

## BOOK REVIEWS

### CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Terry Locke (2004) London: Continuum.  
ISBN: 0 8264 6486 (pp. 112, £12.99, pb).

Review by AILEEN KENNEDY

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This book is one of the Continuum Research Methods Series, and aims to provide an overview of critical discourse analysis (CDA) for students encountering the approach for the first time. Locke packs a lot into what is a relatively compact book, and while this provides an excellent source for identifying key writers in the area, the author's desire to introduce a whole range of key concepts might serve to confuse a reader new to the subject.

However, those completely new to CDA would do well to read Chapter 1, which begins with a description of CDA 'in a nutshell' – the description usefully points up the political nature of CDA, highlighting its capacity to identify the ways in which power is exercised through discourse. Early on in this chapter Locke uses an example of a piece of text (an advertising billboard) to illustrate what he means by discourse analysis, and he refers back to this example on numerous occasions through the book. This proves to be an effective way of helping the reader to make sense of the theory by setting it in a particular context. In this chapter Locke introduces the notion of CDA as both a research method and as a scholarly orientation, but claims that this book focuses on the former. However, only two of the six chapters focus principally on 'how to do CDA' – the other four exploring theoretical considerations of language, power and discourse.

Chapter 2 discusses the increasing prominence of discourse analysis in the social sciences in recent years, arguing that this is recognition of the understanding that language has the power to construct reality and not merely to reflect it. Locke draws the contrast between 'traditional' cognitive concepts of literacy, i.e. the ability of an individual to read and write, and the concept of literacy as 'a set of socially constructed practices that readers and makers of text are apprenticed in as members of a particular social group' (p. 13). This chapter provides an excellent rationale for the use of CDA as a research methodology, but might have assisted its target readership by addressing explicitly some of the criticisms that are directed at such a methodology.

The 'critical' element of critical discourse analysis is dealt with in Chapter 3 where Locke acknowledges the difficulty in defining 'critical' research, but nevertheless goes on to describe how various prominent CDA scholars claim their work to be critical. This results in a fairly brief, but somewhat complex series of explanations and lists which would require more than one read through to make real sense of, particularly for those new to the area.

In Chapter 4 Locke deals with a question often posed by those considering using CDA – 'how much linguistic knowledge does one need to do CDA?' His reassuring response to this question draws on the work of Norman Fairclough, who observes that 'discourse analysis is in fact a multidisciplinary activity, and one can no more assume a detailed linguistic background from its practitioners than one can assume detailed backgrounds in sociology, psychology, or politics' (cited in Locke, p. 44).

While Locke's target readers are students new to CDA, the book actually has something for anyone interested in this approach. New students of CDA will doubtless find the introductory overview in Chapter 1, together with the 'how

to' guides in Chapters 5 (Analysing a Print Text) and 6 (Analysing Oral Texts) particularly useful, while those already working in the area will find some of Locke's theoretical discussion in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of particular interest in challenging their own work.

Despite its claim to be a book about how to carry out a particular research methodology, Locke's book does more than this – yes it provides a couple of chapters illustrating CDA in use – but it also provides an insight into the work of CDA scholars deemed to be influential by the author. Herein lies a slight difficulty; while Locke provides an overview of some of the key conceptual bases of writers such as Bakhtin, Fairclough and Foucault, he does not provide an overall critique of their work and does not acknowledge explicitly that there are other orientations within what might loosely be termed CDA. Given the target readership for this text – students new to CDA – one might have expected such a critique to feature. This is particularly noticeable in the final two chapters where Locke illustrates how to carry out a piece of CDA, but fails to acknowledge that alternative approaches exist. However, other books provide overviews of the range of CDA approaches and orientations, for example, Wodak and Meyer's edited collection *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis* (2001), and the strengths in Locke's book, particularly that it works on a number of levels, renders it a very useful addition to this growing body of literature.

In conclusion, while the book might not provide exactly what it claims to, it is an interesting and readable book that I will make good use of myself, and that I will be happy to direct both students and colleagues to.

#### REFERENCE

Wodak, R. & Meyer, M. (Eds.) (2001) *Methods of critical discourse analysis*, London: Sage.

#### TEACHER RESEARCH: FROM DESIGN TO IMPLEMENTATION.

Colin Lankshear and Michele Knobel (2004) *Milton Keynes*: Open University Press. ISBN: 0335210643 (pp. 412, £18.99, pb).

Review by PAMELA MUNN

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There are numerous text books available about research methods in education or in the social sciences more generally. I picked this one up in the hope that it would offer insights into the distinctive nature of teacher research. I was disappointed. The book begins by making assertions about key characteristics of research and stresses the importance of research being systematic. Thus, we are straight away into well trodden territory about the need to construct research questions, select a research design and methods appropriate to answering the questions, being clear about the analytical procedures to be used, and writing up. The book therefore reads as a perfectly respectable contribution to the genre. It provides examples of the process of research in action, inserts questions for readers to answer on the basis of identified issues in research design, and suggests a series of activities for the reader or groups of readers to undertake. I can see it being a useful additional resource to undergraduate or postgraduate reading lists. There are helpful chapters on research methods, including how to carry out a literature search, and a similarly useful chapter on developing a logical argument, distinguishing data description from data analysis.

The book takes as its starting point that teacher research is no different from 'academic' or professional research in terms of the hallmarks of quality. It also makes

the point that teacher research can take many forms, including library-based studies, philosophical work, and policy studies, as well as the empirical study of schools and classrooms. It further argues that by undertaking research teachers enhance their professionalism, being engaged in a process that has ‘a lot to do with thinking and proceeding in ways that are imaginative and creative and, at the same time, methodical, systematic and ‘logical’” (p.10). So far, so good. The authors further illustrate with practical examples the pitfalls of not questioning assumptions and the importance of theorizing to give meaning and form to ‘what goes on in the worlds of teaching and learning’ (p.15). Even better!

So, why was I disappointed? After this very promising opening chapter, the book does not grapple with the way in which general issues in research are played out in teacher research. For example, there are particular issues in ethics and in power relations in conducting empirical work in your own school or classroom. These are not mentioned. Participant observation again raises particular issues which are lightly touched on but not really debated or illustrated by real teacher research examples. While there is a brief concluding section on writing about research findings, there is no real engagement with the issue of why teachers’ writing on their research is conspicuous by its absence.

This is a good book, but those who hope for an analytic discussion of the particular strengths and weaknesses of teacher research will need to look elsewhere. Moreover, those interested in debates about how realistic and feasible it is for teachers to engage in systematic research, and whether hallmarks of high quality teacher research are distinctive from research in general, will not find them here.

#### PERSPECTIVES ON LEARNING (4th edition)

D.C. Phillips and Jonas F. Soltis (2004) New York: Teachers College Press.  
ISBN: 0 8077 44447 6 (pp. 116, £14.50, pb.)

Review by EFFIE MACLELLAN

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Not only have I read this book, I have used it in its previous edition, so I consider that I speak from a position of considerable authority in writing this review. A text of nine chapters, together with notes and an annotated bibliography, *Perspectives on Learning* is a revised and expanded Fourth Edition that builds on the strengths of previous editions. As the text itself makes explicit, the intended readership is teachers and while it is small in size, it is well designed and structured.

The introductory chapter makes clear the focus of the text: the theoretical perspectives that underpin our understanding of learning. However, this chapter also develops the theme that there are competing explanations for how learning allegedly occurs and that the teacher has a professional responsibility to engage in discussion and debate about learning since it is only from a position informed by a critical understanding that the teacher can adequately attend to his or her principal function of facilitating and promoting learning. To engage the reader, this chapter offers hints as to what was perceived to be problematic at the time of each theory’s emergence and period of prominence.

Chapters two through eight offer brief but useful summaries of the alternative explanations ranging from the classical theories of Plato and Locke to the more currently popular cognitive accounts. These are described across an historical perspective, thus helping to show the cumulative influences of differing explanations

and the possibility of alternative explanations for all data! The reader-friendly style of writing helps to characterise theory as very real, rather than as some tablet of stone that is detached from human functioning. While I, from the perspective of a psychologist, find some of the chapters more attractive than others, I think that on balance it is useful to provide this historically structured account of our developing understanding of learning. It is also a welcome antidote to the plethora of texts that depict teaching and learning as dominantly procedural and prescriptive.

Phillips and Soltis do not provide a recipe for how learning occurs or proceeds but, rather, invite the reader to construct his or her own account. This is done through two main mechanisms. One is to provide a critique or evaluation at different points throughout the text in order to highlight what is inadequate about, or incomplete in, the differing accounts of learning. This of itself is a useful resource for many teachers who feel threatened by what might be meant in 'being critical'. The second, supportive mechanism is in the final chapter which comprises eighteen vignettes that both flag up real issues that teachers face on a daily basis (such as the extent to which ICT enables learning) and more general issues (such as what is meant by meaningful learning). These vignettes serve to highlight that curriculum choices and pedagogical procedures can have a more robust basis than political preference and personal whim. The book is written in a clear and concise style and speaks directly to teachers at very different stages of their professional development. This is not to say that beginning teachers don't find it difficult. They do. But it has been my experience that various degrees of scaffolding in the use of the text results in students and teachers who are more thoughtful about both what is achievable and desirable in education.

It is some years since I introduced this text to my own students and to the campus bookshop here in the Faculty. In the intervening years the book has been adopted by courses and classes on which I do not teach, so I guess that this 'good read' doesn't really need my recommendation. The book's clarity of focus and successfully achieved aim of grappling with learning theory make it a thoroughly useful text for teachers.

#### PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH (2nd edition)

Richard Pring (2004) London: Continuum.  
ISBN 0 8264 7261 3 (pp 174, £19.99, pb).

Review by JOHN HALLIDAY

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I reviewed the first edition of this book for *SER* back in 2001. The second edition has changed little. This is hardly surprising since the first edition has been reprinted twice and received widespread critical acclaim. In the preface to this second edition, Pring tells us that he has responded to criticisms and has attempted to fill gaps in the first edition. These are very limited however. They take the form of short additions totalling some six pages in all — a preface and postscript — plus sections on historical research, the political arithmetic tradition of research, and distinctive religious traditions in schooling.

The book's appeal is easy to recognise. It is written in an accessible style by someone whose grasp of the topic is entirely secure. For the novice researcher, the book contains a lucid explanation of research methods, ethical considerations and key concepts such as causation, phenomenology, ethnography and postmodernism. For the more experienced the book contains a sophisticated contribution to debates about the nature and purpose of educational research in which the names Hargreaves,

Hammersley, Tooley and Hillage have recently featured. In addition to this content which is specifically concerned with research, the book also presents a mature account of Pring's Deweyan theories of education and teaching which ought to interest anyone looking for a coherent way through current difficulties that individuals and institutions face. In these ways the book should continue to interest policy makers, teachers, trainee teachers as well as educational researchers.

Rightly in my view, Pring shows the barrenness of what might be called the service view of education. For him talk of delivery of a curriculum (fixed by government) to customers (parents, employers and students) in the most efficient way where efficiency is determined by educational researchers is an enormous mistake. Pring views teachers as mediators of a cultural inheritance and particular student interests. Neither the inheritance, nor the interests are static however. They are both subject to criticism and modification in the light of experience and it is not possible to disconnect the practice of teaching from some goal logically disconnected from teaching. Therefore for Pring it is also not possible to disconnect educational research from the practice of teaching and so the book endorses the central position of teacher as researcher.

Pring is no great supporter of what has become known as action research however. He is deeply suspicious of research findings that are not open to the most widespread and thorough criticism. He is also not entirely convinced by some of those of a postmodernist persuasion who suggest that there is something new about the idea of living with uncertainty. Uncertainty is the root of many perennial philosophical problems and Pring resists being 'seduced by the postmodern embrace'. While he is sympathetic to some of the now standard criticisms of educational research — that much of it is of poor quality, that it is non-systematic, that it provides little guidance for those trying to contend with educational problems on a day to day basis and so on — he offers no trendy alternative. Rather he offers a well-argued extrapolation from his philosophy of education. In summary his argument is that there is no substitute for the practical judgements of educators made in contexts that only they and their students can fully appreciate but that those judgements should be informed and refined by the findings of research. Such informing and refining are far from straightforward however because as Pring acknowledges, there is no one set of findings or body of research to which educators can turn. There are many and no settled agreement on ways even of classifying different approaches to education or educational research.

It is hardly surprising then that Pring avoids the thorny issue of what practical implications might follow from his analysis and of course he is not required to do so. Rather he has provided an eminently accessible account of the extensive range of issues that arise when the philosophy of educational research is seriously addressed. All the same the practical issues are of pressing concern. This second edition does include brief mention of the results of the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise. Plainly a great deal hangs on the deliberations of the education panel for the 2008 exercise. In an editorial in the *British Journal of Educational Studies* (48:1) Pring called for the formation of rather fewer research centres staffed by those who have a good track record in educational research within Universities. There is some evidence that the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise will lead precisely to this state of affairs. It is not clear however that fewer research centres of this sort could include teachers in the ways Pring seems to want. The book raises plenty of issues for readers to consider.

## TRAVELLER EDUCATION: ACCOUNTS OF GOOD PRACTICE

Chris Tyler (ed) (2005) Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books.  
ISBN: 1 85856 308 9 (pp. 178, £16.99, pb).

## TRAVELLER EDUCATION: CHANGING TIMES, CHANGING TECHNOLOGIES

Ken Marks (2004) Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books.  
ISBN: 978 1 85856 351 0 (pp. 36, £10.99, pb).

Review by FIONA LAVIN

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Although these two texts from Trentham will obviously appeal most to those with a special interest in Traveller Education, it will be unfortunate if they are overlooked by others – for they have messages also for many who are evaluating, and looking to enhance, their own practice.

In *Traveller Education: accounts of good practice*, Tyler uses the foreword to remind us that 20 years on from the Swann report (DES, 1985), Traveller Education remains the ‘poor relation’ of provision for minority groupings in schools today. Two main concepts underpin the 14 chapters of the book: firstly, the need to consider the pedagogy of Traveller Education and secondly, what Tyler describes as the ‘collegiate nature of Traveller Education’.

The early chapters consider policy both at authority and school levels, leading to the journey through the various stages of school education. It seems clear that the primary school, including the early years setting, is the area where most progress has been made. In contrast, the history of the Traveller pupil and the secondary school suggests a huge challenge yet to be addressed, and it is in this setting that this group are probably most vulnerable. There is a helpful section on terminology and a short note serving as a reminder about the legislation (in England and Wales) impacting on this area. No educational textbook can ignore the fact that inclusion is an expectation – indeed a requirement – of society today. Of course, inclusion is now accepted as being much broader than providing additional support needs. It should take account of children experiencing significant interruptions to their learning – hence the importance for the educational opportunities of Traveller children.

Chapter 1 considers the rationale of inclusion and explores reasons for the existence of exclusion, particularly within the minority groups which form the focus of this book. The author lays down several challenges, some of which would undoubtedly form the basis of an extremely lively debate amongst professionals – or, at the very least, serve to raise awareness of the reader’s own attitudes and beliefs. It is argued that the diversity of lifestyles and cultures needs to be reflected in policies, and schools must provide quality educational experiences for Traveller pupils.

In Chapter 2, Foster and Horton consider evidence on the performance of Travellers relative to other children. Although the initiatives which they describe (the National Primary Strategies) are rooted in the English education system, the implications and conclusions can be considered within the Scottish system too. Readers with the Scottish perspective in mind might find it helpful to read this alongside the 2005 HMIE Report *Inclusion and Equality – meeting the needs of Gypsies and Travellers*. Both publications emphasise the need to create opportunity for all learners.

The relationship between policy and good practice is considered when discussing the issues that schools need to address. Tyler in Chapter 3 and Beckett in Chapter 4 draw on some established approaches to issues such as communication, ethos and