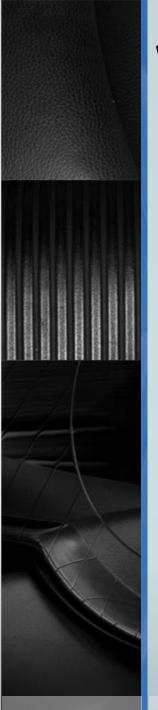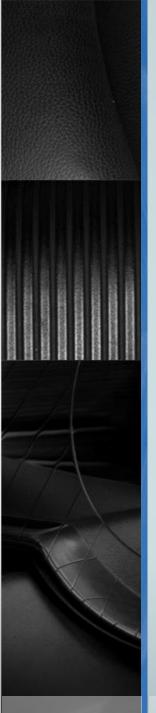# What is CDA?

- CDA is not a direction of research among others, like TG grammar, or systemic linguistics, nor a sub-discipline of discourse analysis such as the psychology of discourse or conversation analysis. It is not a method, nor a theory that simply can be applied to social problems.

- CDA can be conducted in, and combined with any approach and sub-discipline in the humanities and the social sciences.

- Rather, CDA is a critical perspective on doing scholarship: it is, so to speak, discourse analysis `with an attitude'. It focuses on social problems, and especially on the role of discourse in the production and reproduction of power abuse or domination.
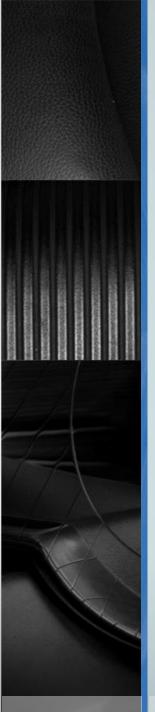
What is CDA?

- Wherever possible, it does so from a perspective that is consistent with the best interests of dominated groups. It takes the experiences and opinions of members of such groups seriously, and supports their struggle against inequality.

- Unlike much other scholarship, CDA does not deny but explicitly defines and defends its own sociopolitical position. That is, CDA is biased - and proud of it.

- Like in any kind of research, there is also bad scholarship in CDA, but not because it is biased. Biased scholarship is not inherently bad scholarship. On the contrary, as many scholars, especially among women and minorities, know, critical research must not only be good, but better scholarship in order to be accepted.
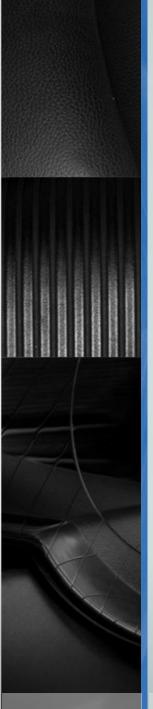
What is CDA?

- No scholarship is attacked as ferociously because of its alleged lacking or deficient methodology as critical scholarship.

- Specialized also in the critical analysis of scholarly discourse, CDA of course recognizes the strategic nature of such accusations as part of the complex mechanisms of domination, namely as an attempt to marginalize and problematize dissent.

- Precisely because of its combined scholarly and social responsibilities, CDA must be rigorous scholarship. Its multidisciplinary theories must account for the complexities of the relationships between discourse structures and social structures.

What is CDA

- CDA theories and analyses not only should be elegant or sophisticated, as well as empirically grounded, but face the toughest test of all ± relevance. They should work.

The discourse , cognition, society triangle

- This label however does not mean that I think that CDA should be limited to social and cognitive analysis of discourse, or to some combination of these dimensions.

- that the complex, `real-world' problems CDA deals with also need a historical, cultural, socio-economic, philosophical, logical or neurological approach,

- CDA also needs a solid `linguistic' basis, where `linguistic' is understood in a broad `structural-functional' sense. In other words, whatever other dimensions of discourse CDA deals with, CDA as a specific form and practice of discourse analysis obviously always needs to account for at least some of the detailed structures, strategies and functions of text and talk, including grammatical, pragmatic, interactional, stylistic, rhetorical, semiotic, organization of communicative events.
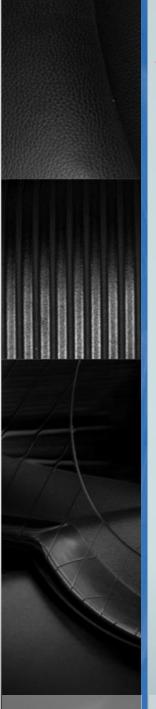
The discourse , cognition, society triangle

- Discourse-cognition-society triangle. is merely a handy label and hence liable to reductionist misinterpretation, it should further be stressed that `discourse' is here meant in the broad sense of a `communicative event', including conversational interaction, written text, as well as associated gestures, facework, typographical layout, images and any other `semiotic' or multimedia dimension of signification.

- Similarly, `cognition' here involves both personal as well as social cognition, beliefs and goals as well as evaluations and emotions, and any other `mental' or `memory' structures, representations or processes involved in discourse and interaction.
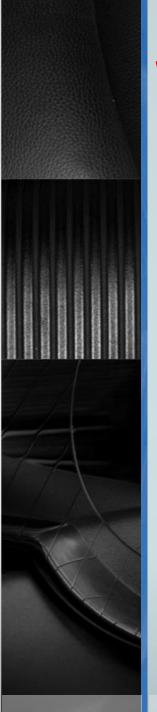
The discourse , cognition, society triangle

- And finally, `society' is meant to include both the local, microstructures of situated face-to-face interactions, as well as the more global, societal and political structures variously defined in terms of groups, group-relations (such as dominance and inequality), movements, institutions, organizations, social processes, political systems and more abstract properties of societies and cultures.

- In a more or less informal way we may view the combined cognitive and social dimensions of the triangle as defining the relevant (local and global) context of discourse.

Which discourse structures should we analyse?

- **Context-text theory is crucial**

- Decades of specializations in the field have `discovered' many hundreds, if not thousands, of relevant units, levels, dimensions, moves, strategies, types of acts, devices and other structures of discourse.

- We may have paraverbal, visual, phonological, syntactic, semantic, stylistic, rhetorical, pragmatic, and interactional levels and structures. This means that in any practical sense there is no such thing as a `complete' discourse analysis: a `full' analysis of a short passage might take months and fill hundreds of pages. Complete discourse analysis of a large corpus of text or talk, is therefore totally out of the question.
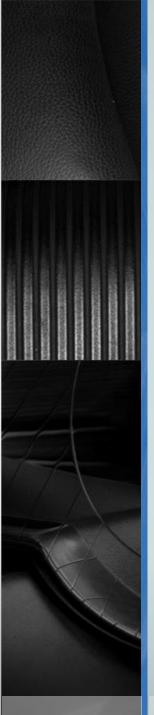
Which discourse structures should we analyse?

- also in CDA, we must make choices, and select those structures for closer analysis that are relevant for the study of a social issue. This requires at least some informal ideas about text-context links that tell us which properties of discourse may vary as a function of which social structures.

- Thus, if we want to study as would be typical in CDA the ways some speakers or writers exercise power in or by their discourse, it only makes sense to study those properties that can vary as a function of social power.

- Thus, stress and intonation, word order, lexical style, coherence, local semantic moves (such as disclaimers), topic choice, speech acts, schematic organization, rhetorical figures and most forms of interaction are in principle susceptible to speaker control

Which discourse structures should we analyse?

- But other structures, such as the form of words and many structures of sentences are grammatically obligatory and contextually invariant and hence usually not subject to speaker control, and hence irrelevant for a study of social power.

- A theory of text-context relations, in which specific discourse structures are related to specific context structures such as the socially shared beliefs of speakers.

Levels and dimensions of discourse
Topics: Semantic Macrostructures

- For discursive, cognitive and social reasons, the topics of discourse play a fundamental role in communication and interaction.

- `semantic macrostructures' **derived** from the **local** (micro) **structures of meaning**, topics represent what a discourse **`is about**' globally speaking, embody most important information of a discourse, and explain overall coherence of text and talk.

- They are the **global meaning** that language users constitute in discourse production and comprehension, and the **`gist' that is best recalled by them**. Language users are unable to memorize and manage all meaning details of a discourse, and hence mentally organize these meanings by global meanings or topics.

Levels and dimensions of discourse
Topics: semantic macrostructures

- Topics defined **as global meanings** cannot, as such, be directly observed, but are inferred from or assigned to discourse by language users.

- However, they are often expressed in discourse, for instance in **titles, headlines, summaries, abstracts, thematic sentences or conclusions.**

- These may be used by language users as **strategic devices for the inference** or assignment of topics as intended by the speaker or writer.

- Because topics have such an important role, and since topical (macro-structural) analysis can also be applied to larger corpora, it is usually recommend starting with such an analysis. It provides a first, **overall, idea of what a discourse or corpus of texts is all about, and controls many other aspects of discourse and its analysis.**

Levels and dimensions of discourse
Local Meaning

- Local meanings, such as the **meaning of words** (a study that also may be called lexical, depending on one's perspective), the structures of propositions, and coherence and other relations between propositions.

- Again, the reason for such a choice is mostly contextual. Local meanings are the **result of the selection made by speakers or writers in their mental** models of events or their more general, socially shared beliefs.

- At the same time, they are the kind of information that most **directly influences the mental models**, and hence the **opinions and attitudes of recipients**. Together with the topics, these meanings are best recalled and most easily reproduced by recipients. and hence may have most obvious social consequences.

Levels and dimensions of discourse
Local Meaning

- CDA research is often interested in the study of **ideologically biased discourses**, and the ways these polarize the representation of us (in-groups) and them (out-groups).

- Both at the level of global and local meaning analysis, we thus often witness an overall **strategy** of `positive self-presentation and negative other presentation'.

- In which our good things and their bad things are emphasized, and our bad things and their good things are de-emphasized.

Levels and dimensions of discourse

Local Meaning

- Especially interesting for CDA research is the study of the many forms of implicit or indirect meanings, such as **implications, presuppositions, allusions, vagueness**, and so on. We call information implicit when it may be inferred from (the meaning of) a text, without being explicitly expressed by the text. It may be inferred from (the meaning of) a text, without being explicitly expressed by the text.

- In theoretical terms this means that implicit information is part of a mental model of (the users of) a text, but not of the text itself.

- That is, implicit meanings are related to underlying beliefs, but are not openly, directly, completely or precisely asserted, for various **contextual reasons, including the well-known ideological objective**.

Levels and dimensions of discourse
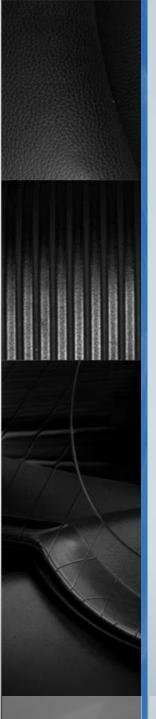**The relevance of subtle `formal' structures**

- Besides or instead of the semantic structures just mentioned, critical discourse analysts may be more interested in those **structures of text or talk that are much less consciously controlled or controllable by the speakers,** such as intonation, syntactic structures, propositional structures, rhetorical figures, as well as many properties of spontaneous talk, such as turn taking, repairs, pauses, hesitation, and so on.

- These various `forms' generally do not directly express underlying meanings and hence beliefs, but rather signal `pragmatic' properties of a communicative event, such as the *intention, current mood or emotions of speakers, their perspective on events talked about*.

Levels and dimensions of discourse
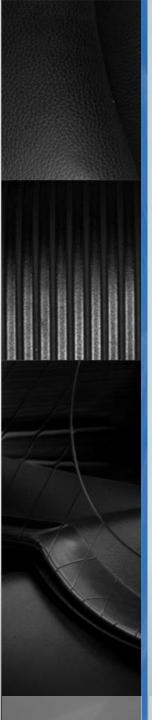## The relevance of subtle `formal' Structures

- Thus, men may well be able to hide negative opinions about women, or white people about black people, but indirectly their evaluations, position or face, and hence their identity may be signaled by **subtle structural characteristics of talk.**

- **Global forms** or superstructures are overall, **canonical and conventional schemata that consist of typical genre categories,** as is the case for arguments, stories or news articles.

- **Local forms** are those **of (the syntax of) sentences and formal relations between clauses or sentences in sequences**: ordering, primacy, pronominal relations.
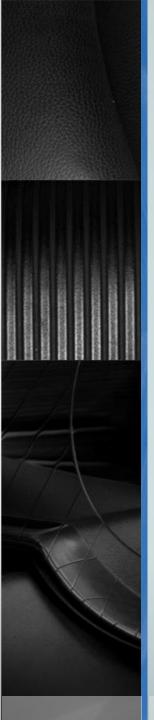
Levels and dimensions of discourse
Context Model

- As argued above, the critical **aims** of CDA can only be realized if discourse structures are related to **structures of local and global contexts**.

- A distinction between **global and local context** is made, Global contexts are defined by the **social, political, cultural and historical structures in which a communicative event takes place.**

- In CDA, they often form the ultimate explanatory and critical rationale of discourse and its analysis.

- Local context is usually defined in terms of **properties of the immediate, interactional situation in which a communicative event takes place.**

Levels and dimensions of discourse
Context Model

- Some properties of such a *situation* are its overall domain (politics, business), an overall action (legislation, propaganda), participants in various communicative and social roles (like the Centre in our example), as well as their intentions, goals, knowledge, norms and other beliefs.

- **Such contexts are said to constrain the properties of text and talk.** That is, what we say and how we say it depends on who is speaking to whom, when and where, and with what purposes.

- Not the various properties of the local situation that control and constrain text and talk, but the ways language users interpret or define these properties in their mental context models.

Levels and dimensions of discourse
Context Model

- Context models have the same cognitive status and schematic structure as other mental models, to which we shall turn below.

- At this point it is only relevant to emphasize that context models are the **mental representations that control many of the properties of discourse production and understanding**, such as genre, topic choice, local meanings and coherence, on the one hand, but also speech acts, style and rhetoric on the other hand.

- Indeed, style may be defined as the **set of formal properties of discourse that are a function of context models, such as lexicalization, word ordering and intonation.**

Levels and dimensions of discourse
Context Model

- **Why are context models so important?**

- Context models are crucial because they are the interface between mental information (knowledge, and so on) about an event and actual meanings being constructed in discourse.

- What we know or believe, either about a specific event, thing or person, or more generally, need not all be expressed in discourse, either because it is irrelevant or because it is redundant.

- Context models thus provide the **constraints** that allow language users to make situationally relevant selections of information people have, and construe these as meanings to be expressed in talk.

Levels and dimensions of discourse
Event Models

- Language users not only form mental models of the situation they interact in, but also of the **events or situations they speak or write about.**

- It is this mental model of events talked or written about that forms the basis for the production and understanding of a discourse, especially of its meaning.

- Context models and event models are mental representations in episodic memory, that is, the part of long term memory in which people store their knowledge and opinions about episodes they experience or read/hear about.
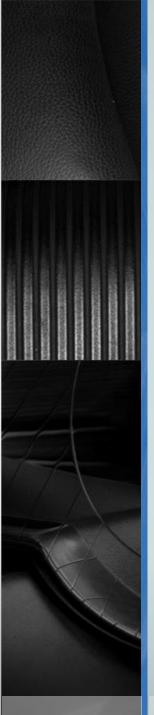
Levels and dimensions of discourse

Event Models

- Mental models probably consist of a **schematic representation** of the personally and socially relevant dimensions of events, such as setting, participants (in various roles), actions, and so on.

- In a rough sense, we may say that context models control the `pragmatic' part of discourse and event models the `semantic' part.

- Understanding a discourse basically means being able to construct a model for it. And in production it is the mental model of events and situation that forms the starting point of all text and talk.

- What we usually remember of a discourse is thus not so much its meaning, as the mental model we construct during comprehension.
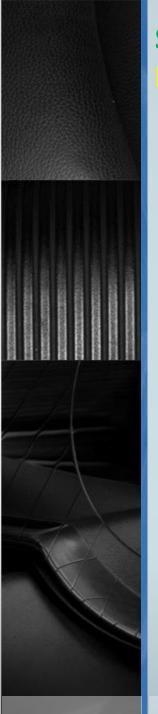
Levels and dimensions of discourse
Event Models

- Models also form the crucial **interface** between discourse and society, between the personal and the social.

- Without such models we are unable to explain and describe how social structures influence and are affected by discourse structures.

- This is because mental models not only represent personal beliefs, but also (often personal versions of) social representations, such as knowledge, attitudes and ideologies, which in turn are related to the structure of groups and organizations.

Social Cognition

- Because CDA is interested in power, domination and social inequality, it tends to **focus on groups, organizations and institutions.**

- This means that CDA also needs to account for the various forms of social cognition that are shared by these social collectivities: knowledge, attitudes, ideologies, norms and values.

- knowledge or attitude items may be expressed directly, in **their general, abstract form**, for instance in the generic sentences typical of teaching and propaganda.

- The second way such socially shared representations are expressed in discourse is **through mental models**, that is through application to a specific event or situation.
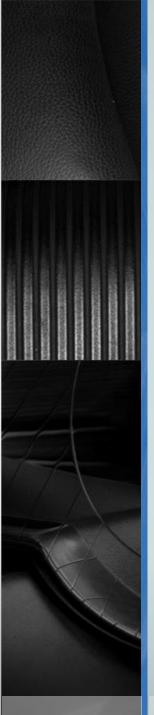
Social Cognition
Knowledge

- **main forms of social representation involved:**

- **Knowledge** It makes sense to distinguish between different kinds of knowledge, namely personal knowledge, group knowledge and cultural knowledge.

- **Personal knowledge** is represented in mental models about specific, personal events.

- **Group knowledge** is shared by specific social groups, such as professionals, social movements or business companies.

- Such knowledge may be biased and ideological, and not be recognized as `knowledge' by other groups at all, but be characterized as mere `belief'.

Social Cognition
Knowledge

- **Cultural knowledge** is shared by all members of a society or culture, and forms the basis or common ground of all social practices and discourses.

- Indeed, in principle all culturally shared knowledge may therefore be presupposed in public discourse.

- Of course, such common ground knowledge constantly changes, and what is common ground yesterday, may be ideological group belief today.

Social Cognition
Attitude

- Attitudes are **socially shared opinions**, such as the opinions people share about immigration, or nuclear energy.

- These are **usually complex**, that is, consist of a cluster of evaluative propositions.

- In the same way as general knowledge may influence mental models, the general propositions of attitudes may also be `particularized' as specific, personal opinions in mental models.
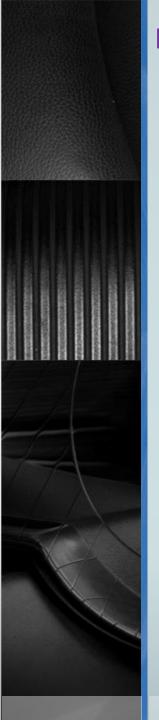
Social Cognition
ideology

Ideologies are basic **social representations** of social groups. They are at the **basis of the knowledge and attitudes** of groups such as socialists, neo-liberals, ecologists, feminists as well as anti-feminists.

They probably have a **schematic structure** that represents the **self-image of each group**, featuring membership devices, aims, activities, norms and resources of each group. Ideologies feature the basic principles that organize the attitudes shared by the members of a group.

Thus, a racist ideology may organize attitudes about immigration or education.

Discourse and Society

- society may also be analysed in more local and more global terms,

- firstly at the level of **interaction and situations** and secondly at the level of groups, **social organizations, organizations and institutions.**

- The latter, social structure, may only be related to discourse in two ways: firstly through the social representations of social members about such social structures, and secondly through the instantiation of social structures (such as groups and organizations) through social actors, interactions and situations at the local, micro level.
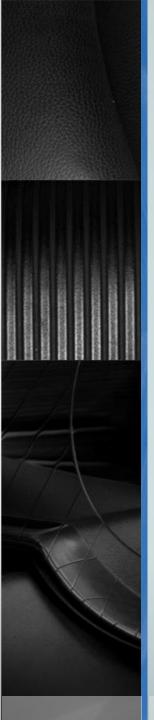
Discourse and Society
Social Situation

Social situations The structure of **social situations** is especially relevant, as we have seen above, for a theory of context.

Discourse is often defined as a communicative event, and occurring in a social situation, featuring a setting, participants in different roles, actions, and so on.

We have seen that such situational features are only relevant for discourse when represented in mental representations: context models.

Discourse and Society
Action

Action CDA is not only interested in speech acts, but also in many other actions, **interactions and social practices** that are accomplished by discourse, or that form conditions or consequences of text and talk and that are a relevant part of context.

Thus, a speech in parliament may consist of assertions or accusations against government policies, but also at many levels many other social and political actions are relevantly involved, such as criticizing the government, being in opposition, representing voters and legislation.

In other words, to understand what is going on in discourse, we need construct it as an instance of, or as part of many other forms of action at several levels of social and political analysis

Discourse and Society
Actors

Actors Similar remarks may be made for actors as we made for actions.

They are constituent categories of social situations, and as parts of communicative situations, they have various communicative roles, such as various types of speakers, writers or producers, and various types of recipients.

They may be locally defined as individuals or globally in terms of groups, organizations or institutions.

Discourse and Society
Societal Structure

Societal structures We have seen that local situations of interaction enact, manifest or instantiate global societal structures.

Participants speak and listen as women, mothers, lawyers, party members, or company executives.

Their actions, including their discursive actions, realize larger social acts and processes, such as legislation, education, discrimination and dominance, often within institutional frameworks such as parliaments, schools, families, or research institutes.