatical continuum, from vocabulary to the inner layers of grammar, functions as the central processing unit for construing ideational meanings and mapping them onto the interpersonal meanings which build and enact social relationships. Hence, we, as speakers, should promote change through a regular exercise of choice within the system, since

> classism, growthism, destruction of species, pollution and the like […] are not just problems for the biologists and physicists. They are problems for the applied linguistic community as well. I do not suggest for one moment that we hold the key. But we ought to be able to write the instructions for its use. (ibidem)

Subsequently, the need for change within the linguists' community was highlighted both by Kress (2000) and by Martin (2004), Martin and Rose (2003). More specifically, Jim **Martin**, in his article "Positive Discourse Analysis: Solidarity and Change", stated that PDA provides "a complementary face of CDA … oriented not so much to deconstruction as to constructive social action. […] A window on the construction of values … through a discourse which we can use both to monitor and design change" (2004: 184–197). From Martin viewpoint, we need examples of analysis of positive change stories, such as the redefinition of gender relations, or environmental issues.

From this standpoint – the need for the analysis of positive discourse as a means to comprehend change and the proposal of naming it "PDA" – Martin maintains that just as analysts try to comprehend how power and power relations generate and are reproduced through discourse from a critical perspective (CDA), investigations should be broadened "to include … discourse that inspires, encourages, heartens", as he had already proposed earlier on (Martin 1999: 51–52). Therefore, pleading for positivity in the face of negativity, Martin suggested the need for "a complementary perspective, on language and semiosis, which functions to make the world a better place" (2004: 179). For example, he considered the Australian Human Rights Commission's *Bringing Them Home* report (1997) as a suitable topic for PDA. The report was the result of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families, and it marked significant progress in the healing itinerary of many Stolen Generations (aboriginal) members. It was written in a positive style, privileging aboriginal voices and including first-person testimonies, thus creating empathy and a movement in public opinion towards reconciliation. In Martin's vision, PDA has to be a proactive and transformative kind of discourse analysis, such as can be found in Youth Justice Conferencing in Australia. Indeed, restorative (or healing) justice exchanges can be suitable

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topics for PDA, especially if considered in the (socio-historically) localised contexts of the many nations and communities where they take place (in the US, Canada, the UK, Italy, etc.) through the work of individuals and groups to promote positive change (Abbamonte 2014; Abbamonte and Cavaliere 2013).

An interesting proposal for propelling marginal discourses into the mainstream news media can be found in "Positive Discourse Analysis: Contesting Dominant Discourses by Reframing the Issues" by Felicitas **Macgilchrist** (2007). Since news stories generally do not contest the dominant frames, she showed, through a case study approach, how five strategies (logical inversion, parody, complexification, partial reframing and radical reframing) could successfully contest the mainstream discourse. Thus, in her view, a useful application of PDA emerged: identifying which reframing/s resonate more with editors and enacting them in order to get marginal or dissonant discourses to be selected for mainstream publication.

Yet, dominant discourses can also be appreciatively considered in given geopolitical contexts. For example, in a PDA study, Ting Su (2016) showed how a speech delivered at the National University of Singapore (on November 7, 2015) by the Chinese President Xi Jinping successfully used positive expressions of Affect, Judgement and Appreciation to evoke the youths' emotional resonance and introduced other voices and stances (heteroglossia), thus establishing a dialogue with his audience, to promote cooperation:

> Finally, it can be seen that President Xi devotes to promoting China's cooperation with Singapore. He is ready to handle the dispute and conflict, based on mutual respect and the spirit of **seeking common ground** while reserving difference, continuously enriching the strategic partnership **and paving a win-win road of the equality and mutual trust**. The speech conveys the **positive signals**, such as friendship, respect, cooperation as well as peaceful development, which benefits the people of all the countries. (Su 2016: 800, my bold)

In a more dialectical way, Tom **Bartlett**[4], in his "Towards Intervention in Positive Discourse Analysis", illustrated that while CDA attempts "to engage with real-world problems by bringing to light obstacles to social justice, by highlighting where discourse *goes wrong*" (2009: 134), it does not show how people can find their own voices and challenge the status quo of the typical power-language relationships. Indeed, this is what PDA does "by highlighting where discourse *works*". He then suggests that PDA should be reinforced through a more ethnographic approach by framing the effective discourses within their societal contexts with a focus on the mores and communication modes. Thus, contributing solutions should become more feasible. Going into more detail,

[4] Bartlett considered CDA as a broad umbrella word/approach that includes many aspects of critical linguistics and whose defining feature is "the move away from the analysis of individual decontextualised texts to look at the sociocultural factors that lie behind the production of particular types of texts". He also referred to Chouliaraki and Fairclough's framework (1999: 60) for CDA, consisting in identifying a problem and the ways to overcome the obstacles to tackling it and reflecting on the analysis. Indeed, he emphasised the transitive dimension of CDA, mentioning, for example, how Ruth Wodak managed to identify problematic areas in doctor-patient interactions and to make useful suggestions which medical professionals often adopted.

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Bartlett quoted Martin's contribution to shaping PDA (see above) and referred to the work of Sally Humphreys on adolescents' blogs, which laid the emphasis on how powerful such non-school based activities can be.

In Bartlett's view, if we accept the idea that societies need to find common ground, then CDA notions of false ideologies to expose are not as useful as considering ideologies as a way of connecting communities. Accordingly, the notion of *intertextuality* is foregrounded not so much "as a means of the dominant bloc extending their view of society into an ever greater range of social activities, but also as a means for alternative voices to get themselves heard in mainstream discourses" (Bartlett 2009: 139).

Concisely, CDA and PDA share many concerns (issues of agency, control over discourse, i.e., power behind language, etc.) and tools, but view them from declaredly different perspectives. From a PDA perspective, linguistic analyses can be used to reveal ideas, aspects of shared understandings and personal relationships and to get things done within specific groups. Through the analysis of a selection of texts (with a focus also on the in/exclusive use of pronouns, modals, etc.), Bartlett (2009) showed how the PDA stance can better identify what discourse *works* in specific contexts[5] and empower the voices that can tackle and solve the problems. Yet, later on, he observed that

> While **PDA** situates complete texts within the broad sociopolitical context of their production and the polemic to which they contribute, *the analysis of the interplay of complex linguistic features* ***remains resolutely textual*** […and] there seems to be a reliance on the trained linguist to provide the evaluation of the different texts and the linguistic resources employed rather than a concentrated approach to assessing the evaluation and uptake of these texts within the target communities themselves […]. *To extend the project of PDA*, then, it is surely *necessary to integrate textual and contextual analyses of communicative practices* and to account for the *link* between language features and social structure. (2012: 8-9, my bold and italics)

Apparently, Bartlett did not consider PDA sufficiently transitive-proactive, and he felt that the limitations of the *textual bias* in CDA persisted in PDA. Yet, such a bias could be overcome through the sociolinguistic concept of *voice*, i.e. "the means of behaving appropriately through language" (2012: 15), or, more specifically, a way of speaking that conveys the speakers' socio-cultural backgrounds and interpersonal relations, thus "creating new discourse styles that are *comprehensible*, *empathetic* and *legitimate* across intercultural divides" (2012: 32). His agenda for PDA practice

> takes these issues on board in order to move beyond analysing counter-discourses with the same textually oriented methods that CDA has used to critique hegemonic discourses and onto an analysis of how these discourses function in their specific context and how an understanding of their workings might contribute to the **design of alternative discourses that are viable within that context**. (2012: 38, my bold)

[5] For example, discourses about sustainability, drawn from field work in Guyana, between the local Amerindian community members and the experts of international development organizations are comparatively analysed.

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It is an appealing agenda that, however, does not seem to fully address the issue of the scope for linguistic analyses, as signalled by Hasan and Blommaert (see above).

The fortunes of PDA have been affected by various kinds of criticism and characterised by low-tide periods. Yet, after a period of "latency", from 2010 onwards, new attention has been given to PDA as an interventionist type of analysis and participation in sites of social change (Martin 2012), with a focus both on how people get organised to make themselves heard and on the resources for implementing future aims. Actually, in the contemporary semiosphere and mediascape, which are increasingly defined by the affordances of our polymedia resources and the growing number of channels that can become personally expressive media (e.g. YouTube), this "re-distribution" of knowledge/s and re-shaping of the power-language relationship are to be expected.

Also inspired by Martin, Arran **Stibbe** (2017) acknowledged that the tendency of ecolinguistics (EL)[6] to criticise the dominant discourse of our unsustainable industrial civilisation (i.e. the negative impact of language in encouraging ecologically destructive behaviours) is only the first step. It is worth noting that PDA and EL share many concerns and, above all, a proactive stance – not simply scientific discourse analysis but dynamic agendas of transitive actions. Thus, the next step should be to find new discourses on which to base society. Apart from Martin's insistence on the need to move beyond the focus on semiosis in the service of abusive power and reconsider power communally, among the other acknowledged influences on Stibbe's elaborations is Halliday's attention to the constraining lexico-grammar of our language (see above). This stance also refers back to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, further explored by Goatly (1996) and Mühlhäusler (2001), who concluded that ordinary language (Standard Average European) cannot adequately represent the scientific reality of ecology. In this vein, a number of linguists are quoted to the effect of displaying a number of alternative phrasings of the humankind-environment interaction (Ponton, this volume), such as "native vegetation removal" instead of "clearing", "free-living non-human" instead of "wildlife", or "cow-enslaver" instead of "dairy farmer" (phrasings that have also attracted some irony).

In Stibbe's vision, which explicitly refers back to Lakoff and Johnson's ground-breaking work *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), the search for new stories to live by, as PDA could be defined (Stibbe 2017: 170), is paramount, thus participating in the increasingly widespread awareness of the importance of stories and story-telling at a societal level to promote change. Stibbe was also inspired by the poet and novelist Ben Okri (1996) who considered the stories as a reservoir of values: "nations and peoples are largely the stories they feed themselves. If they tell themselves stories that are lies, they will suffer the future consequences of those lies. If they tell themselves stories that face their own truths, they will free their histories for future flowerings (1996:21)".

Furthermore, in the inspired writings of some scientists, such as Rachel Carson, Aldo Leopold and Loren Eiseley, Stibbe found a kind of *positive discourse*

[6] For a specific reflection on ecolinguistics and its relation to Positive Discourse Analysis, see D. M. Ponton, this volume.

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whose linguistic features portray the world in ways that encourage respect for nature. Other notable examples are William Wordsworth's poem "The Prelude", which attributes agency to nature, representing it as the Actor participant of clauses, or Nelson Mandela's autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*, which Martin considered as a message of hope, wisdom and grace. Still, the discourses of the scientist and environmental activist Vandana Shiva (analysed in Alexander 2003) are quoted as possible topics for the analysis of positive discourses. Concisely, in Stibbe's view, PDA is "a search for new ways of using language that tell us very different stories from those of the current industrial civilization – stories that encourage us to *protect the ecosystem that life depends on* and build *more socially just societies*" (2017: 170, my italics). From this specific perspective, which strongly connects the protection of the environment to social justice, he referred to the insights of a number of linguists, ranging from van Dijk to MacFarlane, and a variety of topics, such as the issue of eating as an agricultural act, slow food, or the study of Native American discourses in search of favourable representations of the natural world (*beautiful, tame, bountiful*) vs. the dominant western definitions (*wild, infested, savage*). Yet, it is also essential for PDA to preserve a critical stance for highlighting negative aspects of dominant discourses, which is more easily achieved when considering issues of racism than of ecological sustainability. Furthermore, the body of research which critically analyses the mainstream negative discourses that support the current unsustainable civilisation has not yet been matched by a body of research looking at positive, inspirational discourses.

Apart from the awareness-raising discourses supporting environmental sustainability, elective topics for PDA are the discourse/s of popular, aboriginal and native culture/s, as well as the discursive interactions that unfold in restorative justice circles, many kinds of (dialogue-based) social activism, educational practices and their dissemination, etc. A major emphasis is laid on interventionist research and its role in serving communities. J. M. F. **Hughes** (2018) recently extended the potential of PDA interventionist and emancipatory research to include the discourse analysis of neurodiversity discourse as a tool for disability rights activists interested in challenging cognitive ableism.

5. Applied, appliable PDA resources – a case study

The research and works of Rebecca Rogers are an interesting example of how PDA can be socially proactive and interventionist, through strong educational and social engagement, at a multimodal-media level. **Rogers** is an educational researcher specialising in literacy studies and critical discourse studies, with foci on the socio-political contexts of literacy education and ethnographic traditions. In *Reclaiming Powerful Literacy Practices: New Horizons for Critical Discourse Analysis* (2018), she expanded the analysis framework to the multimodal learning/teaching process.

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Interestingly, Rogers promoted a six-month project (Spring 2015) focusing on **racial literacy**[7] for a class of teacher education students in the Normandy school district (Ferguson), which was among the poorest and most segregated in Missouri. Her initiative took place after a prolonged, violent protest had erupted in Ferguson when, on August 9, 2014, the body of a black teenager, Michael Brown (a graduate of Normandy High School), fatally shot by a white police officer, was left in the street for four hours. Brown, a model student with no criminal background, was unarmed. It was a high-profile case that received huge news media coverage in a long chain of similar events. The community was infuriated, and riots were met with an unprecedented use of police force.

Rogers's initiative of encouraging a positive reaction to those dire events by using multimodal discourse analysis to provoke and study racial literacy appears to realise the *reinforced ethnographic approach* Bartlett invoked. The context of Ferguson was engaged as a point of departure, showing how discourses of race were intertwined within and between local, institutional and societal domains. In Rogers's words, racial literacy has to do with learning and building meanings about racism in its psychological, interpersonal and structural dimensions and is a collaborative endeavour of becoming – "a slow-motion semiotic practice", in Halliday's terms.

In that "teachable moment", public schools in Ferguson were reinforcing their counselling services to cope with students' anxieties after two weeks of violent protests in their community, and plans to make a learning opportunity out of these race-based tensions were taking shape. A new proactive approach was thus displacing the typical attitude of many area school leaders who advised teachers to stay neutral and avoid discussing race, apparently, rather than to analyse racism as a long-standing phenomenon. In that changing social climate[8], at St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley (Ferguson, MO), a multifaceted event took place with a high iconic value, starting from its very denomination – *Drawing FergUSon Together: A Vision of Peace*.

Within the initiative of interest for linguistic and multimodal communication, we find *Using Story Circles to Engage in Courageous Conversations* (by Casey Tuths, Rebecca Rogers *et al.*) and, in particular, *Reading, Writing and Responding with Ferguson: Critical Literacy in Action* (by Rebecca Rogers and Cara Richeé). From a proactive perspective, Rogers and Richeé both claimed that the Black Lives Matter movement could also inspire the work of educators. Their central aims were to investigate institutional forms of racism, including segregated schools and the school-to-prison pipeline, as well as the subtly constraining neoliberal takeover of schools in low-income communities, in order to facilitate the building of social justice-oriented curricula (for more details, see Abbamonte 2018).

[7] Rogers illustrated her project in a paper presented at the Cadaad Conference at the University of Catania, Italy, on September 5-7, 2016. The images in this section are taken from her PPT presentation, which she kindly made available (and remains available on request), and were made from publicly available non-copyrighted documents.

[8] A variety of suggestions for teachers and teaching materials were proposed, among which are Emdin 2014; Schulten et al. 2014; Granata 2014; Morningside Center 2014.

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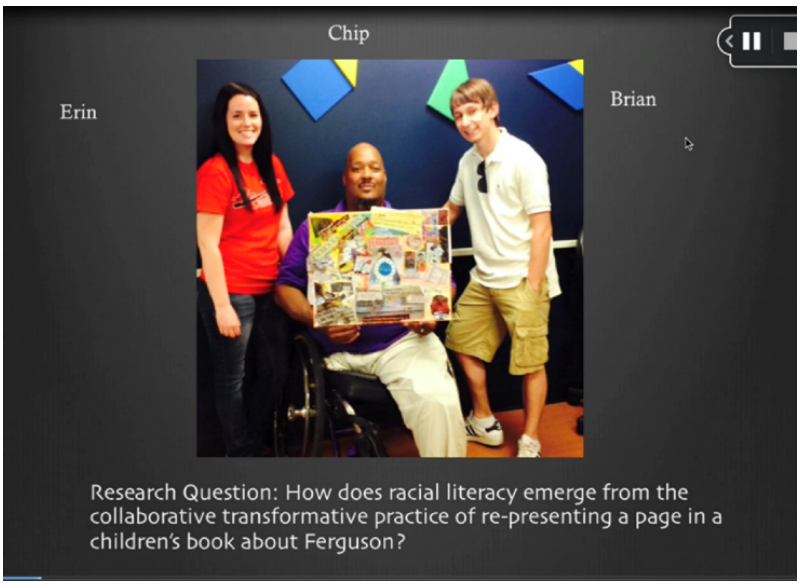
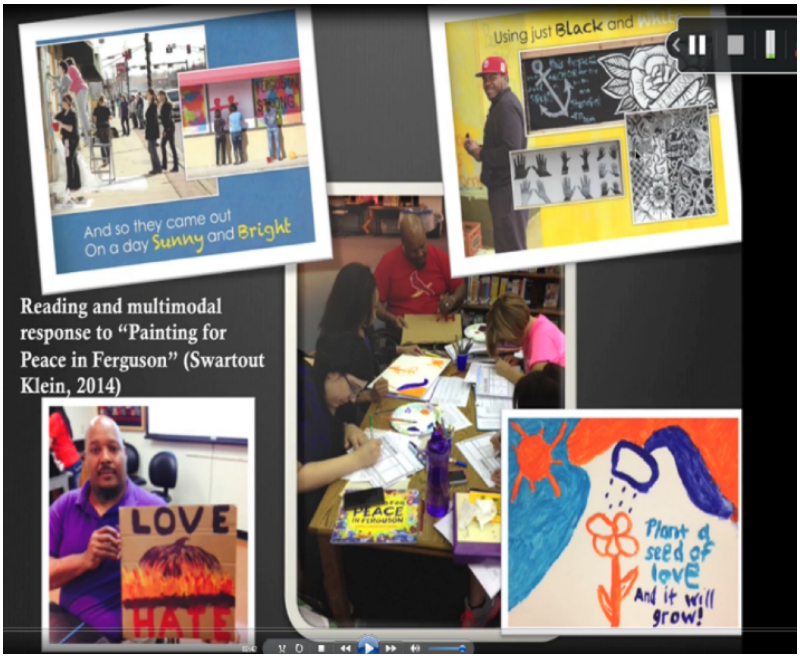
In that re-educational context, grounding her 2015 project in expansive studies of learning and critical race theory, Rogers intended to utilise the **potential of discourse analysis to provoke change through cooperative transforming practices**, such as representing and interpreting the healing initiative of a number of artists, *Painting for Peace in Ferguson*[9], through a collage (made by her class group) and creating a storyline that addressed racism. Here follow three pictures representing her class members and their collaborative collage-making activity.



Picture 1. Rogers's class of teacher education



Picture 2. Activities of Rogers's class of teacher education

[9] A series of images, shots from murals and child-friendly verse were collected in a drawing book for children by Carol Swartout Klein, published on February 21, 2015.

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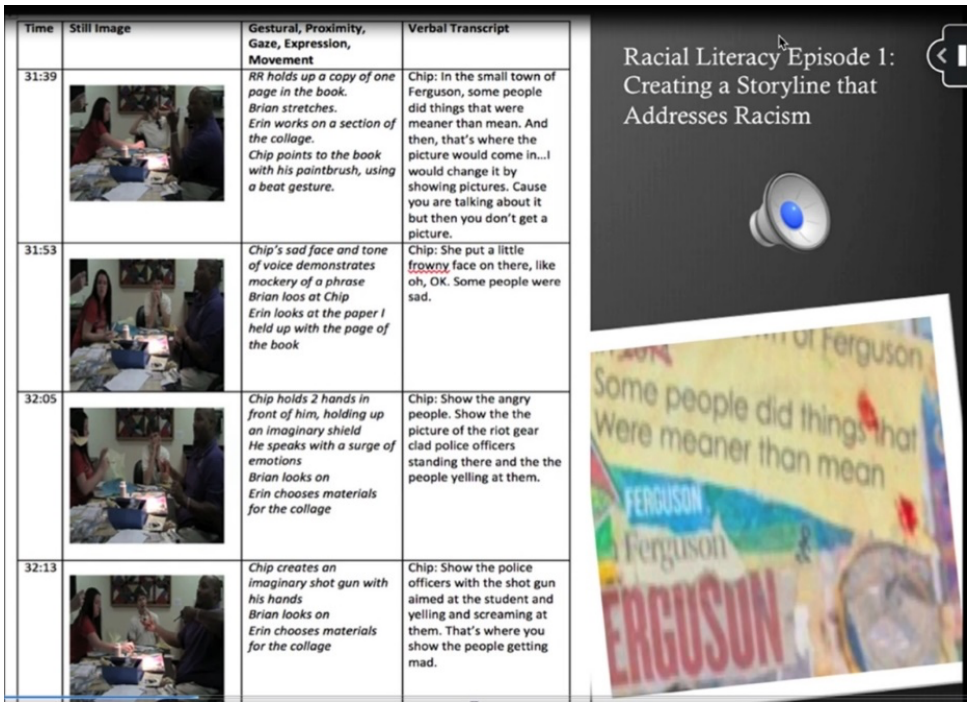
Picture 3. Collage by Rogers's class of teacher education

The class activity was also video-recorded, and the multimodal responses of the participants to the unfolding racial issues, which included the re-voicing of unnamed (non-participant) white people, were assessed.

As a form of *racial literacy in action*, a storyline addressing racism and narrating racial justice intervention was created during the semester (see below). It is a multimodal performative story that cannot be suitably represented in a written paper, but it is interesting to notice (or deduce) how meanings were created and chained across gestures, gazes, movements and spoken words.



Time	Still Image	Gestural, Proximity, Gaze, Expression, Movement	Verbal Transcript
31:39		*RR holds up a copy of one page in the book. Brian stretches. Erin works on a section of the collage. Chip points to the book with his paintbrush, using a beat gesture.*	Chip: In the small town of Ferguson, some people did things that were meaner than mean. And then, that's where the picture would come in...I would change it by showing pictures. Cause you are talking about it but then you don't get a picture.
31:53		*Chip's sad face and tone of voice demonstrates mockery of a phrase Brian loos at Chip Erin looks at the paper I held up with the page of the book*	Chip: She put a little frowny face on there, like oh, OK. Some people were sad.
32:05		*Chip holds 2 hands in front of him, holding up an imaginary shield He speaks with a surge of emotions Brian looks on Erin chooses materials for the collage*	Chip: Show the angry people. Show the the picture of the riot gear clad police officers standing there and the the people yelling at them.
32:13		*Chip creates an imaginary shot gun with his hands Brian looks on Erin chooses materials for the collage*	Chip: Show the police officers with the shot gun aimed at the student and yelling and screaming at them. That's where you show the people getting mad.

Picture 4. Storyline 1.

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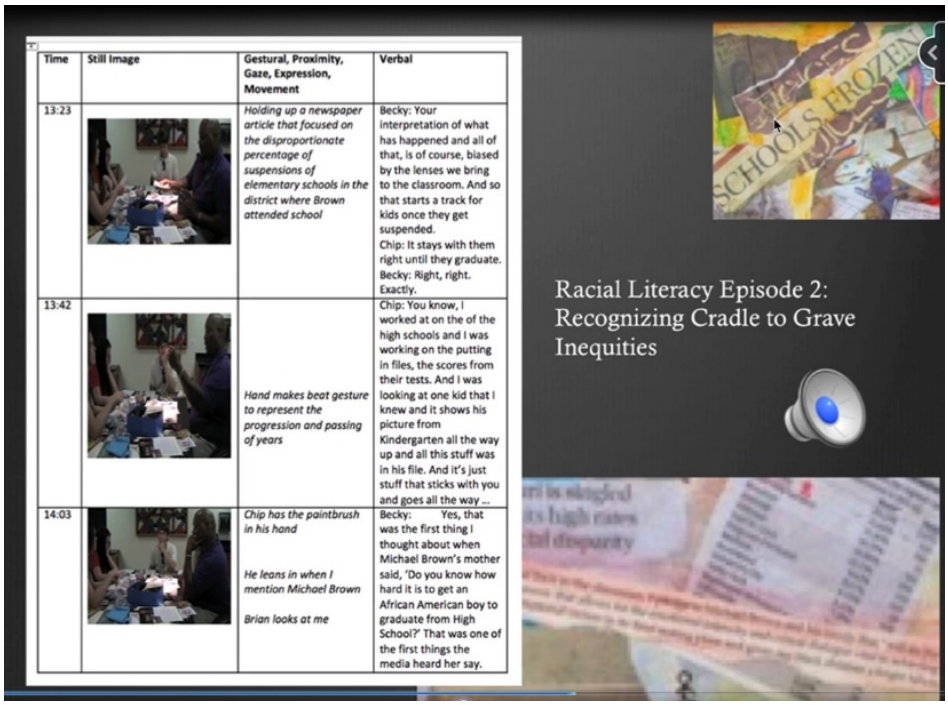
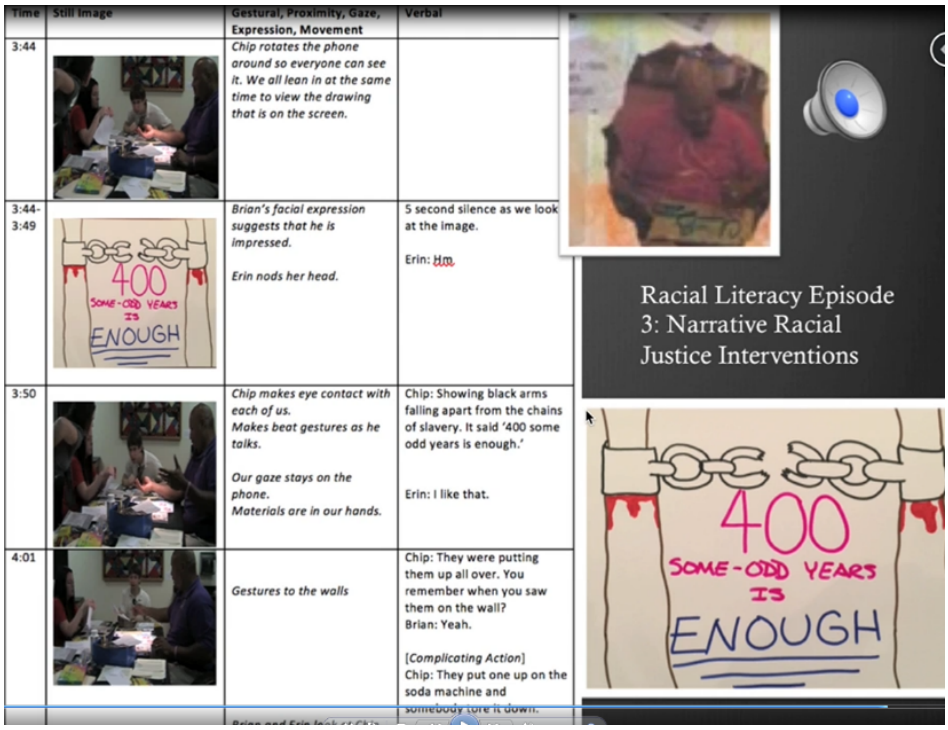


Picture 5. Storyline 2.



Picture 6. Storyline 3.

The function of these pedagogic multimodal narratives is, according to Rogers, to create a space for practising racial literacy by voicing multiple perspectives and critiques. For example, she pinpointed the unfairness of tracking students' records and suspensions that "stick with them" until (or if) they graduate, especially for African American boys. Concisely, **racial literacy focuses on**

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meaning-making rather than knowing, and this includes vulnerability and the exercise of imagination. Although aspects of CDA are recognisable, the major emphasis is on **transforming** the existing racially unbalanced situation and **promoting positive change** rather than on critiquing obstructionist or bigoted attitudes.

In her 2018 volume, Rogers illustrated the shift towards **PDA**, which functions as a reconstructive discourse analysis and focuses on discourses of *hope, transformation* and *liberation*, referring to activities such as 6th graders designing a social justice museum exhibition or the above-mentioned teacher education students, who implemented racial literacy in response to the death of Michael Brown.[10] Rogers's emphasis is not on the "method" but rather on positively oriented **examples** with the potential to shape discourse analysis. Such attention to examples, cases and their contexts rather than methodological and formal concerns is common to many EL works.[11]

6. Conclusion

Largely, topic selection is the major difference between CDA, which is interested in opposing the dominant mainstream discourses supporting an unsustainable society, and the positive focus of PDA. By selecting only discriminatory discourses with their pervasive patterns of linguistic features to be deconstructed, there is no scope for positive critical thinking, whereas, from a PDA orientation, new transformative meanings can emerge through the voices of less privileged or racialised social groups. Across our web-wired, porous mediascape, where professional journalists navigate alongside the less disciplined voices of people variously engaged in the events, efforts could be made to make such voices enter the mainstream communication (through blogs, forums, Twitter, Facebook, Reddit, etc. and eventually the news media).

For example, Rogers emphasised the great educational potential of the free circulation of such audio-visual race-based narratives as those produced by artists and educators and pupils in Ferguson, claiming agency for themselves and providing a positive response to the death of Michael Brown, the protracted riots, the lootings and the harsh police repression. Rogers explained how PDA does not emphasise academic methods per se but, broadly, liberates creative energy for a healthy revaluation of social mores.

Interestingly, in a similar vein, a representative of the news media, Nancy Gibbs, observed:

[10] A similar study in a different context (a public school on the north coast of Colombia) was carried out by Calle-Diaz in 2019, "Possibilities of building peace through classroom discourse: A positive discourse analysis".

[11] Concern about strict adherence to pre-established theories and methods can vary across the analytical schools. Yet, as Ruth Wodak (2011, 2015) pragmatically observed, while "grand theories" often serve as a foundation, in specific analyses, "middle-range theories" frequently supply a better theoretical basis. The safest course, so far as discourse analysis specifically is concerned, seems to select the more adequate analytical resources for the texts/discourses to be investigated from among the available disciplinary tools and frameworks, or to gradually re-shape, implement and develop such resources, according to the textual features at stake.

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> Critical stories are journalism. […] But a **bias against the positive fuels cynicism** in both public officials and voters. […] And it **misses the story**. […] In the worst of times, we feel small and defensive and risk averse and tribal. As opposed to the expansive, embracing, oxygenated opportunity of optimism.
> **If we don't write about what is working** as well as what isn't, whether in state and local government, in the private sector, in the vibrant, entrepreneurial, immensely potent philanthropic arena, **we are missing one of the greatest stories of our times.** (Gibbs 2017, my bold)

An even more progressive position is advanced by Bill Gates (2018):

> Reading the news today does not exactly leave you feeling optimistic. […Yet,] on the whole, **the world is getting better**. This is not some naively optimistic view; it's **backed by data**. Look at the number of children who die before their fifth birthday. Since 1990, that figure has been cut in half. […] In 1990, more than a third of the global population lived in extreme poverty; today only about a tenth do. A century ago, it was legal to be gay in about 20 countries; today it's legal in over 100 countries. Women are gaining political power […] and the world is finally starting to listen when women speak up about sexual assault. […] **Being an optimist** doesn't mean you ignore tragedy and injustice. It means you're **inspired to look for people making progress** on those fronts, and to help spread that progress more widely. […] **So why does it feel like the world is in decline?** I think it is partly **the nature of news coverage**. Bad news arrives as drama, while good news is incremental—and not usually deemed newsworthy. (Gates 2018, my bold)

Gates attributed to the journalistic voices the habitus to accommodate the natural human attitude to focus on threats and bad news, whereas to be better able to promote positive change, one needs "to see good things happening." Accordingly, news coverage should be more balanced and prioritise achievements as well, such as, say, the institutional discourse/s on green transition and human rights.

Indeed, it is not always easy to create a distinction between PDA and EL, since the latter also recommends finding new forms of language with different linguistic features embedded in their grammar in order to move on from negative discourses. Apart from EL's greater emphasis on the need for critiquing discourses of consumerism, superficial "greenspeak" (vaguely reminiscent of the Orwellian "newspeak") etc., the difference between them can be found in topic selection, since PDA's range of topics is wider, while EL favours the analysis of

> **nature writing**, indigenous stories, new economics and humane organisations to discover clusters of linguistic features that come together to convey positive stories about the **place of humans** in the **natural world**. The ultimate aim is to promote these clusters of features so that they can become widespread alternatives to the dominant discourses of industrial civilisation. (Stibbe 2017: 176-177, my bold)

Although it is difficult to outline final distinctions, since we are dealing with evolving and intertwined domains of research, Table 1 below may be useful to

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broadly recap the tendential differences and commonalities among CDA, PDA and EL.

Table 2. Differences and commonalities between CDA, PDA and EL in our evolving semioscape, at a glance (the circle symbol indicates the weak presence of the feature).

	Characteristic	CDA	PDA	EL
Perspectives	Critical stance (vs. unequal power/language relations)	✓	○	✓
	Positive stance (emphasis on solidarity)		✓	✓
	Ethnographic approach	○	○	○
	Non-neutral attitude/ideological commitment	✓	✓	✓
	Interdisciplinary	✓	✓	✓
	Interventionist	○	✓	✓
Activities	Re-construct/ transform	○	✓	✓
	De-construct	✓	○	○
	Meaning-making/ hope	○	✓	✓
	Re-framing	○	✓	✓
Objects/topics of analysis	Texts/discourses that encourage		✓	✓
	Texts/discourses that perpetuate injustice	✓		○
	Nature vs. industrialisation discourse	○	✓	✓
Focus	Progressive texts/discourses – features		✓	✓
	Oppressive, abusive texts/discourses – features	✓		○
Aims	Social critique	✓	○	○
	Social change	○	✓	✓
Methods	SFL-based	✓	✓	✓
	Examples > methods	○	✓	✓

The possible extent and implications of both the interventionist attitude and the pluri-disciplinary aspects entailed in the social dynamics behind the production of the selected texts/discourses and the social consequences of their production are sensitive issues (Hasan 1995; Blommaert 2005). Concisely, among the possible questions, how far can linguistic/discourse analysis go while staying credible? Seemingly, to move forward from the linguistic research domain and conduct interdisciplinary research, other specialists need to be involved; moreover, if linguists chose to become activists, forms of socio-political activism would have to be enacted.

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