

# CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND ETHNOGRAPHY<sup>1</sup>

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For nearly 20 years, Izabel Magalhães has argued in favor of an ethnographic-discursive research proposal whereby Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Ethnography complement each other in investigations of social practices. However, a book revolving around this type of research had not been published in Brazil, and the Portuguese-language book *Análise de Discurso Crítica: um método de pesquisa qualitativa* [*Critical Discourse Analysis: a method of qualitative research*<sup>2</sup>] has come very timely to fill this gap and take its place as a unique and relevant publication.

The book takes an approach that distinguishes it from any other CDA work published in Brazil: CDA as a qualitative research method and its transdisciplinary relation with Ethnography. Its contribution is unique, especially for students and researchers from various knowledge domains who are interested in analyzing the social practices in which texts are embedded, and which as such requires field research.

Since every social practice comprises such elements as productive activity, means of production, social relations, social identities, cultural values, consciousness, and semiosis (FAIRCLOUGH, 2012), an approach that goes beyond the discourse analysis of texts and the discursive aspects of social practices is required if we are to truly understand how such practices work and how discourse/semiosis relates to other components of the social practices. It is necessary, as Magalhães, Martins and Resende contend, to carry out ethnographic research to look into discourse as one of the elements of the social practices, that is, it is necessary to take an approach that is both ethnographic and discursive. This allows researchers to keep in sight at all times both the role of discourse in the moments of practices and the dialectical relations between them.

Besides its introduction and conclusion sections, the book is composed of nine chapters equally distributed into three parts. Part 1 calls for a qualitative research method

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<sup>1</sup> Review of MAGALHÃES, I.; MARTINS, A. R.; RESENDE, V. de M. *Análise de Discurso Crítica: um método de pesquisa qualitativa*. Brasília: Ed. da UnB, 2017. 259 p. Translated by Igor A. Lourenço da Silva.

<sup>2</sup> All translations from Portuguese into English were produced for the purposes of this review. The original quotes are provided in footnotes, and translations for titles and some words or expressions are provided in brackets.

for social criticism; Part 2 presents Critical Discourse Analysis and Ethnography; and Part 3 describes a method of text analysis<sup>3</sup>.

In the introduction, the authors explain their major objective with the book and describe how it is organized. In Chapter 1, *Pesquisa qualitativa, crítica social e Análise de Discurso Crítica* [*Qualitative research, social criticism, and Critical Discourse Analysis*], they provide an overview of CDA while locating it in the qualitative research tradition and relating it to the social criticism. They show the different approaches within CDA, the notions of discourse and text, and the importance of the notion of text for the study of contemporary social processes, as texts are artifacts for such a study and “have causal effects – i.e., they bring about changes” (FAIRCLOUGH, 2003, p.8).

In Chapter 2, *ADC - teoria e método na luta social* [*CDA - theory and method in the social struggle*], the authors first provide the major assumptions of CDA as both a theory and a method by particularly focusing on the notions of discourse, interdiscursivity, power and ideology, and on the role that discourse plays in late modernity and in social change. Then, they list some methodological procedures deemed to be essential for establishing the research focus and the analysis process within CDA, placing a strong emphasis on how CDA relates to ethnographic research. The description of the steps to be followed in carrying out ethnographic-discursive research is a major contribution of the chapter, which provides clear, useful guidelines to both students and researchers regardless of their level of expertise in the domain.

In the last chapter in Part 1, Chapter 3, *Textos e seus efeitos sociais como foco para a crítica social* [*Texts and their social effects as a focus for social criticism*], the authors focus on an aspect that had been mentioned in a previous chapter: the social effects of texts. They unveil how such effects can be used in social critical research by drawing on an analysis of newspaper accounts of sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in Brasília, federal capital of Brazil, and an interview with one of the mentors in project GirAÇÃO, developed by the National Movement for Street Children in the Federal District, which was directly affected by the news. Their analysis of intertextuality and polyphony in one of the pieces of news is certainly a reference for other researchers to learn how to organize and carry out a study based on these two categories. Their approach to the interview reveals the effect of the news on project GirAÇÃO and how text analysis alone cannot account for the “role of texts in meaning construction and their causal effects”<sup>4</sup> (p.91). This is undoubtedly a sample of how productive ethnographic-discursive research is.

Part 2, which comprises Chapters 4 to 6, is devoted to Critical Discourse Analysis and Ethnography. Two of them – Chapter 4, *Análise de Discurso Crítica e Etnografia - uma relação complementar* [*Critical Discourse Analysis and Ethnography - a complementary relation*], and chapter 6, *Etnografia e Análise de Discurso Crítica* [*Ethnography and*

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<sup>3</sup> The title of the parts in Portuguese are: “*Um método de pesquisa qualitativa para a crítica social*” (Part 1), “*Análise de Discurso Crítica e etnografia*” (Part 2), and “*Um método de análise textual*” (Part 3).

<sup>4</sup> Original: “envolvimento de textos na construção de significado e o efeito causal de textos.”

*Critical Discourse Analysis*] – are very close to each other in both their titles and objectives. In both, the authors advocate the complementarity between Ethnography and CDA. Judging from their common purposes and similar titles, it could have been a more productive choice and wider, deeper approach to such a complementarity if the authors had united their contents in one single chapter.

In Chapter 4, Magalhães, Martins and Resende address the types of field notes, provide examples of conceptual notes, recommend a joint use of CDA and Ethnography as a form of research validation, and devote a section to describe an ethnographic-discursive methodology. Because it is a book coauthored by three scholars, traces of individual authorship should have been deleted from the chapters (for instance, the expression “*a meu ver*” [“inform my point of view”] on page 120 in Chapter 4).

In Chapter 6, the authors stress the importance of ontological and epistemological coherence. They claim that “[...] there is an inconsistency between the CDA’s ontological perspective and its documentary analysis tradition.”<sup>5</sup> (p.155), because such a tradition does not support the construction of knowledge encompassing all inter-related components in the social world, as assumed in the Faircloughian approach to CDA. This is why resorting to the ethnographic paradigm articulated with CDA’s text analysis method is indicated as an adequate solution. However, in a word of warning the authors say that only those ethnographic approaches “which require engagement with the research context and the participants”<sup>6</sup> (p.156) are coherent with CDA. Such a warning is fundamental, especially for beginners in this type of research.

Still in Chapter 6, Magalhães, Martins and Resende explain how to proceed to a research plan that articulates CDA and Ethnography, which involves reflections and decisions from the ontological, epistemological and methodological perspectives. According to them, such decisions should “[...] follow a sequence, with the ontological decisions preceding the epistemological decisions [...] and the latter preceding the methodological decisions.”<sup>7</sup> (p.161). As such, there may be a number of potential epistemological paradigms for a given ontological variant, and therefore there may be multiple possible paths to be followed. Later in the chapter, the authors address ethnographic data collection and provide the methods used to this end. They also provide several reading references for all aspects mentioned in the chapter, which can be helpful in gaining a deeper understanding of ethnographic-discursive research. This is an invaluable chapter in the book precisely because of its content, organization and relevance.

Chapter 5, *Mudança social - prática e discurso* [*Social change - practice and discourse*], seems to stray away from the focus of Part 2, which is noticeable from the titles of its sections: unlike Chapters 4 and 6, the titles in Chapter 5 do not make any

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<sup>5</sup> Original: “há inconsistência entre a perspectiva ontológica da ADC e sua tradição de análise documental.”

<sup>6</sup> Original: “que preveem um engajamento com o contexto de pesquisa e com os participantes.”

<sup>7</sup> Original: “[...] dão-se num eixo de sucessividade, isto é, as decisões ontológicas são prévias às epistemológicas [...], que são prévias às metodológicas.”

reference to Ethnography. In fact, this chapter is closely related to Chapter 2, because the authors resume their discussion about late modernity (although using different terms – “modernidade posterior” in Chapter 2, and “modernidade tardia” in Chapter 5), and social change. In addition, as in Chapter 2, the authors discuss in Chapter 5 the notions of social practice and discursive practice before establishing the difference between them. The discussion about both concepts is highly relevant to all discourse analysts, making clear how they relate to one another and how prolific it is to work with both within CDA. However, Chapters 2 and 5 do not seem to be properly assigned to Parts 1 and 2 in the book because of their focus; a swap in their order could have contributed to the text’s organization and fluidity.

In turn, Part 3 is not focused on an interface between CDA and Ethnography, but rather on CDA as a method of text analysis. Its three chapters (7, 8, and 9) report analyses of news articles, a brief meeting report, and a piece of news, respectively. Chapter 7, *ADC e minorias - representação e peso político na esfera pública [CDA and minorities - representation and political strength in the public sphere]*, sheds light on a path to new dialogues and avenues by providing five struggle fronts: “[...] knowledge and monitoring of social condition, discovery and preservation of social identity, struggle for rights and more democracy, struggle for a territory in the public sphere, and engagement towards positive representation in the media.”<sup>8</sup> (p. 178). Besides explaining each one of those fronts, the authors show how useful CDA can be in setting the grounds for such fronts and analyze four newspaper articles that address the situation of communities living in “quilombos” (hinterland settlements founded by runaway slaves in Brazil) in the Municipality of Alcântara, in the State of Maranhão. Their analysis encompasses three dimensions: text, discursive practice, and social practice.

In Chapter 8, *Análise de Discurso Crítica: conceitos-chave para uma crítica explanatória com base no discurso [Critical Discourse Analysis: key concepts for an explanatory discourse-based critique]*, the authors argue for interdisciplinarity as a common characteristic to all approaches within CDA. As a theory concerned with the social functioning of language, CDA should not neglect theories of the functioning of the society, and therefore an interface is of essence between CDA and such theories. Magalhães, Martins and Resende also emphasize that one of the key aspects of CDA is its approach to the intrinsic mutual relation between language and society, and they eventually draw our attention to the notions of discourse, genre, and text. The authors believe that distinguishing such concepts one from the other has been one of the major challenges for students to understand CDA’s theoretical and methodological model, and mistaken uses of such concepts have theoretical implications that compromise empirical works. To illustrate the distinction between the terms, the authors analyze a brief meeting report, which serves for other researchers to use as a reference while developing their studies and analyses of discourse, genre, and text.

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<sup>8</sup> Original: “[...] o conhecimento e acompanhamento da situação social; a descoberta e preservação da identidade social; a luta por direitos e por mais democracia; a luta por espaço na esfera pública; e o empenho pela representação positiva na mídia.”

In Chapter 9, *Identidades e discursos de gênero* [*Identities and gender discourses*], the authors set out “to investigate some contributions of the Critical Discourse Studies (CDS)”<sup>9</sup> (p.213). This is the first time that they refer to CDS, but they do not explain how such studies are related to CDA or whether they are synonymous with CDA. The problem persists as the authors address CDA further in the text without any reference back to CDS. Assuming that the practices include discourses, literacies and feminine identities, and that a newspaper article is the product of socio-cultural practices, the authors analyze a sample of this genre which reports a crime against a woman aiming at investigating its text construction of gender identities. To this end, they analyze the lexical choices, the intertextual relations, the discourses articulated in the news, the gender identities, and the literacies. Their analysis point to some results, but, as they argue, it should be complemented with ethnographic research, which is consistent with the focus adopted in the book. As a point of improvement, a repeated instance of the term “interdiscursividade” [“interdiscursivity”] should be corrected in Figure 9.1 on page 230; it should be replaced with “*intertextualidade*” [“intertextuality”] to be consistent with the analysis developed in the chapter.

The contribution of Part 3 is undeniable. However, because several other publications have provided samples of Critical Discourse Analysis as a method of text analysis in Brazil, it would have been more interesting and consistent with the book approach if Part 3 had consisted of chapters providing detailed research samples, and their respective results, showing how CDA and Ethnography complement one another.

In their conclusion, the authors take up again some of the CDA’s foundations to show in which chapters they had been addressed. They also draw the readers’ attention to the fact that CDA, as both a theory and a method, has its limitations since it is under construction and subject to reformulations. Besides, they emphasize that the complementarity between CDA and Ethnography is advantageous to both domains, with CDA gaining validity and analytical consistency, and Ethnography gaining an interface with the discourse analysts’ methods for analyses of texts and interactions.

In sum, this book is an essential reading for students, researchers and professionals interested in a comprehensive analysis of social practices, which requires ethnographic discourse analysis, rather than the sole analysis of their representation in discourse. The book is, therefore, an open invitation and a stimulus to the development of this type of research.

## REFERENCES

FAIRCLOUGH, N. Análise Crítica do Discurso como método em pesquisa social científica. Translated by Iran Ferreira de Melo. **Linha d’Água**, São Paulo, v.25, n.2, p.307-329, 2012.

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<sup>9</sup> Original: “examinar algumas contribuições dos estudos críticos do discurso.”

FAIRCLOUGH, N. **Analysing discourse**: textual analysis for social research. London and New York: Routledge, 2003. 270 p.

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