Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

Gender, Power and Ideology in Discourse

Edited by

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institutional settings, institutional discourse analysis, and political discussion.
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Politicking Gender in Discourse:
Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis
as Political Perspective and Praxis

Michelle M. Lazar

A critical perspective on unequal social arrangements sustained through language use, with the goals of social transformation and emancipation, constitutes the cornerstone of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and many feminist language studies. Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis brings together, for the first time, an international collection of studies at the nexus of CDA and feminist scholarship (which includes feminist studies of language). The specific aim of the volume is to advance a rich and nuanced understanding of the complex workings of power and ideology in discourse in sustaining a (hierarchically) gendered social order. This is especially pertinent in present times where issues of gender, power and ideology have become increasingly complex and subtle. First, feminist debates and theorization since the late 1980s have shown that speaking of 'women' and 'men' in universal, totalizing terms is problematic longer tenable. Gender as a category intersects with, and is shot through by, other categories of social identity such as sexuality, ethnicity, social position and geography. Patriarchy is also an ideological system that interacts in complex ways with say, corporatist and consumerist ideologies. Second, the workings of gender ideology and asymmetrical power relations in discourse are assuming more subtle forms in the contemporary period, albeit in different degrees and ways in different local communities. Grounded in specific empirical studies, the contributions in this book address both kinds of intricacy in their analyses of various discursive structures and strategies emergent in their different texts and talk. In a variety of cultural and institutional contexts – which include the news and advertising media, educational settings, workplaces, governments and transnational organizations – the studies show the complex and subtle ways in which taken-for-granted social assumptions and hegemonic
kind of relationship between men and women.

Power relations are discursively produced, perpetuated, and negotiated through the medium of language. While power relations between men and women are similar to those between classes and ethnic groups, they are not identical. Power relations in the family, for example, are not the same as power relations in the workplace. Power relations in the family are often hidden and taken for granted, while power relations in the workplace are more visible and often challenged.

The concept of power relations is central to understanding gender, race, and class. Power relations are not fixed or static, but are constantly negotiated and renegotiated. They are also not absolute or unchanging, but are subject to historical and cultural contexts. The study of power relations is important for understanding the ways in which we construct and reproduce our social realities.
sufficiently organized themselves to come together in a shared forum. This volume, it is hoped, is one such attempt to draw together international scholars working in 'feminist CDA'. The issue of collectivity and gaining group visibility is important, too, for another reason. Although CDA in its early years had a marginal status within the more established mainstream fields in linguistics, today it has shifted more to the centre and has become somewhat of an orthodoxy itself (see Billig 2000).

Writing in the early 1990s, van Dijk had remarked that 'for CDA to become a prominent approach in the humanities and social sciences, we should expect dozens of books, hundreds of articles and conference papers, and special symposia or conference sections yearly' (1991: 1). More than ten years on, all these have been achieved and more: for example, in the year 2004, an international CDA conference and, separately, a new international journal on critical discourse studies have appeared. The importance, then, of feminist visibility and voice in 'mainstream' CDA scholarship, curiously, also has a political function.

**Why a feminist critical discourse analysis?**

It is now widely recognized that there has been a turn towards language or, more specifically, towards discourse in social scientific research. From post-structuralist theorization, we have a view of discourse as a site of struggle, where forces of social (re)production and contestation are played out. Within feminist scholarship, the discursive turn, not surprisingly, therefore, is reflected in volumes outside linguistics (for example, Wilkinson and Kitzinger 1995) as well as within linguistics (for example, Hall and Bucholtz 1995; Wodak 1997; Litosseliti and Sunderland 2002). The present volume, from the perspective of feminist CDA, is intended as a timely contribution to the growing body of feminist discourse literature.

Wilkinson and Kitzinger (1995: 5) have noted that there is really 'no necessary coincidence between the interests of feminists and discourse analysts', even though the possibility for fruitful engagement is there. In terms of feminism and CDA in particular, however, there is actually much overlap in terms of social emancipatory goals. Indeed, unlike feminist approaches that apply descriptive discourse analytic methods, feminist CDA has the advantage of operating, at the outset, within a politically invested programme of discourse analysis. CDA offers a sophisticated theorization of the relationship between social practices and discourse structures (see, for example, Wodak and Meyer 2001, for various types of theorization), and a wide range of tools and strategies for close analysis of actual, contextualized uses of language. Further, under the umbrella of CDA research, explicit analyses of various forms of systemic inequalities have been developed. For feminist discourse scholars, much can be learnt about the interconnections as well as particularities of discursive strategies employed in various forms of social oppression that can feed back into feminist strategies for social change. The marriage of feminism with CDA, in sum, can produce a rich and powerful political critique for action.

**Feminist CDA as a political perspective on gender**

Key interrelated principles of feminist CDA as theory and practice are outlined below.

**Feminist analytical resistance**

CDA is part of an emancipatory critical social science which, as mentioned, is openly committed to the achievement of a just social order through a critique of discourse. As feminist critical discourse analysts, our central concern is with critiquing discourses which sustain a patriarchal social order: that is, relations of power that systematically privilege men as a social group and disadvantage, exclude and disempower women as a social group. One of the aims is to show that social practices on the whole, far from being neutral, are in fact gendered in this way. The gendered nature of social practices can be described on two levels (Connell 1987; Flax 1990). First, 'gender' functions as an interpretative category that enables participants in a community to make sense of and structure their particular social practices. Second, gender is a social relation that enters into and partially constitutes all other social relations and activities. Based on the specific, asymmetric meanings of 'male' and 'female', and the consequences being assigned to one or the other within concrete social practices, such an allocation becomes a constraint on further practices.
Acriticalpraxis-orientedresearch,therefore,cannotanddoesnot pretendtoadoptaneutralstance;infact,asLather(1986:259)notes, ... 1986;Fox-Keller1996;seealsoChouliarakiandFairclough's1999 responsetoWiddowson).

'Gender'asideologicalstructure

Fromacriticalview,ideologiesarerepresentationsofpracticesformed fromparticularperspectivesintheinterestofmaintainingunequal powerrelationsanddominance.Althoughsuchaviewofideologyin Marxistaccountswasdevelopedspecificallyintermsofclassrelations, ... theconceptnowisarticulatedinequitablepowerrelationsand
domains,whereasideologyismorebroadlydefinedas"whatwemake
meaningofourlives"(vanDijk1991).Theconceptofideologyhasthe
advantageofbeingmoreflexibleandwelldesignedtorapidlyrespond
tochangingsocialconditions,whereasclassistheoreticalframework
isconsideredlessflexibleandadaptability.

Fromananalyticperspective,ideologycanbeseenas"aninstrument
ofimperialpower"(Wiskemann1996).Ideologyfunctionsasamechanism
fortheconstructionandmaintenanceofhierarchicalpowerstructures
andinequalities.Ideology func -

...
To say that patriarchal gender ideology is structural is to suggest that it is enacted and renewed in a society’s institutions and social practices, which mediate between the individual and the social order. It means, therefore, that asymmetrical gender relations cannot merely be explained by individuals’ intentions, even though it is often individuals who act as agents of oppression (Weedon 1997). Connell (1987; 1995) argues that institutions are substantively structured in terms of gender ideology so that even though gender may not be the most important aspect in a particular instance, it is in the majority of cases. This accounts for the pervasiveness of tacit androcentrism in many organizational cultures, in which not only men but also frequently women are complicit. (See the case of women professors in universities, and women employees in companies who perpetuate sexist attitudes and practices in Chapters 5 and 3, respectively, in this volume.) In turn, gender inequality gets perpetuated through women’s and men’s habitual, differential participation in their particular institutions, also understood in terms of particular communities of practice (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992). The various ways that the institutionalization of gender inequality is discursively enacted are examined in this volume in regard to a wide range of institutions and social practices: in advertising and news media, educational settings, workplaces and associations, and political institutions. These institutions range from the local Chapters 2, 3, 5 and 8, national Chapters 6, 7, 9 and 10 and supranational Chapter 4 level.

Although the prevailing gender ideology is hegemonic and is routinely exercised in a myriad of social practices, it is also contestable. The dialectical tension between structural permanences and the practical activity of people engaged in social practices (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1992), means that there are ruptures in the otherwise seamless and natural quality of gender ideology. While a focus on creativity and transgression is important, this must be, at the same time, carefully considered in relation to the constraints and possibilities afforded by particular social structures and practices. Otherwise, a celebration of agency on its own can become romanticized; as Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999: 48) remind us, the extent to which, and for whom, interaction can be creative largely depend on the particular social structures. Another issue worth considering is whether acts that go against gendered expectations may unwittingly result in the reinforcement of the existing gender structure. For instance, the ‘masculinization’ of talk by women in power (see Chapters 2, 3 and 4 below), or the ‘feminization’ of forms of masculinity (see Chapter 6), on one level, may appear to transgress the expected gender norms for women and men; yet, on another level, these gender crossings inadvertently emphasize the underlying dualism of the gender structure and, as these studies also show, the deviations from the gender-appropriate norms are policed through criticism by others and/or through containment.

Complexity of gender and power relations

Third-wave feminist and post-structuralist theories have contributed to complex and nuanced understandings of power relations and gender at work within particular social orders. Two important insights for a feminist CDA have been the recognition of difference and diversity among ‘women’ (and ‘men’), which has called for undertaking historically and culturally contingent analyses of gender and sexism; and the pervasiveness of the subtle, discursive workings of modern power in many modern societies (both of these are discussed below). While there is a diversity of forms which gender and sexism assume in different cultures and across time, the structure of gender (and the power asymmetry that it entails) has been remarkably persistent over time and place. An important goal, then, for feminist CDA is to undertake contingent analyses of the oppression of women, as Rubin has put it, in its ‘endless variety and monotonic similarity’ (quoted in Fraser and Nicholson 1990: 28).

Power relations are a struggle over interests, which are exercised, reflected, maintained and resisted through a variety of modalities, extents and degrees of explicitness. Overt forms of gender asymmetries or sexism include blatant exclusionary gate-keeping social practices, physical violence against women, and misogynistic verbal harassment and denigration. Such overt manifestations of power (or the threat of it), to varying extents, remain a reality for women in many societies, including Western societies such as the USA which, in spite of legislation against blatant sex discrimination, continues to witness a rampant ‘rape culture’. Much more pervasive and insidious in modern societies, however, is the operation of a subtle and seemingly innocuous form of power that is substantively discursive in nature. This form of power is embedded and dispersed throughout networks of relations, is self-regulating, and produces subjects in both senses of the word (Foucault 1977). From a feminist perspective, it is necessary to note, though, that even though power may be ‘everywhere’, gendered subjects are affected by it in different ways. From a critical discourse analytic perspective, too, it is useful to complement the concept of modern power with the view of power relations as dominance, particularly in Gramsci’s terms of hegemony (see Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999). The effectiveness
of modern power (and hegemony) is that it is mostly cognitive, based on an internalization of gendered norms and acted out routinely in the texts and talk of everyday life. This makes it an invisible power, 'misrecognized' as such, and 'recognized' instead as quite legitimate and natural (Bourdieu 1991).

Relationsof power and dominance (cf. Foucault, Bourdieu, and Gramsci), however, can be discursively resisted as well as counter-resisted in a dynamic struggle over securing and challenging the interests at stake. The task of feminist CDA is to examine how power and dominance are discursively produced and/or resisted in various ways through textual representations of gendered social practices, and through interactional strategies of talk. Also of concern to feminist CDA are issues of access to forms of discourse, such as particular communicative events and culturally valued genres (see van Dijk 1993, 1996) that can be empowering for women's participation in public domains (see Chapters 5 and 8 below).

The mechanisms of power are produced and reproduced through the (de)construction of social identities and categories (Fairclough 1989, 1992). For feminist CDA, the focus is on how gendered expressions of power are discursively constituted, maintained, and resisted in representations of social practices, in social relationships between people, and in people's social and personal identities in texts and talk. Underlying a critical feminist analysis of discourse in these three domains is the principle of 'gender relationality', which may be signaled explicitly or maintained implicitly in the studies. Gender relationality is the structural and institutional framework that conditions the experience of power and knowledge. It is the context in which power operates, and it is through the (de)construction of gender that power is produced and reproduced.
focus on two kinds of relationships. First, and primarily, the focus is on the discursive co-constructions of ways of doing and being a woman and a man in particular communities of practice. The concern is not with women in isolation, but vis-à-vis men within particular gender orders. Gender relationality in this sense also renders analyzable, from a feminist perspective, how men talk (see Johnson and Meinhof 1997) and are textually represented. Second, gender relationality entails an analytic focus also on the dynamics between forms of masculinity (Connell 1995): specifically, in terms of how these participate within hierarchies of oppression that affect women. Similarly, there needs to be a critical awareness of relations among (groups of) women: for example, how women may rally together in solidarity to oppose some form of discrimination, or how women themselves operating within androcentric cultures (for instance, at home or at salaried workplaces) help perpetuate sexist attitudes and practices against other women. Where the aim of such analysis is praxis-oriented and concerned with social transformation of structures of gender oppression, awareness and attitudinal change by both men and women are necessary.

Social constructionist approaches emphasize the on-going, iterative and active accomplishment of gender (along with other identities) in and through discourse (West, Lazar and Kramarae 1997). Accomplishment suggests that people, through their linguistic (and non-linguistic) behaviour, produce rather than reflect a priori identities as ‘women’ and ‘men’ in particular historical and cultural locations, although the produced identities often get viewed as ‘natural’, immanent and transhistorical. Within feminist CDA, the use of both the ethnomethodologically-based concept of ‘doing gender’ as well as the post-modernist idea of ‘gender performativity’ can be found. The ethnomethodological ‘take’ is quite clearly compatible with feminist CDA research in its insistence on situating gender accomplishments within institutional frameworks, and in asserting that doing gender means creating hierarchical differences between people (West and Zimmerman 1987). The ethnomethodological orientation is evident in this volume, for example, in Holmes’ and Wodak’s discussions on ‘doing power’ and ‘doing politics’, respectively.

Post-modernist understandings of ‘gender as performance’, however, have been notably problematic for some feminists (e.g., Grant 1993; Kotthoff and Wodak 1997; Hekman 1999), who rightly point out that there is a tendency by Butler, for instance, to locate everything in discourse and overlook experiential and material aspects of identity and power relations. Also problematic from a feminist perspective is the celebration of individual freedoms to perform transgressive acts such as cross-dressing, which are not tantamount to a radical subversion of the gender structures; indeed, such acts unwittingly only help to reinforce those very structures. However, it needs to be noted, too, that Butler (1990) does acknowledge (especially in earlier accounts) the coerciveness of ‘rigid regulatory frames’ that police gender performances in a way which makes the accomplishment of identities neither freely chosen nor entirely determined acts. A political ‘take’ on performativity, based on empirical studies, is of value to feminist CDA (see Chapters 5 and 6 below). Although typically gender and language studies have applied gender performativity to research on individuals in talk, Chapter 6 also shows how gender identities can be performed representationally in texts, and by institutional bodies.

Investigations of the interrelations between gender, power, ideology and discourse are necessarily complex and multifaceted, which explains why feminist studies and CDA alike (and feminist CDA at their confluence) are open to interdisciplinary research. The interdisciplinarity in feminist CDA is evident on three counts: first, in terms of the kinds of social and political questions it seeks to address, and the range of theoretical and empirical inspiration that underpins the research; second, it is evident, methodologically, in some studies, in the collection and contextualization of linguistic data based on ethnographic methods, which include interviews and participant observation (see Chapters 2, 5 and 8 below); third, in terms of actual collaborative research undertaken between scholars across disciplines (see in this volume the call by Wodak; note also Chapter 3, which attests to joint research by a linguist and a sociologist).

The scope and approach to analysis of discourse within feminist CDA is also catholic. Based on concrete analysis, the data in feminist CDA includes contextualized instances of spoken and written language as well as other forms of semiosis such as visual images, layout, gestures and actions. While the analysis of data includes meanings expressed overtly, it is especially attentive to the less obvious, nuanced and implicit meanings for the subtle and complex renderings of ideological assumptions and power relations in contemporary societies. The approach and tools for undertaking principled analysis of talk and text are many and varied. The analytic frameworks and categories include those from pragmatics, semantics, systemic-functional grammar, narrative structures and conversation analysis. Although some would argue against the compatibility between conversation analysis and CDA perspectives (see Schegloff 1997), feminist conversation analysts have found the engagement a fruitful one (see Stokoe and Weatherall 2002; see also
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Chapter 2

These feminists stress both the value of the emergent character of gender in interactions, and the need for sociohistorical and institutional framing of the category of gender.

Levels and fociofanalysis in feminist CDA are also wide-ranging, including choices in lexis, clauses/sentences/utterances, conversational turns, structures of argument and genre, and interactions between discourses. The latter, also known as interdiscursive analysis (Fairclough 1992), is influenced particularly by Bakhtin's (1981) idea of the dialogical nature of texts, and is concerned with the identification of, and more importantly the interaction between, different discourses (and also genres) within particular texts and talk. (See Chapter 7 below for an elaboration of the concept.) For example, I have identified the presence of two competing discourses of gender relations in a set of government advertisements—one based on traditionalism, and the other on egalitarianism—and have shown the complex ways in which the former achieves dominance (Lazar 1993; 2000; see also Chapter 6 below). The dual discourses attest to the changing social-cultural context of a community, which recognizes the complexity of interactants' positions regarding views on gender relations, as well as contributing to the formation of complex hybrid gender identities. The idea of the two discourses originally identified has relevance beyond the Singapore context, as can be seen also in studies by Martin Rojo and Gómez Esteban about Spain (2003), and Magalhaes about Brazil (Chapter 8 below).

Critical reflexivity as praxis

According to Giddens (1991), reflexivity is a generally pronounced characteristic of late modern societies, by which I mean the increased tendency for people in this period to utilize knowledge about social processes and practices in a way that shapes their own subsequent practices. A critical focus on reflexivity, as a phenomenon of contemporary social life, must be an important facet of the practice of feminist CDA.

There are at least two levels for this interest. First, the interest lies in how reflexivity is manifested in institutional practices, with implications for possibilities for change in the social and personal mindsets and practices of individuals. Second, there is a need for on-going critical self-reflexivity for feminists keen on achieving radical transformation of the gendered social structures. Each of these will be elaborated below, with implications for a critical feminist analysis of discourse and practice.

Reflexivity of institutions is of interest to feminist CDA both in terms of the progressive institutional practices engendered, and in terms of the progressive institutional practices engaged, and in terms of the progressive institutional practices engaged in terms of the progressive institutional practices engaged.
goal is a radical social transformation based on social justice that opens up unlimited possibilities both for women and men as human beings; a discursive critique of the prevailing limiting structures is a step in that direction. From this view, liberal, reformist positions – even when embraced by some feminists – is inadequate (see Chapter 9 below) and can be easily co-opted by the dominant structures.

Contemporary feminist theorists have pointed to the inherent flaws in classical liberal notions of equality and freedom, as premised upon an abstract universalism and ‘sameness’. First, equality from this perspective implies ‘same as men’, where the yardstick is that already set by men. Instead of a radical shift in the gender order, women therefore are required to fit into the prevailing androcentric structures. Many of the problems encountered by modern women in the public sphere, in spite of (and as a result of) gaining access to education and paid employment, are due to the unchanging gendered social structures. For example, exclusion and alienation among peers and subordinates, the lack of female role models and self-determined leadership styles for women managers, suppression of non-mainstream voices in peer discussions, and the double shift-work shouldered by women in the office and at home. These social issues are also in part discursive in nature, which in various ways are analysed and discussed in the studies in Part I of this volume. Second, the dominant liberal ideology assumes the sameness of all women. It has allowed middle-class, heterosexual, Western, white women to represent their partial experiences as universally shared by all women, thereby ignoring the material conditions and needs of non-Western, non-white, lesbian and poor women around the globe (hooks 1984; Mohanty, Russo and Torres 1991; Moghacim 1994). Several of the chapters in Part II of the volume attempt to redress this problem from the perspective of feminist critical discourse studies.

Although the existing liberal ideology is flawed – and what is required in the long term is a serious re-visioning of gender – there is implicit consensus among most feminists regarding the value of the ‘ideals of liberalism for a current pragmatic feminist politics. Hirschman (1999: 28), for instance, notes that the ideals of freedom and equality are historically important for politically disadvantaged groups of women who have been systematically denied equality under the law and freedom to control their lives, make choices and act as agents in the world. It is necessary, however, to reconceptualize the category of ‘universality’ and rights along the lines of current third-wave feminist thinking. As proposed by Hirschman (1999) and Benhabib (1987), this involves viewing universality in ‘concrete’ rather than in abstract terms, based on acknowledgement of specific differences in the material conditions, contexts and situations of women’s lives. Only by attending to, instead of negating ‘difference’, can feminists identify and theorize more accurately the commonalities of gender oppression, and build alliances among women in tackling specific issues and achieving concrete political goals. It is hoped that Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, as an international forum based on concrete discursive analysis of different local situations, contributes to feminist politics in this way.

Even while acknowledging the usefulness of certain liberal ideals reconceptualized in feminist terms, there is a need to safeguard against slipping into the current mainstream neo-liberal thinking that is pervasive in the late modern societies of today. Of particular concern to feminist CDA is the global neo-liberal discourse of post-feminism (Lazar 2004). According to this discourse, once certain equality indicators (such as rights to educational access, labour force participation, property ownership, and abortion and fertility) are achieved by women, feminism is considered to have outlived its purpose and ceases to be of relevance. Although the discourse tends to be particularly associated with the developed industrialized societies of the West, the dichotomous framing in terms of the global west/north versus the east/south is quite misleading. Even in the case of the former, women’s rights and freedoms cannot be assumed as a given, for these can be contested through backlash discourses and changing public policies (note the recent contestation of abortion laws by the Bush government in America). Also, rights and freedoms are not total: for example, a gendered wage gap continues to exist in a number of these societies, as does systematic male violence against women in various forms and permutations which curtails women’s full social emancipation.

The discourse of popular post-feminism is in urgent need of critique for it lulls one into thinking that struggles over the social transformation of the gender order have become defunct in the present time. The discourse is partly a masculinist backlash that defends against the whittling away of the patriarchal dividend. However, it is important to recognize that some women, including those who explicitly identify themselves as feminists (for example, Walter 1999; Wolf 1993 cited in Chapter 7 below), also attest to the presence of a post-feminist era. According to these women, this is a time for celebrating women’s new-found power and achievements; it is a moment of ‘power feminism’ (see Chapter 7 below, which offers a discursive analysis of one aspect of this).

While it is important to acknowledge the social, economic and political strides achieved by a growing number of young women in many industrialized
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In societies today, there is a need also to exercise critical reflexivity on the matter. One of the problematic assumptions of post-feminist discourse is that women can ‘have it all’ if only they try hard enough, which makes women’s struggles and accomplishments a purely personal matter, obscuring the actual social and material constraints faced by different groups of women. Concomitantly, there seems to be an inward-looking focus and contentment only in the achievement of personal freedoms and fulfillment. A self-focused ‘me-feminism’ of this sort detracts from a collective ‘we-feminism’ needed for a transformational political program (Lazar 2001). The focus on freedoms alone, moreover, is inadequate; as some have argued, freedom for feminists is only the beginning, not the end (Grant 1999:189). In the current way of post-feminism in modern societies, Segal pointedly argues for the continued relevance of feminism as follows: ‘Why feminism? Because its most radical goal, both personal and collective, has yet to be realized: a world which is a better place not just for some women, but for all women’ (1999:232).

Finally, feminist self-reflexivity must extend beyond a position of theoretical critique to include one’s own academic and other practices. I want to reflect here on the gate-keeping practices of research as well as an instance of teaching. In regard to research, the importance of internationalizing the scope in order to theorize more carefully the endless variety and monotonous similarity of gender oppression across diverse geographical contexts has been established above. Another part of feminist academic practice is the importance of including and representing wherever possible international feminist scholarship in research articles, in authoritative handbooks, readers, and textbooks, and in plenary addresses at international conferences.

Referring to the overwhelming representation of (white) scholars from the north (or west) in academia, including in the more critical-oriented fields, van Dijk (1994b) has noted this as a form of academic ethnocentrism, based on seldom questioned feelings of scholarly and cultural superiority. Although feminist linguists today are increasingly reflexive on the issue of representation and inclusion of diversity, two points are worth further critical consideration. The first pertains to researching a community outside one’s own, when undertaken not in collaboration with the locals or native scholars of the community, but from an external position of authority. This is problematic when the direction of expertise flows from the co-opted to the co-opters, re-enacting historical imperialism in academic neo-imperialist terms.

The second point worth critical feminist reflexivity pertains to what I would call ‘marked inclusion’. This refers to the benevolent inclusion of critical and/or feminist discourses from non-Western geographical regions in international fora, but marked as ‘other’ instead of mainstreamed. For example, some years ago, an academic report written after the event of a ‘Language and Masculinity’ seminar held at a university in England scrupulously named the geographical locations of the ‘non-Western’ studies presented at the seminar, but left unmarked those studies from the West. In a separate event, the third International Gender and Language conference (IGALA3) held in Connell (USA) in 2004 expressed in its conference publicity the aim to ‘highlight the “international” in the conference title’. This was done by devoting an extended timeslot to an international perspectives’ panel, in which four speakers from diverse non-Western countries (and a Western white male as the panel moderator) shared an extended timeslot. In both examples, good intentions notwithstanding, the practice of marking inadvertently emphasizes as ‘other’ non-Western research from mainstreamed Western studies or studies undertaken by scholars in the West. (Perhaps, in the case of IGALA3, one of the non-Western panelists could have been offered an unmarked full plenary slot just like her other Western plenary compatriots in the programme.)

Interaction among feminists, too, requires critical reflexivity, especially in public professional situations such as teaching. I will offer a personal anecdote here as an example. Some years ago, I was teaching a feminist language studies module with two other (women) colleagues at a university. We were teaching in the same year; the other women colleagues and I were named as teachers in the module’s programme, while the module co-ordinator was not addressed by name in the programme. The other women were very active in the classroom, often interrupting and correcting my use of the term ‘teacher’. This was a reminder to me that even in the classroom, one must be mindful of the power dynamics and the potential for ‘privileging’ certain teachers over others.

In conclusion, feminist self-reflexivity and critical engagement are necessary in order to theorize more carefully the endless variety and monotonous similarity of gender oppression across diverse geographical contexts. As feminist scholars, we must be reflexive about our own practices, as well as our interactions with others. This involves being aware of the power dynamics in the classroom and elsewhere, and ensuring that all voices are heard and valued. As critical analysts of discourse, we must be mindful of the potential for re-enacting historical imperialism in academic neo-imperialist terms, and strive to create more inclusive and equitable educational environments.
Organization of the book

The volume is divided into two parts, each of which respectively, though not exclusively, addresses issues around two broad themes: ‘Post-Equality? Analyses of Subtle Sexism’, and ‘Emancipation and Social Citizenship: Analyses of Identity and Difference’. These represent, I believe, important contemporary feminist concerns that are complex and sometimes subtle in nature, which feminist CDA aims to investigate through nuanced, contextualized analyses of texts and talk.

Part I Post-equality? Analyses of subtle sexism

This section addresses popular post-feminist assumptions that once a measure of equality, in liberal terms, has been achieved by women, gender struggles along with feminism have ended. The chapters in this section deal with various contexts that acknowledge (some) women’s visibility and ascendancy in the public domains of paid work, politics and education. Also featured are the concerted efforts by one government body to make visible men’s roles in the private domain of childcare and housework. While recognizing these changes in contemporary modern societies, the ‘post’ in ‘post-equality’ and the question mark in the title raise two things: first, whether we have really moved beyond equality; and second, even if we have, what the quality of that equality is. All the studies in this section show that beneath the appearance of emancipation, sexist discrimination thrives in covert forms in these contexts through deep-seated, naturalized, androcentric assumptions. The achievement of equality in liberal terms, therefore, is inadequate; what are required instead, as discussed earlier, are radical changes in the gender structure maintained in institutions and people’s mindsets. Of note in several of the chapters are the ways some women (and men) within the existing gendered organizational structures negotiate and challenge the dominant ideologies and power structures, indicating possibilities for change.

The first three chapters deal with women’s participation in the public workplace. In Chapter 2, Janet Holmes shows that although women in senior management positions in New Zealand may ‘do power’ overtly like their male counterparts, there is an underlying pressure and constraint on women managers to mitigate their speech style through supposedly appropriate ‘feminine’ interactional behaviour. There is also an association of some kinds of work done in organizations with women, which men avoid. Holmes argues that gender stereotypes remain in the background underlying workplace interactions, contributing to subtle forms of gender discrimination.

Like Holmes, Martín Rojo and Gómez Esteban’s study in Chapter 3 also points to the deeply androcentric workplace culture in Spain, in spite of an emerging management ethos that seemingly favours women. Martín Rojo and Gómez Esteban note two sets of challenges confronting managerial women in their country: first, how do women exercise leadership and authority in a work culture that associates power with masculinity? And second, based on the emerging relational management model that relies on evaluations by peers and subordinates, how do women establish peer networks with male colleagues who exclude them, and gain respect from (male and female) subordinates who mistrust them? As noted by the authors, women managers in Spain typically face social isolation and exclusion, which poses real implications for their further professional development and promotion in the organizations.

Although Ruth Wodak, in Chapter 4, is also concerned with women’s participation in public organizations, her study is located at the supranational level. Her focus is on a ‘gender mainstreaming’ programme adopted in the European Union, which in its ideal form aims to promote long-lasting and all-round changes in gender roles and organizational practices. Wodak’s initial findings, based on a qualitative study on the European Parliament, suggest that due to the relatively open structure of this organization, women politicians can negotiate their gender and political identities in a range of different ways which are not usually possible in other more rigidly structured institutions. However, she also notes that although there is some representation of women politicians in the European Parliament, this is unevenly spread among member states; and that although there has been an increase in women’s participation in the other European organizations, women are still markedly underrepresented at the highest levels. Her study points to the need for interdisciplinary research in order to investigate the relationship between the nature of particular organizational structures within the EU and the achievement of gender equity.

Kathryn Remlinger in Chapter 5 discusses issues of participation and access in an educational context. Her study is based on two American university classrooms that read explicit gender-related courses, which are designed to foster among students an awareness of gender and sexuality issues. As Remlinger discovers, such issues ironically are simultaneously at the centre and at the margin of campus politics. She shows how, through negotiation of meanings and uses of the classroom floor, students (and staff) discursively (re)produce, resist, and oppose resistances to
Part II: Emancipation and social citizenship: analyses of identity

Even while recognizing the limits of equality without a radical redefinition or transformation of the gender structure, this second part shows that there is an opportunity for women to cultivate new identities and become valued citizens in political and social life.

Chapter 7 by Mary Talbot is a stark reminder of women’s lack of full social citizenship and emancipation in present-day America (as in most other societies): the prevalence of violence against women, as Talbot notes, continues in patriarchal societies as an overt form of power and control over women. In this chapter, Talbot shows how the American National Rifle Association (NRA), capitalizing on women’s legitimate fears of assault and feminists’ calls for women to resist victim status, discursively constructs an ‘empowered’ identity for American women through promotion of gun ownership by women. Guided by commercial profit, the NRA (a right-wing organization which is opposed to anti-gun laws aimed at reducing a violent environment) appears to empower women, when what it actually does is subvert feminists’ call for non-violence, and perpetuate instead a climate of fear and continued violence.

Chapter 8 by Izabel Magalhães examines Brazilian women’s identity in the context of two adult literacy programmes in communities where gender equality and emancipation are only recently emerging issues. Her analysis of three separate genres in the programmes indicates, in varying degrees, the co-existence of ‘old’ as well as ‘new’ identities for the women learners. Whereas some aspects of the new identity are gender-neutral and empowering, and gender inequality and discrimination are openly demanding issues in the context of the daily struggles of women in Brazil, other aspects (namely those tied to global consumerism) place women in subject positions that are disempowering.

Based on her findings, Magalhães argues that the Brazilian government needs to invest in women’s education in order to afford them the opportunity to be agents of social change. She calls for a democratizing of the educational system, where the current dichotomy between school and work (an obstacle for women, particularly young women) is overcome to allow for a greater participation of women in the political and social life of the country.

Chapter 9 by Erzsébet Barát investigates what space is available in the political printed media for the discussion and critique of bourgeois patriarchy in a democratizing Hungary since the 1990s. In this chapter, Barát finds a systematic masculinist gate-keeping strategy that is aimed at discrediting feminism. It is a misogynistic discourse that is also racist and heterosexist. Of the few feminist voices present in the media, Barát notes that these are liberal/reformist, and that they fail to challenge—and therefore are complicit in—the hetero-gendered social order. Barát’s chapter is of interest to a politics of difference in two ways: first, in terms of the configuration of systems of oppression (patriarchy, racism, heterosexism, and classism), and the implications this has for power and ideology enacted in relation to different groups of women; and second, in terms of the need to acknowledge differences in feminist positions, and to be critical of forms of feminism that contribute to the perpetuation of a hetero-gendered social order.

In Chapter 10, Carlos Gouveia takes as his central focus the deep-seated prejudice against homosexuals in Portugal. The study reveals important parallels and convergences in the discursive enactment of systems of oppression, in this case between heterosexism and patriarchy.
Gouveia's analysis of special coverage devoted to homosexuality in a prominent Portuguese newspaper reveals that while the newspaper is careful not to appear blatantly discriminatory, it manages nonetheless to promote fear and prejudice against gays and lesbians by implying that they are a dangerously powerful organized group. Further, he discusses the fact that lesbians in particular are doubly discriminated against in Portuguese society based on their sexual orientation and gender. This is reflected in their representational invisibility in the mainstream news texts, as well as in representations by the gay men. The invisibility and exclusion of lesbians in public discourse means that this group of women is hardest hit in terms of having their civil rights neither protected nor guaranteed.

Notes

1 Although studies in feminist CDA have existed for more than a decade, as a body of research it has been insufficiently made known. Up until now, publications in feminist CDA have been dispersed across a variety of journals (most notably in Discourse & Society) and edited volumes on gender and language. Where reviews on CDA and feminist language studies exist separately, feminist CDA has received brief mention only in endnotes (see Fairclough and Wodak 1997; and Cameron 1998, respectively). More recently, even where feminist scholarship in CDA is briefly discussed, the representation of work in this area has been disappointingly narrow, based on limited studies (see Bucholtz 2003).

2 Apart from the present contributors' works, a selection of other critical studies on institutional gender relations includes works on medical encounters (see Bucholtz 2003).

References


