REVOLUTIONS IN CONSCIOUSNESS:
A STUDY OF THE EMANCIPATION PROBLEMATIC IN CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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Critical Discourse Analysis and Intercultural Communication

I became interested in critical approaches to the study of language, particularly in the kinds of language analyses promoted by critical linguists or critical discourse analysts, through teaching intercultural communication. It seemed to me that their approach to language was one which was very well suited to the interests of the intercultural communication classroom. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an approach to the analysis of texts which includes amongst its aims the development of increased social awareness and human understanding in the interests of social change.

> Critical studies of language, Critical Linguistics (CL) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) have from the beginning had a critical project: broadly speaking that of altering inequitable distributions of economic, cultural and political goods in contemporary societies. The intention has been to bring a system of excessive inequalities of power into crisis through the analysis of potent cultural objects – texts – and thereby to help in achieving a more equitable social order. The issue has thus been one of transformation, unsettling the existing order, and transforming its elements into an arrangement less harmful to some, and perhaps more beneficial to all the members of a society. [1]

The hope is that CDA can make some positive contribution to the development of society through its problematisation of the relationship between texts and the construction of the social world. In this process CDA raises 'critical' questions about the nature of society and the organisation of human relations which centre on the legitimacy of social structures and practices. Critical discourse analysts take a perspective on society in which human relations are often viewed as counter-communicative, unequal, and lacking in social harmony. This is because what often passes for the normalcy of the everyday is more accurately in CDA theory a normalisation of misunderstanding, miscommunication and, to some extent, mystification. Normality and everydayness are thus understood as communicative distortions in a Habermasian sense. Since human relations are to a considerable extent grounded in language, this distortion is also a function of

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[1] G. Kress, '*Representational resources and the production of subjectivity*', in C. R. Caldas-Coulthard, and M. Coulthard, (eds), *Texts and Practices*, (London: Routledge, 1994), p.15.

language: society 'miscommunicates' in and through language and so by examining the way in which this occurs, CDA attempts to discover ways in which such miscommunication can be lessened or even eradicated. It thus targets issues of power, race, gender, identity and social inequality and examines how these are articulated, represented and reproduced in discourse. These are of course isuues which are also central to a great deal of intercultural communication pedagogy. Due to this overlap in interests, I have found CDA to be a very useful tool for teaching intercultural communication generally, and for examining many of the issues which arise within it.

The Emancipatory Interest in CDA

For the world to change for the better, if that is indeed the aspiration, the way people, groups and institutions think and act need to change as well. This requires changes and perhaps 'revolutions' in consciousness: in our understandings of relations between people and between groups of people, in our understandings of the social, economic and political structuring of the societies to which we belong, and in our understandings of the institutions of society, both within the state and within the economy, through which such structuring occurs. In so far as these changes have as their interest the development of a 'better world', they are more than just an interest in change, they are an interest in emancipation. Or to put it slightly differently, they articulate an 'emancipatory interest'. Hence the title of this paper. It is through what I am calling the emancipation problematic in CDA that the emancipatory interest of CDA practice is articulated.

In practising CDA in my teaching and in reading literature in the field it occurred to me that the relationship between theoretical practice and pedagogical practice, specifically on the question of the emancipatory interest, was not well established. If one asks what emancipation is supposed to mean in CDA, then the perspective of Kress quoted above is about as explicit as you will find. More usually references to the idea of an emancipatory interest are expressed in more general terms, for example as a need to combat social inequality, prejudice and the abuse of power by dominant groups.[2] Nevertheless, despite the clarity and conviction of Kress's statement a certain vagueness lingers as to the theoretical complexion of the emancipatory interest in CDA, particularly with respect to social theories of emancipation. It is this lacuna which is the primary motivation for this paper. For this reason the major part of my paper is a discussion of the contribution of social theory to the emancipation problematic in CDA, as well as an attempt to classify the emancipatory interest to be found there. The secondary motivation for this paper is that through

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[2] Intercultural communication literature often articulates this interest in terms of the need for increased understanding and tolerance.

examining CDA's emancipatory interest I hope to throw some light on the rationale both for doing CDA and for teaching intercultural communication, as their object of study is so similar. In the conclusion I therefore make some connections between critical practice and intercultural communication pedagogy. With these objectives in mind, I have addressed myself to the following questions:

1. What are the principal emancipation paradigms in CDA literature?
2. How might their interests be classified?
3. What is the pedagogic rationale for doing critical work of this kind?

Paradigms of Emancipation in CDA

In order to determine the kinds of emancipatory paradigms existing in CDA literature I began by trying to categorise references which implied an emancipatory interest: such as references to social change, dominance, inequality and transformation.[3] From my reading there seemed to be broadly two ways in which emancipation is connoted in the literature: as revolution (Marxist), or as social libertarianism (social democracy).

References connoting a Marxist perspective:

false consciousness, ideology, class interest, class society, antagonisms and conflicts, power differentials, social inequality, unequal power, challenges to authority, disruption, unequal relations of power, emancipation, resistance, change, domination, exploitative social relations, social emancipation, emancipatory discourse, oppressed social groupings, dominant blocs, sites of struggle, inequitable distributions, more equitable social orders, transformations, alternative forms of social organisation

References connoting a social libertarian perspective:

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[3] The works to which I referred were the following: N. Fairclough, (1989) *Language and Power*, (Harlow, Longman, 1989); N. Fairclough, (1992) *Discourse and Social Change*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1992); N. Fairclough (ed), (1992) *Critical Language Awareness*, (Harlow, Longman, 1992); N. Fairclough and R. Wodak, '*Critical Discourse Analysis*', in T. van Dijk, (ed), *Discourse as Social Interaction*, (London, Sage, 1997), pp.258-284; L. Chouliarki and N. Fairclough, (1999) *Discourse in Late Modernity*, (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1999); R. Fowler, R. Hodge, G. Kress and T. Trew (eds), (1979) *Language and Control*, (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979); R. Fowler, '*On Critical Linguistics*', in C. R. Caldas-Coulthard, and M. Coulthard, (eds), *Texts and Practices*, (London: Routledge, 1994), pp.3-14; R. Hodge and G. Kress, (1979) *Language as Ideology*, (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979); G. Kress, '*Against Arbitrariness*', *Discourse and Society*, 4 (2) (1993), pp.169-191; G. Kress, '*Representational Resources and the Production of Subjectivity*', in C. R. Caldas-Coulthard, and M. Coulthard, (eds), *Texts and Practices*, (London: Routledge, 1994), pp.15-31; T. van Dijk, 'The Role of Discourse Analysis in Society', in T. van Dijk, (ed), *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, *Volume 4*, (London, Academic Press, 1985), pp.1-8; T. van Dijk, (1993) 'Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis', *Discourse and Society*, 4 (2) (1993), pp.249-283; T. van Dijk, '*Discourse Analysis as Social Analysis*', *Discourse and Society*, 5 (2) (1994), pp.163-164.

consciousness, truth, understanding, thought, heuristic linguistics, revealing, reflecting critically, critical study, critical linguistics, critique, humanism, increasing consciousness, critical consciousness, raising consciousness, awareness, critical language awareness, becoming more conscious, critical understanding, critical projects, more equitable social orders, less harmful arrangements, critical theorisation, democracy, democratic control

The lexicon of the first group of references suggests that CDA has a Marxist orientation and doing CDA is a means of contributing to the process of crisis which will permit emancipation to occur. But this would be a partial formulation only because it leaves out what I have called the social libertarian tradition. To complete the picture what is needed is a theoretical framework which incorporates both traditions: the Marxist and the social libertarian. In addition, it must be a framework which is able to accommodate the variety of emancipatory formulae which are intimated in the literature through reference to thinkers such as Marcuse, Bourdieu, Giddens and Habermas. I believe that such a framework may be derived from the Hegelian philosophical tradition.

The Hegelian Dialectic

Habermas credits Hegel with inaugurating 'the discourse of modernity'.[4] What Habermas means by this is that the task of modernity has been to try to discover a higher order of social existence; a more rational basis of being. Hegel inaugurates this discourse because he was the first Enlightenment thinker to make the relationship between philosophy and reality a philosophical issue in itself. Or to put it another way, Hegel was the first to make social transformation itself into a philosophical category: *the Hegelian dialectic*.

Hegel's entire philosophical system is built upon the idea that mind/spirit (*geist*)[5] determines reality, and is thus the motor of social change and progress. The transformative character of Hegelian philosophy is derived from the connection Hegel makes between *geist* and human freedom. Consider these extracts from the *Philosophy of History* (1822):

> Just as gravity is the substance of matter, so also can it be said that freedom is the substance of spirit … Philosophy teaches us that all the attributes of spirit exist only

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[4] J. Habermas, (1987) *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1987) p.51.
[5] *Geist* in Hegel is variously translated in English as mind or spirit. Mind/spirit should be understood as something greater than individual consciousness. It is the collective consciousness of humanity. Another way to think of it is as reflective consciousness or reason.

> by virtue of freedom, that all are merely means of attaining freedom. Speculative philosophy has shown that freedom is the one authentic property of spirit.[6]
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> World history is the expression of the divine and absolute process of the spirit in its highest forms, of the progression by which it discovers its true nature and becomes conscious of itself … World history merely shows how the spirit gradually attains consciousness and the will to truth; it progresses from its early glimmerings to major discoveries and finally to a state of complete consciousness. (Hegel, p.404)

For Hegel then the development of *geist* (our collective consciousness) is the development of freedom, and the task of philosophy through history is to develop this mind/spirit to its ultimate level, and thus to ultimate freedom. The Hegelian dialectic may be summarised as follows:

- Philosophy is mind/spirit in development.
- Mind/Spirit is absolute knowledge/absolute reason.
- Speculative philosophy is the means by which we achieve absolute knowledge about the nature of our being.
- Speculative philosophy has to go through different stages of development towards absolute knowledge (thesis, anti-thesis, synthesis).
- These stages of development correspond to stages in the progress of history.
- The moment when absolute knowledge is achieved is the moment when speculative philosophy recognises itself as mind/spirit.
- Absolute knowledge is absolute freedom.
- Freedom is the organic society.

If we take Hegel's dialectic and map it onto what critical discourse analysts say in their work, it is possible to see how the speculative philosophy of the Hegelian dialectic finds expression as the development of reflective consciousness towards greater awareness and a more rational society. The following is an illustrative example from van Dijk:

> Unlike other discourse analysts, critical discourse analysts (should) take an explicit sociopolitical stance: they spell out their point of view, perspective, principles, aims, both within their discipline and within society at large … Their hope, if occasionally illusory, is change through critical understanding.[7]

The presence of the Hegelian dialectic in CDA suggests this preliminary conclusion: that the emancipation problematic in CDA involves a progressive movement on the part of society towards greater social awareness and

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[6] G. W. F. Hegel, '*Philosophy of History*', in S. Houlgate (ed), *The Hegel Reader*, (Oxford, Blackwell, 1999) p.401.
[7] T. van Dijk, (1993) 'Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis', *Discourse and Society*, 4 (2) (1993), p.252.

understanding. CDA in this Hegelian sense is a contribution to the progressive realisation of *geist*. Where Hegel invokes speculative philosophy to reach this goal, CDA invokes the critical interpretation of texts. I believe these critical practices are a function of the Hegelian dialectic.

The Marxian Dialectic

After Hegel's death, his followers split into two camps: Right Hegelians and Left Hegelians. Right Hegelians believed that the Prussian state was the embodiment of Hegel's philosophical system; that it *was* the organic state of his writings. They thus became defenders of the status quo. The Left Hegelian group, to which Marx belonged, observed the *actual* Prussian state and reached the conclusion that it was decidedly irrational. They adopted Hegel's rational view of the dialectic and began applying it as a dynamic force for change.

Marx eventually came to the conclusion that Hegel's system was completely idealistic. It was not grounded in the real world but issued from Hegel's idealised metaphysical world of *geist*. In Marx's hands the historical progress of the Hegelian dialectic by means of speculative philosophy (*geist*) is replaced with historical progress by means of transformations in the material forces of production. The dialectic is retained but is stripped of its metaphysical idealism and is reconstituted upon a materialist base. The effect is an inversion of Hegel's ontology, and so *contra* Hegel, 'It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness'.[8] I believe that in CDA the Marxian dialectic is readily identifiable through the implied Marxist emancipatory interest which is to be found there.

'New' Left and 'New' Right Hegelianism

Marx's materialist recasting of the Hegelian dialectic has the effect of extinguishing the revolutionary rationalism of the Left Hegelians. In its place Marx constructs a 'New' Left Hegelian or Marxist problematic grounded on the material conditions of existence. Emancipation results from the social rupturing these conditions produce. Followers of this Hegelian New Left tradition include Lukacs and Gramsci in the 1930s, Horkheimer, Adorno, Benjamin and Marcuse of the Frankfurt School of the 1930s to the 1970s and Jurgen Habermas today. They may differ in the philosophical ingredients of their Hegelianism but the overall recipe remains the same: radical social transformation is a desired outcome, albeit with varying levels of emphasis and optimism.

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[8] K. Marx, Preface to '*A Critique of Political Economy*', in D. McLellan (ed), *Karl Marx Selected Writings*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 425.

The Hegelian New Left tradition may be contrasted with a Hegelian New Right tradition in which revolution is discounted as idealistic, impractical, irrelevant, undesirable or simply unachievable. This tradition may be said to embrace social theorists who, while discounting the possibility of the revolutionary transformation of society, are nevertheless critical of the social, economic and political structures of modern capitalism and the social dissonance these engender. This is a broad category which includes thinkers as diverse as Durkheim and Bourdieu, Weber and Giddens. These two theoretical paradigms are both apparent in literature devoted to CDA. There has been a struggle between the two, with neither one achieving overall dominance. In the earlier work of the 1970s and 1980s the Hegelian New Left tradition was in the ascendancy, since that time the Hegelian New Right perspective has been the more dominant.

I have attempted to classify the contributions of many of these theorists to the development of the emancipation problematic in CDA and have produced the classification table which may be found at the end of my paper. The table classifies these theorists according to the Hegelian traditions I have identified and indicates their emancipatory interest.

Critical Practice and Intercultural Communication

We live in a world where the logic of the market appears to have become paramount and where the perceived needs of this market increasingly dictate which attitudes, skills and practices are deemed the most appropriate for it to function effectively. This logic and the discourses upon which it is based are widely accepted as a given by governments, employers and by large sections of society. In the process universities are increasingly defined as service providers to the economy, and the worth or otherwise of university curricula measured according to the extent to which they develop market valued skills. This has been accompanied inevitably by a redescription of the role the teacher, who is expected to act more as a trainer than as an educator. Universities have always been sites of power and of socialisation, but where I feel there was once an emphasis on discursivity and knowledge formation in the learning process, there has been a perceptible shift towards an emphasis on skills and the discrete accumulation of them as students progress through their courses, as though such skills may be simply ticked off or programmed in.

This raises important questions both for teachers of intercultural communication and for teachers in universities generally. I feel that there is a danger that studying intercultural communication may come to mean little more than studying how to do 'effective' international business, i.e. studying the stereotypical characteristics of differing races, peoples and cultures in order to

be able to explain and thereby avoid the cross-cultural pitfalls associated with 'doing business' in a global economy. Intercultural communication pedagogy needs to avoid such comparative reductionism. I believe that part of the rationale for teaching intercultural communication should be to raise awareness about the social construction of differing realities in order to introduce some critical distance between given assumptions about the nature of the social world and the possibilities for changing it. This means recognising that the goals of increased tolerance and understanding in intercultural communication articulate, just as in CDA, an emancipatory interest, and that it is an interest worth striving for. It also means presenting through our pedagogic practice a view of the university as a centre of discursivity in the public sphere, where the discourses of society and of cultures may be subject to critical examination and debate. This is important for many reasons, but one of the most important is to give people the opportunity to discuss and confront their own relationships to dominant discourses in the world today. In this way it may be possible for us as teachers of intercultural communication and as teachers in higher education to make some contribution to purposeful and beneficial change in the world.[9]

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[9] Other works which I have found useful in the preparation of this paper include: L. Althusser, (1971) *Lenin and Philosophy*, (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1971); T. Burns and I. Fraser (eds), (2000) *The Hegel-Marx Connection*, (London, MacMillan, 2000); T. Eagleton, (1991) *Ideology* (London, Verso, 1991); D. Held, (1997) *Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1997); A. Gramsci, (1971) *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Q. Hoare and G. Nowell Smith (eds), (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1971); F. Jameson, (1998) *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern*, (London, Verso, 1998); H. Marcuse, (1968) *Negations*, (London, Penguin, 1968); H. Marcuse, (1986) *Reason and Revolution*, (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986); P. Rabinow (ed), (1991) *The Foucault Reader*, (London, Penguin, 1991); J. Struik, '*Introduction*' in K. Marx, (1977) *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, (New York, International Publishers, 1977), pp.9-56. I would also like to thank Catherine Wallace at the Institute of Education, University of London, for her many helpful comments.

Theorist	Emancipatory Interest	Method	Contribution to EP in CDA	Left/Right Hegelian?	Tradition
Hegel	Progress of speculative philosophy Mind/Spirit (Geist) towards absolute knowledge/recognition of itself	Historical/Dialectical Reason	Consciousness awareness/ consciousness raising	Both	German Idealism
Right Hegelians	19th Century: Rational Conservatism; realisation of the organic society in 1840s Prussia	Historical/Dialectical Reason	Evolutionary tradition	Right	Hegelianism
Left Hegelians	Criticism and overthrow of Prussian monarchical system by means of reason	Historical/Dialectical Reason	Revolutionary tradition	Left	Hegelianism
Marx	Progress of forces and relations of Production towards Communism	Historical/Dialectical Materialism	Ideology, class struggle, class conflict	New Left	Young Hegelianism/ Feuerbachian Materialism
Gramsci	Revolution; development of organic intellectuals to lead the challenge against the dominant hegemonic bloc	Historical/Dialectical Materialism; War of Position/War of Manoeuvre	Ideology, dominance, hegemony	New Left (Marxism)	Hegelianism/ Marxism
Marcuse	Revolution desirable and necessary, but Socialism is not inevitable	Historical/Dialectical Materialism; Critical Theory; Negation	Negation	New Left (Marxism)	Hegelianism/ Marxism
Althusser	Unspecified; pessimistic vision of possibilities for political resistance	Theoretical practice; Science vs. Ideology	Ideology, ideological state apparatuses, interpellation, subject position	New Left/ New Right	'Scientific' Marxism; Structuralism
Habermas	Emancipatory interest of communicative rationality (unspecified outcome)	Historical/Dialectical Materialism; Methodical self-reflection; Critical Theory; Maintenance of the public sphere in the lifeworld	Ideology, distorted communication, ideal speech situation	New Left (Marxism)	Hegelianism/ Marxism
Jameson	Revolution (unspecified outcome, unknowable)	Dialectical materialism; Postmodernity is the latest stage of Capitalism	Cognitive mapping (new class consciousness)	New Left (Marxism)	Marxism
Bourdieu	Local changes to Habitus	Awareness of Habitus	Habitus	New Right	'Constructivist' Structuralism
Giddens	Social Democracy/Social Capitalism	The Third Way; 'Life Politics'	Globalisation, dialoguing across difference	New Right	Marxism