

To Cite This Article:

Keleş, N., & Aydın Yazıcı, E. (2024). Book Review: “An Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis in Education” by Rebecca Rogers (2011). *Innovations in Language Teaching Journal*, 1(1), 138–142. <https://doi.org/10.53463/innovltej.20240300>

**BOOK REVIEW: “AN INTRODUCTION TO CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS IN
EDUCATION”
BY REBECCA ROGERS (2011)****REBECCA ROGERS’IN “EĞİTİMDE ELEŞTİREL SÖYLEM ANALİZİNE GİRİŞ”
KİTABININ İNCELENMESİ****Neslihan KELEŞ¹, Elif AYDIN YAZICI²****1. INTRODUCTION**

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a unique approach to examining interactions, allowing for the conceptualization of social and cultural elements through linguistic features and various sign systems. Discourse is the representation of the social world that human beings live in. In this vein, context plays a key role in interpreting the meaning of signs, and analyzing discourse helps figure out the role of language within specific contexts. Simply distinguishing distinct forms is not enough to assign meaning; rather, comprehending the interactional dimensions in discourse is required to reveal the relationship between form and function.

In line with these principles, Rebecca Rogers’ book *An Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis in Education* offers an in-depth exploration of the intersection of language, context, and meaning, particularly within educational settings. This article reviews Rogers’ work, which delves into how language is shaped by social and educational contexts, focusing especially on the American context. As the editor, Rogers brings together a diverse array of critical education scholars and discourse theorists, creating a comprehensive resource for students and researchers.

The book’s content is structured into three parts: Discourse Analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis, and Multimodal Discourse Analysis each including four chapters. There is one introductory chapter written by the editor and twelve insightful chapters that embrace a broad range of themes such as sign modalities and postcolonial theory to the examination of power relations in education policy. Among the noteworthy contributions are the works of Lakshmanan, Lopéz-Bonilla, and Woodside-Jiron, whose case studies provide theoretical insights as well as practical applications, making them valuable for anyone interested in the dynamic relationship between discourse and education. Other significant chapters, including those by Rowe, Lewis, and Ketter, further explore themes that are central to discourse analysis and ethnography, such as the connection between discourse and action, or the question of how one makes sense and understands, and engages in dialogue in a complex multicultural educational experience.

The contribution of Rogers to the editorial content is observed in this second edition (2011) which builds on the first edition in 2004. This new edition is a must-read for anyone interested in the field

¹ Correspondence to: Lect., Atatürk University, Department of Foreign Languages Education, Erzurum, Türkiye, neslihankeles@trabzon.edu.tr, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7614-9317>

² Lect. Trabzon University, School of Foreign Languages, Trabzon, Türkiye, elifaydinyazici@trabzon.edu.tr, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6634-1025>

BOOK REVIEW

of CDA in education. In her own remarks, the second edition of the book is a product of what Rogers has offered to the readers from her teaching practice on CDA. Rogers applied her teaching experiences to improve the book, realizing that the first edition did not fully assist students, especially the novices. In the second edition, the author restructures the book to introduce CDA gradually, beginning with simple concepts and proceeding to advanced ones such as the analysis of discourse in a multimodal environment. By bridging the gap between the sociology and politics of language and CDA by putting forth more resources, Rogers seeks to broaden the knowledge and interest of students in CDA.

The first edition of the book was reviewed by Maalej (2004) and Bialostock (2006). The second edition was also briefly reviewed by Zheng (2012). This version offers a more comprehensive overview of the chapters along with our critical evaluations.

2. OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

The book starts with the editor's general introduction to CDA in education. In this first chapter, Rogers briefly examines the scope, goals, and methodologies of CDA, as well as questions about what constitutes critical, discursive, and analytic CDA.

Part I. Discourse Analysis

The second chapter titled *Discourse Analysis: What Makes it Critical?* by James Paul Gee starts with an intriguing question of what exactly makes discourse analysis critical. In order to give a concrete answer to that question, he distinguishes some key concepts, for instance, 'utterance-type meaning' and 'utterance-token meaning'. The first term refers to the standard meaning of a word, while the latter refers to context-specific, or situated meaning. Gee then moves beyond these meaning tasks by introducing social practices as a third analytical task. He argues that discourse is inherently tied to social structures like politics, power, and hierarchy, making critical discourse analysis a necessary tool for understanding how language shapes societal relations. The author also points out that language is not simply a tool for communication; it is rather a means of 'building' things within society. He outlines seven building tasks—significance, activities, identities, relationships, politics, connections, and sign systems—that serve as frameworks for analyzing how discourse functions in society. The chapter concludes by explaining how discourse goes beyond language, incorporating social behaviors and values into its analysis.

In the third chapter entitled *Narratives of Exclusion and the Construction of the Self*, the author Guadalupe Lopez-Bonilla (2004) analyzes how Mexican high school students create their figured worlds about school and their academic outcomes. Through a longitudinal discourse analysis of student narratives, the study reveals common themes such as struggles with abstract subjects, communication breakdowns between teachers and students, and feelings of alienation due to authoritarian teaching methods. The chapter illuminates how these occurrences extend beyond personal struggles and are located within the social order and understandings of education that help construct student identity and agency. The rich ethnographic understanding of the analysis offers many aspects on how language relates to social order, the social relations emphasis is quite restricted by the cultural context of the research, thus making it very hard to generalize. Nevertheless, it contributes meaningfully to understanding how discourse shapes educational experiences and outcomes.

In Chapter 4, the author Manika Subi Lakshmanan explores Patricia McCormick's *Sold* employing postcolonial theory and CDA to analyze how characters like Lakshmi, a young Indian girl forced to commercial sexual exploitation, are portrayed and consumed in Western literature. This chapter

discusses the global issues of sexual exploitation and argues that books like *Sold* reflect larger socio-political dynamics and power relations in play. While Lakshmanan's analysis strongly establishes connections between discourse, identity, and visual elements, it also questions the limitations of understanding third-world experiences through a Western lens. The integration of CDA with postcolonial theory therefore underlines the need to recognize how literature reflects as well as shapes global power relations.

Chapter 5 called *Figured Worlds and Discourses of Masculinity: Being a Boy in a Literacy Classroom* by Josephine Marsh and Jayne C. Lammers (2004) adopts a CDA perspective to understand how masculinity is constructed and reshaped through figured worlds of high school boys with a special focus on a Mexican American student named Chavo. This chapter describes how Chavo's literacy practices and gender beliefs are restructured through his ambitions to succeed as an athlete. Such a shift in priorities by Chavo -from academics to sports- is in fact affected by social pressures, peer expectations, and changing perceptions of masculinity. While the chapter effectively uses CDA to expose the complex nature of gender identity and literacy, it raises some questions from a critical point of view about how cultural expectations influence the ways students engage academically, particularly the ways boys negotiate school environments.

Part II. Critical Discourse Analysis

Chapter 6 entitled *Semiotic Aspects of Social Transformation and Learning* by Norman Fairclough discusses the criticisms of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) for not adequately engaging with learning issues, emphasizing the performativity of spoken and written texts within educational research. This chapter presents the semiotic aspects of social transformation and learning. The term *semiosis* is used by the author to clarify the distinction between semiotic elements and broader discourse constructs. The chapter further indicates that human learning through texts and social interactions is complex while arguing that critical discourse analysis should pay attention to the interrelationships among genres, discourses, and styles in contexts of learning. It also, moreover, emphasizes that structural and interactional aspects of semiotic research in education must be considered together if the validity and usefulness of the research are to be achieved.

Chapter 7 titled *Learning as Social Interaction: Interdiscursivity in a Teacher and Researcher Study Group* by Cynthia Lewis and Jean Ketter presents a longitudinal CDA research that investigates the interactions among teachers and researchers while teaching multicultural young adult literature in a rural middle school. The study examines how teachers' conceptions of learning and their interactions with one another develop group learning over four years. Participants included eight European-American teachers and two White male administrators. The following research underlines that individual and collective assumptions about race, identity, and multiculturalism heavily influenced the choices teachers made about which books to use and how to teach them. It reviews the relevant literature on both sociocultural learning theories and critical multiculturalism, underlining in particular the role of social interactions in learning and identity formation. The study applies Fairclough's concept of 'interdiscursivity' to investigate the interaction patterns in a community of practice using data from various sources within the period between June 1997 and April 2000. The dominant discourses coming up are liberal humanism and cultural multiculturalism. On the theme of whiteness, interaction patterns range from polite opposition in early transcripts to interdiscursive moments later. In sum, this research underlines the role of interdiscursivity in shaping understanding and values in learning communities and points to how the genres and voices of participants evolve over time through interaction. This elaborates on a theory of learning via literature within informal contexts.

Chapter 8, *Language, Power, and Participation: Using Critical Discourse Analysis to Make Sense of Public Policy*, by Haley Woodside-Jiron employs CDA to investigate public policy and the speeches of policymakers, particularly focusing on educational policy legislation related to reading in California. Utilizing Fairclough's framework, the analysis examines texts, discourse practices, and social practices surrounding recent shifts in reading policies, emphasizing that U.S. policymakers are increasingly prioritizing reading education. The chapter outlines data collection methods that include formal and informal policy documents, media articles, and historical events, analyzing legislative texts for vocabulary, grammar, and structural elements. The results indicate that reading policies have undergone radical changes; new information is built upon previous legislation in order to inform understanding. Such an analysis uncovers the issue of specification within policy terminology, points to processes of recontextualization concerning instructional materials, and repeats how expert input has an impact on policy consensus. This chapter concludes by reaffirming that texts, discourses, and social practices are at the core of the CDA explanation for the changes of a social and political nature concerning education policy.

Chapter 9 titled *Locating the Role of the Critical Discourse Analyst* by Lisa Patel Stevens explores two emerging trends in the application of CDA within educational research: the examination of public speeches to analyze educational policies and ideologies, and the analysis of close interactions between speakers and researchers, such as teachers and students or parents. The chapter identifies power relationships and respective responsibilities deriving from this research perspective attendant on most qualitative studies in education. The author herein reflects on her role-shifting between her identities as a literacy specialist and a researcher, highlighting how such shifting framed the discursive relationships she encountered, especially with one science teacher by the name of Dawn. Utilizing the CDA frameworks of Gee and Fairclough, the author looked at reflexivity and answerability as two important concepts in investigating the participant perspective within classroom interactions. This kind of analysis revealed deep insights into the participants' beliefs regarding language, literacy, and the behavior of adolescents while demonstrating how CDA is able to reveal complex dynamics within educational contexts. It is concluded that even though CDA may foster learning, its outcomes depend on the quality of relationships between participants and researchers and also on how the research process has been prepared.

Part III. Multimodal Discourse Analysis

In chapter 10 titled *Discourse Analysis and Education: A Multimodal Social Semiotic Approach*, the author Gunther Kress elaborates on his multimodal social semiotic method of critical discourse analysis. He claims that both discourse and text are insufficient to describe the intricate meanings involved in the social structuring of education. According to Kress, a multimodal social semiotic offers a more profound conceptualization of the diverse ways in which meaning is produced or learning comes about. In other words, this approach enables us to consider the processes of sign- and meaning-making as forms of learning and to account for all the various modes thro

The chapter entitled *Discourse in Activity and Activity as Discourse* by Shawn Rowe shows how CDA and sociocultural theory can usefully complement each other in order to transcribe speech and activity and analyze them simultaneously. From this perspective, Rowe argues that analysts can capture both the language in use - through CDA - and the emergent activity - through sociocultural analysis. He also offers a new transcription system that includes the activity in itself, detailing how attention to both linguistic and nonlinguistic elements of activity allows for specifying how some discourses are reproduced and granted privilege in local interactions.

In Chapter 12 titled *Mapping Modes in Children's Play and Design: An Action-oriented Approach to Critical Multimodal Analysis*, Karen E. Wohlwend draws on Kressian multimodal analysis and

explores how practices are given meaning and social significance through action without representation with regard to interactions between modes, semiotic practices, and discourses within glocalized early childhood classroom ecologies. Her emphasis on gaze as mode points out that meanings are inextricably connected to the ways students look at classroom artifacts and each other. These are ways that emphasis on one or another mode brings into view some of the underlying power relations in play. Wohlwend suggests that early years educators should treat the tangible, mundane aspects of everyday, recognizable classroom events as signifying resources to be leveraged intentionally rather than as random happenings.

In the final chapter of the book, which is entitled *The Discourses of Educational Management Organizations: A Political Design*, Mónica Pini combines Kress's multimodal analysis with Fairclough's critical discourse analysis in order to explore the way in which three EMOs appropriate and represent public education. Through the organizations' websites, their layout, and associated texts, Pini deconstructs the marketing and communication strategies of these companies to expose power relationships and concealed ideologies present in the discursive practices. She goes ahead to argue that critical multimodal analysis can enable the emergence of what she calls 'counterpublics' in challenging corporate discourses and practices so as to democratize and provide better quality public education.

3. CONCLUSION

Rebecca Rogers' book, *An Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis in Education*, is an important contributor to the interests of both researchers and students for an in-depth investigation of the relationships among language, discourse, and social structure. The book mirrors the understanding of the power of language in educational contexts and how it affects social inequalities. Each chapter adopts various methods and theoretical approaches that highlight how language is used in education and its effect on social structures. The book is an instructive contribution to both education and linguistics researchers, providing an overview of how language shapes social structures.

References

- Maalej, Z. (2005). Book Review: An introduction to critical discourse analysis in education.
- Rogers, R. (2004). *An introduction to critical discourse analysis in education*. Routledge.
- Rogers, R. (2011). *An introduction to critical discourse analysis in education* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Bialostock, S. (2006). Review of *An Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis in Education*, by R. Rogers. *Language in Society*, 35(5), 788–792.
- Zheng, H. (2012). Book review: Rebecca Rogers (ed.), *An Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis in Education*. *Discourse & Society*, 23(4), 458- 459.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926512450048d>