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Updating Critical Discourse Analysis in Education Reviewed by Erica Newhouse

Book Review of:

Rogers, R. (2011). *Critical discourse analysis in education* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

The publication of the second edition of Rogers' *An Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis in Education* is timely and relevant to the current social, political, and educational climate. Rogers' text provides an in-depth introduction to critical discourse analysis (CDA) in education, an understanding of how the education "crisis" has been constructed, and the possibilities for researchers to use this approach to interrupt these "naturalizations." This edition reflects changes in the field with the addition of Gunther Kress' multimodal social semiotic approach to discourse analysis, which opens new areas of investigation and critique.

Labeling this as an "introduction" is a bit of a misnomer. It is a dense read for beginners and advanced learners. However, Rogers is able to bridge this gap with a companion website that includes Power Points and discussion questions which will be helpful to both novice and experienced CDA researchers. Not only does the book have a multimodal discourse analysis section, it has become multimodal.

Another aid to the reader is the text's organization. It is divided into three parts representing different approaches to CDA. Each section consists of an "anchor chapter" written by a prominent scholar (James Gee, Norman Fairclough, and Gunther Kress) and three chapters that feature research using that approach. Making this division is difficult, because all of the research studies are "hybrids," meaning "the theories and analytic tools brought to bear on the problem cross various traditions and approaches"

(p. xvii). Rogers views this as one of the book's strengths, but perhaps it is also a necessity.

Part I begins with James Gee's latest work in discourse analysis as it appears in the third edition of his book *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis* (Gee, 2011). Marsh and Lammers' "Figured Worlds and Discourses of Masculinity: Being a Boy in a Literacy Classroom" and Lopez-Bonilla's "Narratives of Exclusion and the Construction of Self" are similar. Both utilize figured worlds: "a picture of a simplified world that captures what is taken to be typical or normal" (p.42). Lopez-Bonilla compares the "narratives of personal experience" (p.46) of Mexican students anticipating expulsion with those who graduate successfully. Marsh and Lammers examine the Discourse of an adolescent Mexican American male. These chapters draw on a variety of perspectives and demonstrate that how students are positioned affects their personal and educational choices, possibilities, and success.

In chapter four, "A Critical Discourse Analysis of Neocolonialism in Patricia McCormick's *Sold*," Lakshmanan asserts that power should be critically examined *within* a book and "that emanate *from* the text to its global implications." (p. 69). Lakshmanan directly addresses issues related to teachers choosing books to offer multicultural perspectives written by white Westerners. This chapter gives teachers and students the tools to interrogate these texts. Lakshmanan builds her analysis upon Gee's seven building tasks, utilizes Kress and van Leeuwen's social semiotic methodology for

“decoding” sign systems, and employs Fairclough’s “cruces” to identify “shifts in hegemonic articulation” (p. 76).

Part II opens with Fairclough’s “Semiotic Aspects of Social Transformation and Learning.” Fairclough offers researchers a number of entry points for the investigation, analysis, and critique of learning. For example, “Classroom teaching articulates together particular ways of using language...with particular forms of action and interaction, the social relations and persons of the classroom, and structuring and use of classroom space” (p.121). All chapters in this section were present in the previous edition; however, they have been revised, updated, and edited to provide more succinct arguments.

Woodside-Jiron’s “Language, Power, and Participation: Using Critical Discourse Analysis to Make Sense of Public Policy” continues to be an important chapter. Drawing on the work of Fairclough and Bernstein, Woodside-Jiron conducts a critical analysis of California’s reading policies to demonstrate how “seemingly small assumption grows and hardens into mandated teacher practices and instructional materials” (p. 160). The applicability of this research to any top-down educational policy makes it indispensable.

In part III, Kress’ “Discourse Analysis and Education: A Multimodal Social Semiotic Approach” ventures into new territory. His approach moves beyond the investigation of language to a greater investigation of how meaning is communicated and created. His work is complex, yet critical—inviting the reader to think in new ways. This chapter is difficult for the novice, but Kress’ examples keep the content manageable. The chapters that follow bring the reader back to familiar ground. In “Discourse in Activity and Activity in Discourse,” Rowe observes people at a museum using talk and action to create meaning. In “Mapping Modes in

Children’s Play and Design: An Action-oriented Approach to Critical Multimodal Analysis,” Wohlwend observes kindergarten classes to determine which modes were being used in literacy practices in the classroom. In “The Discourses of Education Management Organizations,” Pini analyzes the websites of four Education Management Organizations as a means of understanding how they construct themselves and how this contributes to the construction of the need for private education. Pini hopes that her “study will help to unravel the dominant discourse.” It is safe to say this goal is shared by all researchers in this text.

Rogers encourages the reader to critique what is included in this text and what is not. One thing that is missing is Rogers herself; this edition does not include her research. To be representative of current work in the field, Rogers’ work with Positive Discourse Analysis would be an important contribution. Research that explores students’ use of technology is also absent. The addition of exciting research that draws on Kress’ work would help reflect modern forms of teaching and learning.

Rogers has created a balanced text. The three sections provide a sense of stability that was not established in the first edition. The entire volume is smooth and streamlined. However, as this area of research grows, Rogers might consider creating two books. One text could be on the introductory level and the other with a focus on new research for those that are working in the field. An appropriate title might be *Approaches to CDA in Education*. It will be exciting to see what Rogers’ will do in the next ten years.

References

Gee, J. (2011). *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.