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NEW  
DISCOURSES  
IN  
CONTEMPORARY  
CHINA



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**Abstracts of plenary speeches**

**Critical Discourse Analysis in a Multi-cultural context: Foundations, Methods and the Way Ahead**

Paul Chilton

Professor of Linguistics at Lancaster University, Visiting Professor at Tianjin University of Commerce

In previous lectures in the NDCC collaboration I have tended to focus on methods of linguistic description (e.g. metaphor, implied meaning, deixis, what SFG calls ‘transitivity’). In this lecture, however, I will try to address more fundamental questions, questions that have been stimulated by our highly fruitful collaboration in the NDCC process. CDA scholars in the West do not always clarify the grounds (philosophical, ethical or political) on which their critique is based. They have been criticised also for selective analysis biased by their political preferences. In seeking to do collaborative CDA in two cultures, for example Europe and China, we cannot avoid examining the basic principles that ground and guide the critical element in CDA. The lecture will thus raise questions for future dialogue. What are the philosophical, ethical and political principles underlying CDA? Are they universal or are the underlying criteria involved in CDA relative to different cultures and value systems, between societies, or even within them? On the practical level, how is it possible to engage in critical discourse analysis in societies around the world where free speech is limited or manipulated? On the level of methods of analysis, in what sense, and to what extent, is it possible for CDA to claim rational objectivity? Finally, I will try to suggest ways in which the NDCC collaborative process can continue to make progress.

## **Review and Prospect of Media Discourse Studies in Greater China**

Doreen D. WU

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong, China

The paper will first give a review of the existing literature on studying media discourses in the Greater China region (i.e., in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macao as well as mainland China), identifying the range of sociolinguistic and linguistic perspectives as well as the range of the media genres these studies have covered. The paper will then focus on the issues of globalization, localization, and/or glocalization in the media discursive practice of Greater China and propose two notions, “discursive appropriation” and “discursive reinvention”, as significant to the study of glocalization in the media discourses of Greater China. Detailed operational definitions, illustrations, and methods of applying these two notions to investigating the changing media discourses of Greater China will be explored and presented in details.

## **Discourse and Social Change in China: Some Methodological Reflections**

Hailong Tian

Tianjin University of Commerce/Lancaster University

After three years of research on new discourses in contemporary China, I become more aware of the roles discourse plays in the social transformation period of China. In this talk, I will discuss some methodological issues in investigating the dialectic of discourse and social change, with an intension to focus on China rather than on the western society as CDA does.

But I will begin with CDA, because CDA did do some pioneering work in studying the dialectic of discourse and society. I'll review briefly the CDA researches done by Fairclough, Wodak and van Dijk, and argue that CDA as a western political movement of intellectuals is not likely to find its replica in China, but that CDA as an academic enquiry will constantly have its dialogue with various Chinese academic research traditions. One aspect of this dialogue may seem to be an application of CDA principles to Chinese studies.

I'll continue to discuss the way of applying CDA principles by considering methodological issues. The focus will be on discourse production rather than on discourse consumption. I will discuss, for example, the strategies of recontextualization, genre chain, and interdiscursivity. Empirical research examples will be used for illustration and further questions will be raised for further thinking.

## **Language and Consumption: Crafting a New Chinese Middle-class Lifestyle**

Qing Zhang

Department of Anthropology, University of Arizona

As a country undergoing rapid socioeconomic restructuring, China provides a rich site for research on the constitutive role that language plays in socioeconomic transformation. This study examines the linguistic practices of two hosts of a Chinese television show, “S-Information Station,” that promotes a new cosmopolitan middle-class lifestyle through consumption. The analysis focuses on how the two hosts strategically combine a range of innovative linguistic (including phonological, lexical and syntactic) features and English-Mandarin code mixing to construct a new cosmopolitan Mandarin style. In contrast to the state-sanctioned standard Mandarin which is based on the phonology of Beijing Mandarin and considered a regional (i.e. Mainland China) Mandarin variety, the cosmopolitan Mandarin style is distinctively non-conventional and supra-regional. Analysis of the discourse of the hosts shows that the new Mandarin style not only indexes their cool, trendy and cosmopolitan persona but also constitutes part of the symbolic repertoire of those who participate in a new cosmopolitan lifestyle. As powerful tools for hegemony or social transformation (Ginsburg et al, 2002), mass media have been shown to differentiate and stratify the Chinese media publics in the reform period (Yang, 1997). This study demonstrates that the new Mandarin style (and the television show) participate in such processes of differentiation and stratification. Being integral to the lifestyle and consumption regimen prescribed by the hosts, the new linguistic style interpellates the audience as cosmopolitan consumers living a trendy and middle-class lifestyle, sharing tastes and consumption practices with their counterparts in other parts of the world.

## **The construction of social order and values in contemporary China through Commercial organizations’ Publicity materials**

Yi Li

Nankai University

This study aims to examine how commercial organizations’ publicity discourse helps to construct social values and order in contemporary China and what implications this may have for the formation of class awareness at a time when new social structure is taking its form and social cohesion is up the political agenda. To this end, a critical discourse analysis was made of the real estate publicity materials and an interview survey was conducted of a sample of their audiences. Based on the discourse analysis and interview data, the research achieved a series of results concerning the construction of social values and order by real estate publicity materials. It finds that through the witty use of such discursive means as symbol construction, linguistics devices and persuasive strategies, real estate publicity materials are set to achieve a two fold effect: to maximize sales and profit and to construct a money and enjoyment oriented social values and social order which are conducive to sales. As revealed from

the interview survey, the social values and order constructed in this way, while instilling intensified class awareness, has also exacerbated the perceived distance and apathy between different social strata. It can be concluded from these findings that the commercial organization or the market, where government's influence has been constantly diminishing, is counteracting the government's agenda to build harmonious society not only through its redistribution mechanism, but also through discursive resources.

### **Language, Space, and Place: New Questions for Discourse Studies**

Barbara Johnstone

Carnegie Mellon University

Linguists in Europe and North America have long been concerned with place. Be it nation, region, county, city, neighborhood, or block, place has long been adduced as a key correlate of linguistic variation, and geography has often entered into explanations of variation. Since in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, dialectologists have been cataloguing and mapping how language varies from place to place. Starting in the 1960s, sociolinguists turned their focus to "social facts" such as class, gender, and race as influences on talk, but they often continued to delimit their research sites as cities, neighborhoods, counties and, in the U.S., states. Place has also played a role in accounts of variation in more metaphorical and more abstract ways: people's "locations" in social networks affect the likelihood of their being linguistic leaders or followers; changes move from centers to peripheries, or sometimes from peripheries to centers, be these physical or social. Studies of the spread of language change have sometimes used models of diffusion from geography.

More recently, place has again become central in sociolinguistics. Some sociolinguists are exploring how physical environments affect patterns of variation and change by shaping speakers' social environments. Others are exploring the linguistic expression and construction of "place identity." Others describe "linguistic landscapes" and "linguistic soundscapes." They explore how signs and other visual and aural evidence of language shape attitudes towards speakers and varieties. Another strand of inquiry has to do with how places can be socially constructed through language or talk about language and how varieties of talk get mapped onto physical and political places through talk about talk.

This paper summarizes all these developments and points to key sources about each. Then I outline several newer ways of thinking about language and place that have emerged in the context of widespread interest in how the social world is collectively shaped in discourse and in how individuals experience language and linguistic variation. I give a few examples of discourse research of this kind, and I end by suggesting some questions about discourse and place that might be interesting to ask in the Chinese context.

## **About the plenary speakers**

**Paul Chilton** is professor of linguistics at Lancaster University, and Visiting Professor at Tianjin University of Commerce. He is co-editor of *Journal of Language and Politics* (with Ruth Wodak) and author of several books and many articles and book chapters. He is the principal investigator of the Leverhulme-Trust funded project “New Discourses in Contemporary China”. His current research interests include: discourse space theory and language and critique. He is now working on two books: *Space, Time and Distance: Discourse Space Theory, Language and Critique: Understanding CDA*. Email: [p.chilton@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:p.chilton@lancaster.ac.uk)  
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**Doreen D. Wu (吳東英)** is an associate professor in the Department of Chinese and Bilingual Studies, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Her primary research interests and publications are in the area of comparative discourse studies, glocalization and multilingual media communication in the Greater China region. She is the co-editor for the book series *Studying Multicultural Discourses* (The Hong Kong University Press); and she serves on the editorial board for a number of international as well as national journals, e.g., *Journal of Multicultural Discourses* (Multilingual-Matters Ltd, England, UK), *Critical Arts* (Routledge), *Contemporary Linguistics* (The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, PRC), *Modern Foreign Languages* (Guangdong U of Foreign Studies, PRC), and *Journal of Contemporary Chinese Discourses* (Zhejiang U Press, PRC).

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**Hailong Tian (田海龙)** is professor of linguistics and dean of School of Foreign Languages, Tianjin University of Commerce. He is also researcher at the Department of Linguistics and English language, Lancaster University. He is investigator and network facilitator of the Leverhulme Trust-funded project “New Discourses in Contemporary China”. He has recently completed a research project “Critical studies of Discourses in China”, funded by China’s National Grant for Philosophy and Social Sciences. His current research interests include sociolinguistics and discourse studies in relation to language use in the present Chinese society. He has published articles and book reviews in national and international journals. His recent publications include *Discourse Studies: Category, Perspective and Methodology* (Shanghai Foreign Languages Education Press, 2009).

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**Qing Zhang** (PhD Linguistics, Stanford University) is an assistant professor in the Department of Anthropology, University of Arizona, USA. Her main research interests are in linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics. Her research concerns the

constitutive role of language in contexts of social-political transformations and globalization, with a geographical focus on China. She has worked on the ways in which linguistic resources are employed in the construction of new social distinctions and the reconfiguration of the contemporary Chinese social-political landscape. Her recent work has appeared in *Language in Society*, *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, and *Words, Worlds, and Material Girls: Language, Gender, Globalization*.

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**Yi Li (李艺)** is professor of linguistics in School of Foreign Languages at Nankai University. His research focuses mainly on pragmatics, critical discourse analysis, politeness phenomena, and cross-cultural communication etc. His past work has mainly focused on the communication between supervisors and supervisees in both inter-cultural and intra-cultural context, with particular interest in relation between language use and power relations, and he has published a series articles in journals. His current research centres on critical discourse analysis in investigation of linguistic and pragmatic meaning across a range of institutional discourse in relation to economic reform and social transformation.

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**Barbara Johnstone** is professor of Rhetoric and Linguistics, director of Graduate Studies, and Linguistics major advisor in Carnegie Mellon University, adjunct Professor of Linguistics in University of Pittsburgh. She is the editor-in-chief of the journal *Language in Society*. Her major research interests include connections between discourse and place and in the role of the individual in language and linguistic theory, discourse structure and function, sociolinguistics, rhetoric, history and theory, style and stylistics and Arabic linguistics. She is author of *Discourse Analysis* (2002, Oxford: Blackwell).

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