

Course Title: Discourse Analysis
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Critical Discourse Analysis

(Based on, Kim, K., (2025), Critical Discourse Analysis in Translation Studies: An Introductory Textbook, Routledge.)

Text types

- ▶ Primary CDA research has focused on topics such as racism, institutional discourse, capitalism, genre, immigration and media language.
- ▶ Its core aim is to expose hidden ideologies and examine how discourse structures maintain power, control, and social inequality..
- ▶ Political speeches and institutional texts (e.g. news media reports) are the most analyzed genres in CDA-based translation research. This focus reflects the discursive power of political actors and institutions to shape, influence, and control society through language.

- ▶ CDA framework can provide theoretical insight for translation and interpreting research by examining studies of political and institutional discourses and their translations.
- ▶ Categorizing previous studies into political vs. institutional discourse is challenging, as political discourse is often disseminated through political institutions like foreign ministries, international relations offices, and global media outlets (e.g. CNN).
- ▶ Given the extensive research on political discourse in translation studies, the following discussion treats political texts separately to show how CDA reveals ideological mediation, translation shifts, and power in the target language.

Research on political and diplomatic settings in translation studies

- ▶ Translations in political and diplomatic contexts are crucial in either strengthening or undermining political relations.
- ▶ For instance, documentation of U.S. foreign relations between 1977 and 1980 highlights translation issues encountered in the Shanghai Joint Communiqué (Office of the Historian, n.d.).
- ▶ The memorandum notes that the U.S. team “never saw the Chinese translation of the joint normalization communiqué” and worked entirely in English, being assured that “the translation posed no problems.”


- ▶ It was later found that the Chinese version diverged from the original: the English word acknowledge was first translated as jen shih tao [认识到] then as cheng-jen [承认], —the latter suggesting stronger endorsement of China's stance.
- ▶ Translation can escalate or ease diplomatic tensions, highlighting its visibility in political contexts. As Chilton & Schäffner (2002) note, language and politics are inseparable, making political texts central to CDA-based translation studies.
- ▶ Analyzing political discourse involves key questions—its definition, features, and boundaries—which require engagement with concepts like power, ideology, institutions, manipulation, and the media.


- ▶ Consequently, much CDA research on political texts examines translators' agency, mediation, and power in shaping discourse.
- ▶ Du and Chen's (2022) bibliometric study shows that although political discourse translation first appeared in 1994, research remained limited until 2010, then grew steadily, peaking at 30 publications in 2018.
- ▶ Using VOS viewer, Du and Chen (2022) identified eight key research clusters: linguistic analysis, translation shifts, corpus-based studies, ideology & manipulation, social media & power, political discourse & interpreting, translation & diplomacy, and conflict & politics.
- ▶ Li and Pan's corpus-based analysis of English translations of Chinese political texts using Martin & White's appraisal system and van Dijk's ideological square exemplifies how translation mediates textual and ideological meaning in political contexts.

- ▶ Du and Chen's (2022) bibliometric study also examined co-citation networks within political discourse and translation research, highlighting Christina Schäffner's extensive contributions as a central reference point.
- ▶ Schäffner's work spans discourse, metaphors, news and institutional translation, with a strong focus on political discourse. She has shown how CDA can reveal translation's role in mediating, reshaping, or reinforcing political and institutional narratives

- ▶ A key insight from Schäffner's work is that translators and interpreters act as mediating agents, operating within ideological and socio-political contexts to shape the production, circulation, and reception of political discourse.
- ▶ -Her work underscores the political consequences of translating political discourse, emphasizing the power dynamics embedded in translation and interpreting practices.

- ▶ In her 2004 study, Schäffner emphasized the synergy between translation studies and political discourse analysis, arguing that translation is often overlooked despite its role in shaping discourse within specific socio-political contexts and for targeted purposes.
- ▶ Schäffner (1997a) emphasized that textual features must be analyzed within their ideological and social contexts, as texts are shaped by broader political and societal structures.
- ▶ Moreover, she pointed out that translations possess distinct profiles shaped by translators' decisions within specific institutional and cultural conditions

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- ▶ According to Schäffner, analyzing translations helps uncover both universal and culture-specific metaphors, as well as the socio-cultural and ideological values embedded in texts (Schäffner 2004, 138; Baumgarten and Gagnon 2016, 198).
 - ▶ This perspective highlights the importance of considering translators' agency and contextual factors in CDA-informed translation studies, particularly when dealing with politically or ideologically sensitive material.


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- ▶ This example highlights a clear translational shift, where the German translation of a political text replaces ideologically loaded terms like “the Left” and “the Right” with more neutral labels (“Socio-Democratic and Socialist parties”, “the Conservatives”), intentionally softening political polarization
 - ▶ Similarly, Schäffner (in Bassnett & Schäffner, 2010) draws attention to multilingual government websites, a largely overlooked area, where translations often diverge notably from both the source texts and each other.

- ▶ Such differences arise from economic constraints, target-audience priorities, or political and ideological considerations, reflecting underlying power dynamics in the presentation of information.
- ▶ For example, Thailand's Tourism Authority tailors content across languages to target specific audiences, while Australia's government site remains English-only, despite many Aboriginal languages, highlighting issues of linguistic inequality. Egypt's State Information Service, though available in five languages (Arabic, English, French, Spanish, Chinese), presents notable content and layout variations, reflecting audience prioritization.

- ▶ Noting these disparities, Schäffner (2012) posed CDA-driven questions about institutional translation: who selects the languages, determines the content, and carries out the translation?
- ▶ She also examined whether translations are outsourced, conducted in-house, or produced by political staff, and how criteria for translation differ between domestic and foreign texts.
- ▶ Schäffner's work also encompasses interpreting, examining interpreter-mediated press conferences and cross-border political communication.
- ▶ She emphasizes the imbalance of power among political actors and argues that translation is not neutral but embedded within institutional policies and ideologies.
- ▶ Given the overlap between media and political discourse within institutional discourse, Schäffner has also examined media translation, offering key insights into applying CDA to both political and media texts in translation studies.

Institutional discourses in translation studies

- ▶ Though widely used, the term “institution” often lacks precise definition. In translation studies, institutional translation typically refers to linguistic mediation performed by individuals or groups on behalf of institutions (Kang 2020, 256).
- ▶ More specifically, it refers to translations carried out within institutional settings, including supranational bodies, national governments, media outlets, and private corporations (Hermans 1997).
- ▶ Consequently, institutional translation research covers courtroom, medical, and media translation/interpreting, with growing interest reflected in studies such as Kang (2014) and Zhang & Pan (2015).

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- ▶ Kang identifies two key developments in institutional translation research:
 1. the growth of translation/interpreting in the EU and
 2. increased focus on the sociocultural and political dimensions of translation.

 - ▶ Typical research questions in this area examine who translates what, when, and for whom, and investigate what is (or is not) translated and why (Kang 2020, 257–58).

- ▶ Spiessens (2015) analyzed media coverage of the 2014 Russia–Ukraine Crimea conflict, examining news selection, translation strategies, and which voices were highlighted or silenced.
- ▶ Kang classifies institutional translation research into three strands:
 - ▶ The first explores institutional culture—norms, policies, procedures and networks—seen in contexts like national translation bureaus and the European Commission.
 - ▶ The second strand examines translation processes and products, such as text selection and (de) re-contextualization of source texts,
 - ▶ The third focuses on translator/interpreter agency and its influence on institutional dynamics.

- ▶ While media discourse is common in institutional translation studies, not all adopt a CDA approach. For instance, Koskinen's work offers key insights into institutional culture but does not explicitly use CDA.
- ▶ While media discourse is common in institutional translation studies, not all adopt a CDA approach. For instance, Koskinen's work offers key insights into institutional culture but does not explicitly use CDA.
- ▶ Despite the breadth of institutional translation research, CDA-based approaches are unevenly applied, especially in studies of processes, agency, and media discourse.

- ▶ Institutional discourse analysis in translation has widely focused on media texts, with key contributions from Al-Hejin (2012), Kamyants (2021, 2022), Kang (2007–2012), Pan (2014, 2015), Pan & Liao (2021), Schäffner & Bassnett (2010), and Valdeón (2007).
- ▶ While not all studies explicitly adopt a CDA framework, Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA and Martin and White's appraisal theory are frequently applied.
- ▶ For instance, Al-model of CDA and Martin and White's appraisal theory are frequently applied. For instance, Al-Hejin (2012) demonstrated how CDA can provide detailed textual analyses of translated media texts.

- ▶ Pan (2014, 557) highlights translator agency within state institutions, noting that while translators are seen as neutral “information transmitters,” they often convey personal beliefs, acting as gatekeepers between social contexts
- ▶ Pan underscores translator agency in state-run institutions, noting that although expected to remain neutral, translators often embed personal beliefs in news translations, acting as gatekeepers across social contexts (Pan 2014, 557).
- ▶ In her 2015 study, Pan used Fairclough’s CDA model and the appraisal theory to analyze Chinese translations of English news on human rights, showing how translation mediates political and ideological stances.

- ▶ Angela Kamyanyets (2021, 2022) also applied Fairclough's CDA to Ukrainian and Russian translations of BBC news, revealing translation shifts and their ideological effects.
- ▶ Spiessens and van Poucke (2016) analyzed news coverage of the 2014 Crimean crisis, comparing articles from The Guardian, Wall Street Journal, Le Monde, and LeFigaro with Russian translations by InoSMI.
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- ▶ Their CDA-based analysis uncovered shifts such as omissions, downgrading, and selective appropriation, aligning with van Dijk's ideological square.

- ▶ InoSMI's translations softened portrayals of Russian aggression, downplayed economic issues, bolstered the presidential image, undermined opposition, and amplified criticism of the West's response (Spiessens & van Poucke 2016, 336).
- ▶ Collectively, these studies underscore the translator's ideological and mediatory role in news media, showing how translation within institutional and socio-political contexts shapes public discourse and perception.

Discourse studies in interpreting studies

- ▶ In international and transnational settings, interpreting entails face-to-face mediation on politically or socially significant issues, including diplomatic, press, and prime ministerial briefings.
- ▶ A key example is the 2022 Itaewon Halloween crowd crush in Seoul, where interpreters were vital in delivering a prime ministerial briefing to both Korean and international audiences.
- ▶ CDA is widely used in interpreting studies to examine interpreters' agency, mediation, and ideological positioning, particularly in ideologically charged contexts.

- ▶ Mason (2015) and Okoniewska & Wang (2021) offer detailed overviews of discourse-based approaches in interpreting, including mainstream discourse analysis, conversation analysis, and CDA.
- ▶ Okoniewska and Wang outline six key areas in interpreting research: cognitive processing, pragmatic and socio-interactional perspectives, systemic functional analysis, interpreting strategies, and training. Wang and Munday (2021) further highlight the value of CDA in analyzing political and institutional interpreting.

- ▶ CDA-based interpreting research often follows two steps: identifying micro-level linguistic interventions, then analyzing how they shape macro-level discourse reconstruction (Gu 2018; Gu & Tipton 2020).
- ▶ Beaton-Thome's studies (2007, 2013, 2020) on simultaneous interpreting in the European Parliament apply CDA to examine ideological shifts, lexical choices, and evaluative language.
- ▶ In her 2013 study, Beaton-Thome analyzed German–English interpretation of debates on Guantánamo detainee resettlement, focusing on how interpreters negotiated terms like “criminals,” “inmates,” and “innocents.” In 2020, she extended this to Brexit debates, highlighting interpreter agency and ideological mediation in multilingual institutional discourse.

- ▶ Overall, CDA provides a robust framework to examine how interpreters actively shape and reconstruct discourse, rather than acting as neutral conduits of information.
- ▶ Gu has examined ideological interventions and discursive shifts in interpreter-mediated conferences using CDA, often combining it with corpus-based analysis to address CDA's limitation of small text samples and enable more systematic investigation.
- ▶ Gu and Tipton (2020) studied government-affiliated interpreters of Chinese political discourse. Using van Dijk's ideological square, Gu (2018) found that interpreters at premier press conferences consistently used the present-perfect tense to frame past governmental achievements.

- ▶ This tense choice, despite the availability of the simple past, served to enhance self-representation, glorify the nation, and legitimize political authority, reflecting van Dijk's ideological positioning.
- ▶ Gu and Wang (2021) extended CDA beyond micro-level linguistic features, highlighting interpreters' role in generating new meaning potentials within political-institutional contexts.
- ▶ They argue that interpreters serve as key (re)tellers of the Chinese narrative in English, mediating official discourse to challenge Western-centric narratives.
- ▶ They also note that interpreted discourse is often (re)contextualized by multiple actors, with selective emphasis or omission, to advance institutional agendas or ideological aims in multimodal media.

- ▶ Li and Zhang (2021) used CDA and a custom corpus to analyse consecutive interpreting at Chinese foreign ministers' press conferences (2016–2018), focusing on gatekeeping practices. Other studies apply van Dijk's ideological square and appraisal theory to explore interpreting in political settings.
- ▶ Gao (2021) and Gao & Munday (2023) examine ideological shifts in interpreted diplomatic discourse, while Bartłomiejczyk (2022) analyses English–Polish simultaneous interpreting of Eurosceptic debates in the European Parliament, linking shifts to the demands of simultaneous interpreting.

- ▶ Overall, these studies demonstrate that interpreters are not neutral conduits; they actively mediate, negotiate, and shape ideological meanings in politically and institutionally sensitive contexts.
- ▶ CDA-informed interpreting research extends beyond political and media discourse. Claudia Angelelli (2011), for instance, applied CDA to healthcare interactions between providers and patients with chronic illnesses in a U.S. public hospital.
- ▶ Angelelli's study highlighted power dynamics in healthcare interpreting, showing that interpreters can reinforce or mitigate inequalities. Interpreter interviews further highlighted their active role in shaping communication outcomes.

- ▶ Despite its value, CDA-informed interpreting research has limitations. Mason (2015) highlights the risk of analytical circularity, where discourse and power structures are used to explain each other without independent evidence.
- ▶ To mitigate this, researchers combine CDA with quantitative methods. Corpus-based analysis enables systematic study of large datasets, while interview triangulation—as in Angelelli’s work—adds external validation to strengthen findings.
- ▶ Combining methods helps address the limits of CDA alone, offering a more robust and nuanced view of interpreter agency and the socio-political impact of interpreted discourse.

Thank You ...