Politics, (con)text and genre: applying CDA and DHA to interpreter training

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Abstract

This study proposes the application of a number of important tenets from Critical Discourse Analysis, specifically the Discourse-Historical Approach, to interpreter studies and training. It recognizes the crucial distinctions of text, discourse and genre in the sphere of politics and proposes a multi-layered interdisciplinary model of context to analyze source texts. The application of the model is illustrated on three political speeches that share the pro-active discourse of climate change.

1. Introduction

No one would deny the significance of ‘politics’ in all fields of action for interpreters, from corporate marketing to Europarliamentary talk. All institutional text and talk are imbued with ideological, historical and contextual references, features Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) addresses directly. However, with few exceptions (Beaton 2007, Olk 2002, Schäffner 2004), CDA has not been fully exploited in the field of Translating and, to an even lesser extent, Interpreting Studies (IS). Those studies that do exist tend to favor ideological issues over extra-discoursal contextual, historical and social ones that are seen as paramount for understanding discourse practices. Moreover, to our knowledge, studies
on the application of context in CDA to interpreter training have never been carried out.

IS has indeed explored issues concerning power relations in institutional contexts (Drennan and Swartz 1999; Laster and Taylor 1994), often through the analysis of pragmatic and situational features (Mason and Stewart 2001), falling short of offering “practisearchers” (Gile 1994) a complete package of background tools to fully grasp texts and talk. Even though many scholars in IS recognize the importance of analyzing context (Setton 1998, Hatim and Mason 1997), the theoretical principles have not yet been fully applied.

This study proposes a synergy of recent theories in both fields directed to the learning process in IS. We apply current methodologies of CDA and IS to the analysis of political speeches. A model of context has recently been introduced in IS (Monacelli 2009a) to detect translational shifts and interpreting moves. Specifically, we argue that the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) (Reisigl and Wodak 2009, Wodak 2001), one of the main theoretical approaches within CDA, provides a highly useful framework to analyze context, which can be successfully applied to interpreter training. Crucially, DHA recognizes four inter-related levels of context: co-text, intertextual, the extralinguistic, as well as the broader sociopolitical and historical contexts. Furthermore, DHA is underpinned by the important distinction between text, genre and discourse, as well as recontextualization.1

We propose a new analytical model, to be used in IS, that also recognizes the importance of different levels of context, an understanding of text, genre and discourse and, additionally, a wider view of recontextualization, i.e. a three-dimensional view of context with recontextualization that spans different layers of context. Our underlying hypothesis holds that when such a model is applied to interpreter training in the analysis of a source text it better places students to perceive discursive practices underlying political speeches and thus potentially fine-tunes comprehension and expectations with regard to a speaker’s message.

The multi-level model we propose embraces the notions of text, genre and discourse as paramount to understanding both discoursal and social practice (Boyd 2009, Fairclough 2003, Wodak and Meyer 2009). It examines the historical, cultural, social and ideological expressions through the analysis of specific linguistic, paralinguistic and pragmatic features. To illustrate the application of the model, we analyze three different speeches on climate change by José Manuel Durão Barroso, Barack Obama, and Gordon Brown.

Section 2 discusses CDA and how genres are dynamically and strategically created, exploited and modified. Section 3 focuses on DHA and what it has to offer interpreter training. Section 4 distinguishes the

1 Fully explained in Section 4.
discursive practice of recontextualization and considers its significance in terms of grasping ideological moves in political speeches. Section 5 discusses the synergies of CDA and IS research and Section 6 briefly examines a recent IS model of context. We propose an interdisciplinary context model in Section 7. This model is then applied in Section 8 to speeches on climate change and its relevance to interpreter training is then discussed.

2. Critical Discourse Analysis, discourse, text, and genre

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is premised on the assumption that language is not only a product of society but also an important force in (re)shaping social practices, both positively and negatively (see, for example, Wodak and Chilton 2005, Fairclough 2010, 2005, 2003, 1995, van Dijk 2001, Wodak and Meyer 2009, Wodak 2008a). Analysts working in this framework aim to examine linguistic structures in relation to their social, political and historical contexts (Schäffner 2007). Wodak (2008b: 297) proposes four overarching concepts characterizing the many approaches found within CDA: critique, power, history and ideology. With such foci, CDA naturally lends itself to the investigation of the ways domination and discrimination are embedded in and mediated through language use (Ietcu 2006: 75).

CDA can be differentiated from other linguistic approaches by its central focus on the “mediation between language and social structures” (Wodak and Meyer 2009: 21). In addition, it calls attention to the conditions in which texts and genres are produced, received and accessed and how these processes are reflected in social practices (Fetzer and Johansson 2008). The ‘critical’ side of CDA originates from analysts originally being interested in unmasking and ultimately rectifying (unfair) distribution practices and ‘social wrongs’ (Fairclough 2009). More importantly, however, especially for the application of CDA in an IS context, is analysts’ unequivocal role in society.

Continuing a tradition that rejects the possibility of a ‘value-free’ science, they argue that science, and especially scholarly discourse, are inherently part of and influenced by social structure and social interaction (van Dijk 2001: 352). While all currents of CDA distinguish between text, discourse and genre, there are some important differences. While a full discussion of the issues at stake are beyond the scope of this work, we discuss the most pertinent issues for IS. In line with Fairclough and Wodak, we see text as an actual occurrence of language use, either written or spoken, while discourse is a

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2 It should be noted that these premises are not universally accepted. For an opposing view see, e.g. Mason 2006, 2009, Stubbs 1997, Toolan 2002 and Widdowson 2004.
more general way of representing the world (Fairclough 2003: 215). Fairclough (2010: 6) further specifies discourse as being “a complex of three elements: social practice, discoursal practice (text production, distribution and consumption), and text”. Texts are “encoded in and determined by discourse and genre” (Wodak 2008b: 17) and discourse practices, in general, are seen to be conditioned by the type of social activity, or genre, being pursued (Fairclough 1995). Genres can be defined as various ways of (inter)acting linguistically, which are distinguished by genre-specific linguistic forms and/or structures and are closely linked to specific social and institutional contexts (Fairclough 2006). In her view, Wodak highlights the importance of “social practices, conventions, rules and norms governing certain sets or groups of speakers” (loc. cit.) in relation to genre. Consequently, since political actors use different genres in different social and institutional contexts, discourse practices can be analyzed on the basis of how these actors exploit different genres to express their ideas, opinions and messages, legitimize their own policies, and delegitimize their opponents in different situations and contexts (Chilton and Schäffner 2002). Finally, such an approach recognizes the crucial role of communicative and social purpose in defining genre, privileging the notions of recontextualization in text, discourse and genre production and reception (Fairclough 1995, 2006, Wodak and Meyer 2009).

One of the tenets of CDA we feel is particularly salient to IS is the notion that the communicative context is not a separate nonverbal level. Furthermore, unlike other approaches to discourse analysis prevalent in IS, CDA is highly focused on mediating between language and social structures (see, e.g., Wodak and Meyer 2009: 21).

A recent IS context model (see section 6 below) maintains that the context provided by the behavioral environment where communication comes about is reflexively linked to it within larger patterns of social activity (Monacelli 2009a: 25) or genres. This would indeed imply that when social actors exploit genres strategically, as mentioned above, the ensuing activity creates a dynamic environment in which an interpreter’s behavior necessarily reflects the communicative context. Such dynamic phenomena have emerged in an empirical study (Monacelli 2009a: 26) in terms of proactive and reactive control (Bandura 1991: 260), where constant action is taken at decisive moments in order to manage contextual and structural (discoursal) shifts, since interpreters always operate in the immediacy of a given situation where they are in a position of coping with contextual constraints (see Varela 1999). To date, however, a broad application of context has yet to be adopted in interpreter training.

3 For a complete discussion of various approaches to text, discourse and genre, see Wodak and Meyer 2009.
3. DHA and context

The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) is one of the main sub-branches within CDA representing the social-political orientation of critical theory (Wodak and Meyer 2009) with its primary focus on political texts and discourse practices. The approach explicitly links the concepts of fields of action, discourse, genre and text (Reisigl and Wodak 2009) and examines the contents of text and talk, discursive strategies and the linguistic means by which speakers enact these strategies. Furthermore, DHA applies a triangulatory approach, i.e. one that “implies taking a whole range of empirical observations, theories and methods as well as background information into account” (op. cit.: 89). Moreover, a multi-dimensional view of context is seen to operate on four linguistic and non-linguistic levels: the immediate co-text; the intertextual; the extralinguistic elements in terms of social variables and institutional frames; the broader sociolinguistic and historical domains. As will be demonstrated in Section 6, we argue for a simplified, three-tiered approach to context.

In line with CDA, DHA also recognizes the importance of power and power relations in language, and language is seen as gaining and maintaining power through the “powerful use people make of it” (op. cit.: 88). This would explain why DHA studies tend to focus on the language use of those in power or of those who belong to different social groups. In addition, DHA’s focus on the notions of discourse, text and genre provides, we would argue, a useful distinction for IS and the application of a context model for the study of source texts. Discourse is defined according to a number of closely related criteria as

[...] a cluster of context-dependent semiotic practices that are situated within specific fields of social action [that is] socially constituted and socially constitutive [,] linked to the argumentation about validity claims such as truth and normative validity involving several social actors who have different points of view [,] (op. cit.: 89)

Discourse, then, is seen as a fluid construct, and moreover one that is “open to reinterpretation and continuation” (ibid.). Such a conception of discourse, we would argue, ties in nicely with our notion of recontextualization (section 4 below). Text is seen as a part of discourse, one that links the two different speech situations of production and reception. Finally, texts reflect the various genres within which they are produced, according to the conventions and expectations of a given genre. Reisigl and Wodak (op. cit.: 90) further note that discourses, such as those dealing with climate change, can be realized through various genres serving various purposes: a news analysis, editorial, political debate, advertisement and, the genre we propose to cite in order to demonstrate the application of our model, the political speech. Another important part of DHA, which we do not specifically address in our model, are fields of
action (Bourdieu 1985), which are regulated by a number of different discursive functions. Finally, another important part of DHA are discursive strategies, which are seen as “intentional plan[s] of practices [...] adopted to achieve a particular social, political, psychological or linguistic goal” (op. cit.: 94).

For its potential use as a model for teaching IS, we do not include certain elements of analysis characteristic of DHA that, we feel, might unnecessarily complicate analyses. This also takes into account the limited amount of time interpreters in the field have. Thus, the fine-grained, multi-level and often time-consuming ethnographic (historical) analyses espoused by DHA proponents would be difficult to recreate in a training situation. Instead, the areas of DHA most suited for use in interpreter training concern a good understanding of the power structures in society, the differences between the concepts discourse, genre, text, and a grounding in various levels of context (Section 6).

4. Recontextualization

In the CDA literature, recontextualization is generally treated as one of the most common means of text production and text-to-text interaction (see, for example, Wodak and De Cillia 2007: 323) and as a sub-type of intertextuality or text-external referencing, whereby an element or argument is extracted from one, often dominant, context or text for some strategic purpose (Chilton and Schäffner 2002: 17) and reproposed in a new one. A useful summary can be found in Fairclough (2010):

Relations of recontextualisation involve principles of selectivity and filtering devices which selectively control which meanings (which can now be specified and differentiated as which discourses, genres and styles) are moved from one field to another. But there are also internal relations within the recontextualising field which control how recontextualised meanings are articulated with, recontextualised in relation to, existing meanings [...] (op. cit.: 76)

Furthermore, since recontextualization processes are underpinned by specific “goals, values and interests” (Schäffner and Bassnett 2010: 8), they can be a powerful tool in transforming social or discursive (linguistic) practices and creating new ones (Busch 2006: 613). In politics it is particularly fruitful to study how discursive practices are relocated or recontextualized through various genres and political fields and ultimately adapted to new interlocutors, arguments, and situations (Wodak and Wright 2006: 254). As noted above, such relocation involves both ‘suppression’ and ‘filtering’ of meanings “[...] in the process of classifying discourses, establishing particular insulations between them” (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 126).
Boyd (2009) proposes a broad interpretation of recontextualization, which occurs both text-externally and text-internally through lexical substitution and resemantization, as well as through metaphor and metonymy. The process is closely tied to the way that social actors are represented and constructed. In particular, recontextualization plays an important role in discourse-world creation through pronominal use, which is particularly salient in political discourse analysis. Pronouns, it is well known, can be used to indicate or obscure collectivity and individuality (Fairclough 2003: 162), for ‘self’ or ‘other’ referencing or to polarize ingroup and outgroup representation (van Dijk 2001: 103). Pronominal use is mediated by a number of different social and personal factors “producing a range of possible uses and interpretations” (Wilson 1990: 45). With so many external factors, which include formality, informality, status, solidarity, power, class, sex and other factors, it is clear that meaning is constructed through various internal and external levels of context. In the field of politics, the most common distinctions are I vs. we, inclusive vs. exclusive-we, and us vs. them. In general, it should be noted, pronoun meaning is inferred on its distance from the ‘deictic center’ of which I and other first-person singular pronominal forms can be considered the core (Chilton 2004: 57-59; see also Boyd 2009: 81-82). The parameters [+/-distance] can be used to express distance from or proximity to this deictic center. In Section 6 we provide specific examples of how recontextualization can operate across various levels of context.

5. CDA and Translation and Interpreting Studies

As mentioned above, CDA has been applied to the field of translation (cf. Saldanha 2010*), but much less so to IS (cf. Beaton 2007 and Mason 2006). This is surprising since politics and political institutions play such an important role in the work of interpreters. Even in Translation Studies, however, as Schäffner notes, “political discourse analysis has not yet paid sufficient attention to aspects of translation” (2007: 135). In their recent volume, Schäffner and Bassnett note (2010: 12) an “increased concentration on social causation and human agency and a focus on effects rather than on internal structures”. The authors stress, moreover, that there is much to be gained from a critical analytical approach to translation, in terms of understanding “institutional practices, the respective roles of actual agents involved in the complex translation processes as well as into the power relations” (ibid.).

4 The author notes that within a critical discourse approach “translation is seen as a process of mediation between source and target world views, a process that is inevitably influenced by power differentials among participants” (op. cit: 150).
An example of how CDA can be successfully applied to political discourse comes from Calzada Pérez (2007), who analyzes how transitivity patterns used in the translation of EU parliamentary speeches reflect individual translation choices. Newmark (1991) also devotes an entire chapter to the translation of political language, with a focus on lexical aspects. He characterizes political concepts as “partly culture-bound, mainly value-laden, historically conditioned and [...] abstractions in spite of continuous efforts to concretise them” (op. cit.: 149). He mentions pronouns, political jargon, euphemisms, metaphors, neologisms, acronyms and euphony, and collocations as characteristic features of political language, thus stressing that “the translator’s neutrality is a myth” (Newman 1991: 161, cited in Schäffner 2007: 142).

In IS, more specifically, there has been a number of scholars who have pointed to the need to critically examine performance output and take heed of discursive practices. Marzocchi (2005: 94), for example, has also warned that “contextualized studies of conference interpreting also show a discrepancy between (assumed) norms and practice”, between discourse and practice.

Diriker’s work (2004), which deals with the position of conference interpreters as individuals and professionals working and surviving in sociocultural contexts, may be considered the beginning of a cultural turn in IS. Her work in many respects is groundbreaking, since she not only examines the meta-discourse as social context and the (re)presentation of conference interpreting in the meta-discourse of various actors inside and outside the profession, but also analyzes a corpus of situated performances. Her study moves from the assumption that

[... ] conference interpreters are constrained by but also constitutive of a multitude of intertwined and mutually reflexive context(s) such as the most immediate discursive context(s) during interpreting that are invoked by previous utterances and implied by potential utterances; the conditions and demands of the particular conference context where they work in a given instance, and the conditions and demands of the larger socio-cultural context(s) in which they operate and survive as professionals. (op. cit.: 14, original emphasis)

Diriker, therefore, views conference interpreting as both context-constrained and context-constituting, adopting a dynamic view. She follows Bakhtin (1981), Cicourel (1992) and Lindström (1992) in approaching conference interpreting in relation to both the broader (macro) and narrower (micro) contexts and makes use of CDA in her examination of the meta-discourse on conference interpreting.

As far as applying background knowledge to IS teaching is concerned, Gran et al. note (2002: 287) “[t]he more background knowledge the addressee can call upon while listening to a speech, the less dependent s/he will be on the actual text, the more rapidly and thoroughly will s/he understand it and the more complete and accurate this understanding will
be”. Moreover, Boyd (2010) has argued for a multidimensional discourse-text-genre approach combined with the use of new technologies to encourage the development of the multitasking skills so important for future interpreters.

6. IS context model

Even though the notion of context is crucial to understanding, surprisingly there is very little agreement in the literature about what exactly a ‘context’ is (van Dijk 1998: 211). When speaking of the ideological control of context in his multidisciplinary approach to ideology, van Dijk (ibid.) defines context as, “the structured set of all properties of a social situation that are possibly relevant for the production, structures, interpretation and functions of text and talk”. There have been several scholars that have modeled context in IS to varying degrees (see Pöchhacker 2004, Alexieva, 1997/2002) but to date, as also Furmanek has pointed out (2010), there is little or no attention being brought to bear on ST discursive practices in interpreter training.

In Section 2 we argued that discursive practices and the communicative context are mutually defined. Bourdieu indeed stresses (1985: 196) that social space is “constructed on the basis of principles of differentiation”, but this presupposes some sort of relationship between what is distinguished and its background or environment. A relationship between two orders of phenomena that mutually inform each other to comprise a larger whole is central to the notion of context (Monacelli 2009a: 48), making for an extremely dynamic environment. When made aware of generic practices, future interpreters may more easily prepare for moments when expectations are flouted, e.g. when politicians strategically recontextualize a topic to push forward their own argument.

A recent model of context used for textual analysis has recently been presented in IS (Monacelli 2009a, 2009b). The model was instrumental in assessing pragmatic shifts from ST to TT and detecting interpreters’ distance-altering alignments, depersonalization and the mitigation of illocutionary force, with respect to the ST. Figure 1 represents an adapted version of this model.

The extra-situational context (Ochs 1979) concerns background knowledge, local phenomena that are systematic features of larger processes (Phillips 1992), as well as discursive rules and conditions that give people unequal power and control (Lindstrom 1992), i.e. what often may be considered the political, economic and historical frame.
The internal and external contexts (Schegloff 1992) are yet two other levels that constrain both the development of a speech and interaction: the external context embraces aspects of interaction understood as constraints on social life (language conventions or genres) or the embodiment of power concerns (setting and behavior); the internal context is created by participants (speakers) through their actions and as the speech unfolds, through a series of structural elements (grammar and discourse), guided by perceptions, implicatures and so on.

This model was successfully applied to interpreting students in an elective course on public speaking used for the creation of speeches framed in events or situations (Monacelli 2009b). Whereas interpreter training necessarily begins with ST analysis, students aiming to create and enact speeches found this model useful. Although comprehensive, this model falls short of allowing for an extended analysis of discourse practices, a crucial element when dealing with the genre of political speeches and an invaluable springboard to interpreter training.

7. A proposal for an interdisciplinary context model

In our model, as demonstrated in Figure 2, there are only three layers of context: internal, external and extra-situational. These combine to a large extent the various levels proposed in DHA while grafting on the terminology from Figure 1 (Monacelli 2009a). By combining DHA with the IS Context Model (Fig. 1), our first aim was to create a simplified version compared to both parent models for use in training without, however, foregoing their comprehensive and multi-disciplinary nature.
As can be seen in Figure 2, DHA’s four-tiered analytical structure has been reduced to three layers of context. Furthermore, in our model recontextualization plays an overarching role, as we envision it as spanning across and operating within the various context layers. Thus, recontextualization can occur text internally, externally and extrasituationally and, more importantly, elements can be recontextualized from one layer of context to another (or others). It should be noted that the model does not currently address Bourdieu’s ‘field of action’ (Bourdieu 1977, 1990), which the DHA model also incorporates (Reisigl and Wodak 2009, Wodak 2001) since the model is to be used for interpreter training.

We have incorporated the four DHA levels: immediate co-text, intertextual, extra-linguistic, broader sociopolitical and historical context, conflating the last two levels into the extra-situational layer of context.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Internal</th>
<th>External</th>
<th>Extra-situational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Descriptors</td>
<td>immediate co-text text as it unfolds</td>
<td>intertextuality: relation with other texts, genres, and discourses</td>
<td>background cognitive frames broader sociopolitical and historical constraints</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Context model dimensions

In Table 1 we provide an overview of the various levels of context in our model which will then be applied to the analysis of texts for interpreter training in the following section.

8. Applying the model to interpreter training

The three speeches we have selected to demonstrate the application of our model were given during the lead-up to the UN Conference on Climate
Change, which was held in Copenhagen, December 2009. The following factors determined our choice: first, the three texts are intertextually (and interdiscursively) related to the broader debate (and existing discourses) about climate change and the institutional frames that define them; second, like all important texts, they too have been and will continue being subject to recontextualization on various levels; finally, the debate about climate change is controversial and therefore lends itself more easily to a critical analysis.

Before discussing the speeches individually we classify them in terms of discourse, genre and text, as provided in Table 2 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse</th>
<th>proactive approach to climate change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genre</td>
<td>political speech to international organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>3 speeches:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Discourse-Genre-Text Classification

All three speeches are representative of what we call proactive discourse about climate change and are made to international organizations: Barroso (the Council on Foreign Relations in New York)⁵, Obama (the UN General Assembly in New York)⁶ and Brown (the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate [MEF] in London)⁷. Extracts from each speech are presented and discussed in the examples that follow.⁸

In the first set of examples below José Manuel Durão Barroso, President of the European Commission, is speaking at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), an independent, nonpartisan membership organization, think tank, and publisher.

1. We want to position Europe as one of the first movers in developing the technology. (L49-50) [...] So we need to signal our readiness to talk seriously about finance this week. (L90)

As to the internal context, “We” gains meaning cataphorically from “Europe” in the immediate co-text. The external context is represented interdiscursively by its relation to “Europe”, here qualifying “we” as the

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⁸ Text samples are referenced by indicating line numbers of extracts, e.g. (L49-50).
Commission, signaling a form of depersonalization (cf. sample 3 below), where the speaker distances himself from the text (+distance). The second use of “we” in sample 1 is exclusive in relation to the audience (Council on Foreign Relations) and again refers to the Commission. Here the speaker realigns himself with the Commission (-distance) but distances himself from the audience (+distance). The frame ‘political representation of the Commission in another setting’ (CFR) establishes the extra-situational context.

In sample 2, Barroso introduces Nick Stern, whom he qualifies co-textually as a climate change expert. Such a characterization, in fact, comes from the external, intertextual layer, so meaning is again reinforced through recontextualization. This example, according to our analysis, also includes an inclusive-we “us” (Commission + CFR), where the speaker again aligns with the audience (-distance). The proactive discourse about climate change activates an extra-situational frame as represented by the reference to economic consequences (“world’s GDP”).

2. However, climate change expert, Nick Stern, tells us that failing to act will cost much more: at least 5% of the world’s GDP every year. (L39-41)

Samples 3 and 4 are taken from a speech by Barak Obama to the UN General Assembly. In it he highlights the new line of US climate change policy after 8 years of G.W. Bush, and the failure of Kyoto. It should be noted that although the expectations for the speech were very high, it offered very few concrete proposals. Nonetheless, the speech demonstrates some interesting strategic uses of political discourse, which emerge in the application of our model. Obama moves across context levels by inclusively and exclusively referring to the audience in sample 3.

3. Taken together, these steps represent an historic recognition on behalf of the American people and their government. We understand the gravity of the climate threat. (L45-46)

On the one hand, he situates both “the American people” and “their government” externally, almost exclusively (in terms of co-text, or internal context). On the other, “We” becomes, at the same time, both inclusive (the speaker and his audience) and exclusive (as compared to the rest of the world). In the first case his discourse develops internally, representing a form of depersonalization (+distance), whereas in the second case his discourse spans across the external and extra-situational context layers through recontextualization.

In sample 4 the important historical figure of JFK is introduced from an external (intertextual) reference, activating an important historical frame.

4. John F. Kennedy once observed that “Our problems are man-made, therefore they may be solved by man.” (L13-14)

In terms of context, there is a direct quotation of JFK’s words at an internal level. However, these words take on new meaning as they are
recontextualized in Obama’s speech: an original exclusive-we becomes inclusive since it is Obama who is repeating these famous words, thereby activating both the external and extra-situational layers. Pronominal meaning is enhanced through recontextualization among the various layers of context.

Samples 5 and 6 are extracted from Former Prime Minister Gordon Brown’s speech to the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate (MEF). It was held later than the other two speeches and therefore closer to the Copenhagen summit on climate change held in December 2009. His message was forceful, speaking of catastrophic consequences and urging developing nations to save the world. The MEF was originally launched on 28 March 2009. It was intended to facilitate a candid dialogue among major developed and developing economies, helping to generate the political leadership necessary to achieve a successful outcome at the December UN climate change conference in Copenhagen, and advance the exploration of concrete initiatives and joint ventures that increase the supply of clean energy while cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

In sample 5, Brown activates the important historical frame of Lancaster House, which is steeped in British colonial history.

5. I’m particularly pleased that you’re discussing such a big issue here at Lancaster house. Lancaster House has a history of resolving some of the great issues of our time. It’s where all the great colonial and independence movements were resolved, from Ghana to Zimbabwe. It’s where we agreed debt relief for the poorest countries. (L4-7)

Brown makes reference to his immediate surroundings through the use of the deictic “here” and the co-referent “Lancaster House”. The reference is both internal and external, as the participants are co-present and the venue’s historic importance represents this intertextual link. This is further reinforced in the actual co-text, “has a history”, and the use of a historically-extended “our” in reference to “time” in the text, similar to Obama’s pronominal use in Sample 4. The following “we” signals an extra-situational reference and recontextualizes the G7 meeting in 2005 held at Lancaster House. Therefore, this pronominal reference is partly inclusive, since some of the MEF members were represented at that meeting; it is also partly exclusive since indeed most of the MEF members were not present. Nonetheless, Gordon Brown uses this discoursal strategy to align with his audience (-distance).

Finally, in sample 6 there is an internal contextual referent “I” since Brown as Prime Minister hosted the MEF at Lancaster House. A deictic shift to “you” follows at an external level (+distance), activating an extra-situational frame in reference to the MEF. Brown then uses an inclusive “we” in relation to the event to be held at “Copenhagen”.

6. And I hope here that you will be able to agree progress on climate change discussions that we need to have at Copenhagen. (L7-8)
Sample 6, moreover, is an example of a recontextualization chain, in which elements of the proactive discourse(s) on climate change, MEF and Copenhagen are selectively filtered (and suppressed) in new texts, creating what might be seen as a sort of recontextualization script. To fully understand text meaning the receivers, and indeed interpreting trainees, need to have access to this script. In the case of these three speeches, which represent only a small part of the complete (and ongoing) script, MEF is recontextualized on various layers of context: e.g., Barroso cites the MEF launch at L’Aquila in July 2009; Obama mentions the six MEF meetings in his speech; Brown addresses the MEF directly. A good knowledge of such scripts will allow trainees to better interpret intended meaning, especially in the case of simultaneous interpreting where the time element greatly constrains performance quality, trainees would be better placed to anticipate discoursal strategies (cf. Chernov 2004).

Fine-tuned discourse analysis, as suggested here, provides interpreter training with a fundamental dimension of investigation. Text samples 1-6 are only just a few of the many existing in the speeches which cannot be represented here in full, all illustrating constant shifts in alignment linked to specific instances of recontextualization across all levels of context. An in-depth examination of these trends (+distance/-distance) enhances knowledge of discoursal strategies at work in political speeches and better places future interpreters to deal with them interlinguistically. While we have mainly focused on how these phenomena operate in relation to pronominal choice due to the space limitations of this article, the delicacy of fine-tuned analysis suggested here fosters the detection and better understanding of emerging ideological trends in political discourse.

9. Some conclusions

One of the underlying assumptions of CDA (and, of course, DHA, see, e.g., Reisigl and Woźak 2009) is that different (political) actors pursue different and often conflicting interests. The examples provided above clearly demonstrate that the speakers shift alignments in relation both to the various layers of context and to their strategic discursive practices, creating more or less distance in relation to their audience and text.

We have argued that a clear distinction among the categories of discourse, genre and text is crucial for text analysis and understanding. We have also recognized the importance of considering different layers of context and how they are linked through various types of recontextualization. By adapting a number of important constructs from CDA in general, DHA and IS, we have proposed an interdisciplinary and multi-layered model of context, thus providing appropriate tools for an analysis of context with a view to interpreter training.
In future research, it would be interesting to carry out empirical research concerning the outcome of interpreter training based on this model, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Along with the assessment of students’ perceptions of the comprehension process, the analysis of performances may offer a key as to whether this model also serves to improve production. We believe the model may also lend itself for use in studies of discursive phenomena and strategies in other genres.

References


Schäffner (eds.), Politics as Text and Talk: Analytic Approaches to Political Discourse, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 1-41.


