

SPECIAL ISSUE ON WORLD ENGLISHES AND CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS:

Exploring the Englishes of World Politics

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1 | INTRODUCTION

Criticality in discourse analysis derives from the belief that discursive events share a co-constitutive relationship with the social, cultural, institutional and political contexts within which they take place (cf. Fairclough, 1989). That is to say that discourse both shapes and is shaped by society. In this sense, 'each discursive event [has] three dimensions or facets: it is spoken or written language, it is an instance of discourse practice involving the production and interpretation of text, and it is a piece of social practice' (Fairclough, 1993, p. 136). Text and social practice are 'mediated by discourse practice' through which the processes of text production, interpretation and social practice leave imprints on one another (ibid.).

Discourse can be seen as a conceptualization of reality stemming from the unique relationship people have with society (social context they're operating in) and depending on their unique social positions within that society. Discourse, in this sense, becomes the means through which interactive participants construct self, society, and system of knowledge (ideologies, cultural models and myths, beliefs etc.), both on part of the sender and receiver. Discourse, thus, as a process of meaning creation relies as much on production as on interpretations.

Deriving from this theoretical perspective, critical discourse analysis (CDA) is interested in 'real, and often extended, instances of social interaction which take (partially) linguistic form. The critical approach is distinctive in its view of (a) the relationship between language and society, and (b) the relationship between analysis and the practices analysed' (Wodak 1997, p. 173). Work in CDA operates at the crossroads between 'language and social structure' and often manifests in topics which reveal 'power asymmetries, exploitation, manipulation and structural inequalities' (Blommaert and Bulcaen, 2000, p. 451). With its interest in theories of power and ideology, CDA seeks to critically explore the discursive construction of social and cultural identity labels that 'legitimate and perpetuate discrimination against particular groups of people' (Lin, 2013).

In its relatively shorter tenure, CDA has expanded both theoretically and methodologically. In addition to traditionally included research strategies, such as discourse historical, corpus linguistics, socio-cognitive, dialectical-relational and social actors approaches, recent work has also expanded to integrate membership categorization analysis, critical metaphor analysis, geosemiotics, narrative analysis, and social media analysis, to name a few, that

complement the broader theoretical principles of CDA, which orient towards demystifying power asymmetry in naturally occurring language by real users as part of socially, politically, and culturally occurring phenomena (Wodak and Meyer, 2009).

This, in one sense, resonates with the Kachruvian approach to the study of Worlds Englishes, which has been

characterized by an underlying philosophy that has argued for the importance of inclusivity and pluricentricity in approaches to the linguistics of English worldwide, and involves not merely the description of national and regional varieties, but many other related topics as well, including contact linguistics, creative writing, critical linguistics, discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, lexicography, pedagogy, pidgin and creole studies, and the sociology of language (Bolton, 2002a).

(Bolton, 2006)

2 | NATIONAL IDENTITY, LEGITIMACY AND WORLD ENGLISHES

This special issue tackles the emergence of what I would loosely term, the Englishes of politics around the globe. There has been some valuable and interesting work in the area of culturally-specific political discourse, including political slogans in China (Lu, 1999), proverbs in African political discourse (Orwenjo, 2009), inclusiveness in political campaigning in Trinidad and Tobago (Esposito, 2017), and delegitimization in the Arab Spring (Bhatia, 2015), to mention a few. However, there is scope for further work in the area of how culture-specific politics shapes language, and how, in turn language shapes local politics.

It is in this direction that the issue seeks to thread the needle. By focusing on the discursive construction of socio-political (de)legitimization in cultural contexts around the world, we open the gates to several unexplored areas of research and analysis. As van Leeuwen (2007) argues, 'a decontextualized study of legitimation is not possible' (p. 92). Legitimization is about practice and social effect; it is about audience and context; and it is about history and the future. With a globally dynamic socio-political landscape, transient populations, and the ever-evolving use, practice and invention of media (redistributing power of the medium of expression), the study of discursive socio-political (de)legitimization cannot be exhausted but only kept up with, as far as possible, in terms of these social, political, cultural and technological developments.

The papers in this issue offer newer insight into the development of World Englishes from the prism of critical discourse analysis, in the exploration of how political discourse can take on the unique linguistic properties of the cultural contexts in which it is conceived, and accordingly sculpt the identities of all those addressed or involved. The issue brings into focus (a) culturally-specific linguistic trends in political discourse; (b) trends in critical discourse analysis in the study of socio-political language around the world; (c) construction of

sociocultural and political identities on new media; (d) issues of power in the choice of language in politics; and (e) political myth-making in different sociolinguistic contexts.

This issue makes an effort to focus in more depth on how critical discourse analysis can be employed in a further study of World Englishes by exploring the discursive processes of racialization, (de)legitimization, and populism in global politics. In this vein, the papers here explore more closely the creation of hegemonic socio-political narratives, what Bhatia for instance describes as the *Discourse of Illusion*, that comes to be recognised as ‘the dominant framework (through endorsement from many witnesses) within which understanding of that reality operates’, and what Schulter terms in her paper as ‘hegemony of representation’. In this way, the success of any social or political vision rests on the acceptability of that narrative by listeners and readers. The belief that the vision truly deciphers reality and, most importantly, that it is the only legitimate reality. We discuss in this issue, global discursive movements that rely on affective rhetorical devices to create relevance and resonance amongst local target audiences, in favour specific social or political agendas.

To begin, Breeze’s paper employs a corpus- assisted approach to critical discourse analysis in order to explore the construction of populist language in political campaigning on Twitter by Nigel Farage. She argues that this is a carefully managed informal register, comprising colloquial expressions that contribute to an impression of Farage as man of ‘the people’. Emerging from a sociocultural context where large swathes of British society ‘lost out in processes of globalisation have become disaffected, distrustful of the establishment’, Farage’s narrative signals a kinship with the British people and ‘identification with this speech community’. Breeze demonstrates how through assimilation with a ‘popular habitus’, Farage is able to establish a kinship with British people, appealing to their emotions and sensibilities.

Playing on a concept similar to ‘popular habitus’, Bhatia in her paper explores the discursive construction of Hindutva by India’s populist leader Narendra Modi. Drawing on the theoretical framework of Discourse of Illusion, she uses a multi-perspective approach to critical discourse analysis, which tackles data at the level of historicity, linguistic action and social impact, to deconstruct the use of Hindi-English code-switching in the articulation of ‘rural-centric policies expressed through urbanised message platforms’ to diminish polarity between urban and rural voters. As with Breeze, this paper too argues that the unity of Hindus across caste and community, urban and rural regions depends on the ‘animation of a foreign other’ that counters the national habitus, or identity of the Indian people and nation.

Nartey and Bhatia further develop this representation of a united Us and threatening Them in populist discourse in their study of Ghana’s president Kwame Nkrumah’s political narrative. Implementing a discourse-historical approach, the paper analyzes the creation of mythic discourse that legitimizes the construction of ‘heroes and villains, protagonists and antagonists’ in what can be perceived as ‘a radical anti-imperialist rhetoric and discourse of resistance’. The authors reveal that through use of significant hyperbolic metaphors and stereotypes, in addition to use of ‘Ghanaianisms’, coinages/neologism and idiomatic expressions, Nkrumah is able to ‘(emotionally) connect with his audience and strengthen the

persuasive impact of his speeches... highlight[ing] the role of language or discourse and (post)independence leaders in political decolonization’.

Schulter in her paper integrates critical discourse analysis and geosemiotics in order to investigate the Turkish government’s framing of 2016’s attempted coup and the, subsequently, legitimized crackdown on dissent through analysis of government-sponsored billboards. Drawing on slogans that tap into people’s collective memory of the Republic’s founding father, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s ideology, the emerging post-coup democratic narrative recontextualizes historical memory and national sentiment to inspire ‘revolutionary patriotism and winning key battles against foreign foes’ in the hearts and minds of the Turkish people, forging a renewed national identity. Combining threads of nationalism and populism, president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan enforces the notion of a ‘monolithic people whose persistent struggle against Goliaths resulted in victory both in the framing of the Turkish revolution under Atatürk and the coup overthrow under Erdoğan’. In this way, we witness the creation of a powerful populist narrative that firmly establishes Us and Them divisions, by emotionally pleading nationalistic and revolutionary citizens to unite through invocation of a collective memory and rise against terrorists who threaten the sovereignty of the nation.

Sarkhoh and KhosraviNik, adopting a Social Media Critical Discourse Studies (SM-CDS) approach to the study of identity politics and collective identity, reiterate the propensity of ‘new Arabism discourses’ in the Middle East, emerging from the bottom up through social media channels, to formulate a national identity ‘largely predicated on the negative Other representation. As such, the primary topics dominating most of the posts revolve around a variety of Iran (the Persians, the Other, the rival non-Arab) related stories and events’. This is not dissimilar to the creation of an enemy for the establishment of a muscular India in Bhatia’s paper, a sovereign Britain in Breeze’s paper, or a valiant and united pan-Africa in Nartey and Bhatia’s. Previously mentioned papers have constructed this Negative Other in the form of Pakistan, the EU or more monolithically, the West; anti-nationalistic terrorists; and so too, the authors note, Arab national identity manifests itself discursively through the ‘the extensive negative framing of the Other (Iran, Israel, Zionists, West; often in conflation)’; the legitimization of self and nation expressed through the delegitimization of an Other. This discursive strategy works to, as mentioned earlier, curate a national identity by drawing on local, cultural values, emotions and speech communities.

The characteristic of nationalist or populist discourse to construct and demonstrate against a negative Other, one against whom a populist leader or social movement might qualify him/itself to defend, and on the basis of which a national habitus or identity is represented, seems to surface as one of the most salient in the papers across this issue. However, while populist narratives from different parts of the world may share a similar aim, often that is protection of core values or agenda, they need to, as Bhatia mentions in this issue, be ‘woven with threads of local sociocultural sentiment and language to evoke the appropriate response and emotions in the target audiences’.

We see a demonstration of this in the paper by Ross and Rivers, who state that ‘pursuit of legitimacy is a core feature of political discourse and is especially related to practice and socio-political effect, to audience and context, and to both history and the future’. Adopting Reyes’ (2011) framework for legitimisation, which stems from Critical Discourse Analysis, their paper analyzes the influence of American celebrity culture on Trump’s twitter discourse. Ross and Rivers make a case for the importance of considering impact of the language of local popular culture on socio-political discourse. To illustrate this, they look at the rise and popularity of America’s president Donald Trump, a result they attribute to a new form of political rhetoric that derives from ‘informal and de-professionalised language use, which Kayam (2018) states continues a trend of anti-intellectualism’. This style of discourse, thus, has the effect of depicting Trump as ‘authentic’ and trustworthy to American voters, who like Farage’s audiences, have grown wary of savvy politicians and manipulative party politics.

On a similar note, Ng’s paper in this issue takes the notion of legitimizing political sentiment through affectivized discourse further in exploring Singapore’s People’s Action Party, using critical discourse analysis to investigate why the context of ‘neoliberalized political engagement, performance and presentation have become important factors’ in order to ‘achieve relatability and forge affinity with citizen-audiences’ through use of popular genres. Also reiterating the significance of a popular or national habitus, as with previous papers, Ng demonstrates how Singapore’s five ‘Shared National Values’ contribute to the creation of a neoliberal “‘Asian”-centric discourse’ articulated through political performance ‘leveraged in and through the affordances of informality and casualness that a communication genre like the talk show provides... blur[ring] the distinction between publicity and entertainment’.

Lazar, in her paper for this special issue, further explores the intertwining threads of Singapore’s Shared National Values and national identity, by focusing on the LGBTQ social movement known as Pink Dot in Singapore. Drawing on a critical discourse perspective (extended to the discourse of the marginalized), undertaken in dialogue with sociolinguistic theorization, Lazar notes that ‘[d]iscursively associating itself closely with the nation has enabled LGBTQ activists to tactically navigate the legal restrictions and stigmatization of non-normative sexualities and genders, and survive the scrutiny and retaliation of the Singapore government’. Analysing data that derives from published videos on digital platforms such as YouTube, Lazar notes that ‘homonationalistic sensibility’ by Pink Dot is cultivated through ‘particular language varieties, speech styles, and patterns of representation’ in order to achieve qualities of legitimacy and authenticity, reinforcing earlier arguments by authors of this issue that legitimacy of any socio-political narrative derives from an ‘existing social order in terms of its norms, values, and practices, which are presumed to be widely shared, whether or not the group personally shares them’.

Musloff’s paper, especially, elaborates on the notion of national habitus or national identity and its metaphorical construction as a ‘body’, most evident in English-speaking cultures. Employing metaphor analysis on a corpus of responses by participants in over twenty countries and from more than forty linguistic backgrounds, including New Zealand,

Australia and China. The paper investigates culture-specific variation in interpretations of metaphorical conceptualizations of the nation, which can offer significant insights into the emotive and ideological associations of the publics of any nation or state. These metaphorical conceptualizations of nation as the body, be it as a person, an organ, or geobody can be seen to illustrate the fairly intrinsic role that nation-identity can play in the cultivation of an individual's identity and language, including their allegiance or aversion to certain politics and parties, their judgment about power and hierarchy, and ultimately, 'sought in conceptual traditions, including religious and philosophical backgrounds, idioms, proverbs and other culturally important discursive traditions... as well as in historically or topically salient political/ideological issues'.

3 | DISCUSSION

The papers of this issue demonstrate two salient points with regards to the Englishes of world politics. Firstly, as traditional political genres (speeches and conventional press conferences) have slowly invaded more pop cultural mediums of expressions (blogs, tweets, daily shows etc.), public discourses have begun to change in nature. Some of these changes have included

the rise of "post-heroic" societies and the... distinct constructions of common pasts; the increasing discontinuity and fragmentation of public and other modes of discourse; the role of technology as ever more persuasive and its connection to and effect on discourses; the collapse of democracy within formally stable democratic regimes; and, of course most recently, the financial and economic crisis and the further development of neoliberalism as the late modernity's central politic-economic ideology....

(Krzyzanowski and Forchtner, 2016, p. 56)

These changes have also meant the expansion of critical discourse analysis towards more integrative and interdisciplinary research, allowing for a more multi-layered study of sociocultural and political discourses. The different approaches within the wider school of critical discourse analysis illustrated within this issue, which have included the integration of metaphor, corpus, historicity, social media analysis and so forth to more fundamental tenets of critical discourse studies, have revealed not just trends in public discourses in the construction of public argumentation and identity-construction, but also the meaningful lenses that CDA can offer studies in World Englishes.

This connects to our second point- the unique characteristics that political discourse imbibes from its local sociocultural context. The papers in this issue illustrate how political parties, political leaders, and socio-political movements and issues are most persuasively narrativized when they play on local sentiment and language features representative of local communities and audiences. Use of culture specific metaphors, categorization, local coinages, local language varieties and patterns of representation and so forth, illustrate a collective

habitus which needs to be tapped into through careful linguistic choices to positively present the speaker, party or argument, in addition to medium of conveyance, as relevant and sympathetic to respective audiences. The language used in the construction of sociopolitical arguments attempting to shape reality, should be seen as representing a particular perspective on reality, a specific belief system, and community. The discursive creation of same-ness in socio-argument then becomes effective in legitimizing these arguments, as well as creating a connection and familiarity between speakers and listeners. Therefore, we can argue that the study of any 'political text can be considered as a highly culture-bound text that may look opaque if not fully contextualized' (Esposito, 2017: 26) within particular speech communities, their historical and political contexts, as well as a shared, collective habitus.

The papers in this issue explored socio-political discourse from different parts of the world, including Ghana, Turkey, Britain, Singapore, America, India and the Middle East, with the aim of exploring how resulting political discourses take on different shapes and characters in each place, despite often common, populist aims. It seems fair to argue then, that in being able to demystify hidden power structures of political discourse, as well as gauging its creation of collective identities and framework for understanding different issues and events, research needs to be integrative and adventurous by forging connections between areas of research (CDA and WE for instance) which are traditionally regarded as inconsonant. This can include taking a more macro perspective to consider meaning-making beyond simple linguistic features, to consider the contribution of cultural myths and models, genre, medium of expression, and technology on the impact of collective identity and belief systems.

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