



Cultural Discourse Analysis

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What is it?

Cultural discourse analysis (CuDA) is an approach to the study of communication which explores culturally distinctive communication practices in our world. The theory is based upon the premise that communication consists of culturally situated *means* and *meanings* active in various local contexts. In an effort to extract these means and meanings, CuDA analysts study how people talk about identity, relations, action, feeling, and dwelling. The research methodology in this analysis consists of four distinct yet complementary modes of analysis: descriptive, interpretive, comparative, and critical. The empirical, field-based literature has produced insights about intercultural communication and cultural approaches to communication around the globe.

Who uses the concept?

In the field of communication, CuDA is mostly used by scholars of Language and Social Interaction. It has also been used in the sub-fields of environmental, intercultural, and health communication, as well as rhetoric and mediated communication. Recently, in the field of applied communication, CuDA was utilized to assist General Motors (GM) in designing a culturally appropriate in-car communication speech system for the U.S. and Mainland China.

Fit with intercultural dialogue?

Intercultural dialogue happens when members of different cultural groups, who hold conflicting opinions and assumptions, speak to one another in acknowledgment of those differences. CuDA not only acknowledges these differences, it also embraces, highlights and celebrates them. The empirical, field-based literature characteristic of this

approach has produced insights into how different symbols, premises, forms, and motivations for conversation can cause difficulties in intercultural interactions, and by extension dialogue. Through an understanding and appreciation of these cross-cultural differences, scholars hope to be able to anticipate and troubleshoot both visible and invisible intercultural misunderstandings in an effort to smooth the intercultural dialogue process.

What work remains?

The framework has been utilized to address social and cultural concerns, such as identity politics, pedagogical practice, social justice, humanitarian aid, environmental issues, and intercultural dialogue. The ever flexible and inclusive nature of the theory, philosophy, and methodology of this approach means that CuDA could be applied to all aspects of societal life. Since communication constitutes and organizes societal life, human institutions such as education, law, medicine, economics, religion, and politics are understood to be a result or outcome of specific communication processes. There is much work to be done to understand how discursive resources deeply rooted in history and geography come together in our increasingly global and multicultural world.

Resources

- Carbaugh, D. (2007). Cultural Discourse Analysis: The investigation of communication practices with special attention to intercultural encounters. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 36, 167-82.
- Scollo, M. (2011). Cultural approaches to discourse analysis: A theoretical and methodological conversation with special focus on Donal Carbaugh's Cultural Discourse Theory. *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, 6(1), 1-32.