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Abstract

In our judgment, Cresswell's theoretical discussion of the two main concerns with CDA methodology and the conceptual ways to deal with them is most interesting and promising. However, we found his empirical illustration of how to deal with these two concerns unconvincing, problematic, and apparently contradicting of his overall theoretical framework, but also instructional and thought-provoking. We see the main shortcoming of Cresswell's application of his theoretical ideas to empirical research in his *technism*, a belief that there are methodological techniques detached from investigators' research goals and subjectivity – a belief likely rooted in positivism. In our commentary, we want to justify our judgment and offer our own illustrations of his fruitful theoretical and methodological ideas.

Keywords

Broader outside social discourses, communal practices, embodiment, technism

We have found deeply thought-provoking and enlightening both the strengths and weaknesses in James Cresswell's critique of conventional critical discourse analysis (CDA) methodology (Cresswell, this issue). Grounded mostly in the work of Garfinkel and Bakhtin, Cresswell revealed two major concerns with CDA methodology that we call 'the breadth concern' and 'the depth concern'. The breadth concern with CDA methodology is about the localism of discourse analysis; it is too locally focused on what goes on

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immediately in the studied discourse. Along with other critics, Cresswell argues that broader social discourse can tacitly participate in studied local discourse and shape it, but it often remains unaccounted for by discourse analysis researchers who focus exclusively on local utterances and exchanges. The depth concern with CDA methodology consists in the fact that many discourse analysis researchers neglect the embodied experiences that participants constantly evoke in their discourse.

James Cresswell's critique is developed in two sections. First, he provides a theoretical discussion of each concern with CDA methodology and ways of addressing them based on Garfinkel and Bakhtin's frameworks; and, second, he illustrates these conceptual solutions with an extract from his own empirical work in a case study of Chinese immigrant ethnicity in Canada.

Although in his article he constantly emphasizes the topics of refugees, racism, and ethnicity, we could not understand his justification for using these topics rather than others, as his theoretical arguments do not seem to be research topic-specific. Even his empirical illustration involving issues of ethnicity seems to be arbitrary – he could have easily used any other topic for this. Unless we have overlooked something, from his article we do not learn anything new about refugees, racism, and ethnicity beyond his general methodological arguments which are apparently applicable to any discourse topic. If his arguments are not topic-dependent, why did he constantly mention those topics? If the arguments *are* topic-dependent, how so and why?

In our judgment, Cresswell's theoretical discussion of the two main concerns with CDA methodology and the conceptual ways to deal with them is most interesting and promising. However, we found his empirical illustration of how to deal with these two concerns unconvincing, problematic, and apparently contradicting of his overall theoretical framework, but also instructional and thought-provoking. We see the main shortcoming of Cresswell's application of his theoretical ideas to empirical research in his *technism*, a belief that there are methodological techniques detached from investigators' research goals and subjectivity – a belief likely rooted in positivism. In our commentary, we want to justify our judgment and offer our own illustrations of his fruitful theoretical and methodological ideas.

Breadth concern: Broader outside social discourses

James Cresswell challenges CDA for its neglect of broader outside social discourses 'that constrain and enable in situ talk' (p. 554) because of its narrow local focus on the visible and verbal discourse at hand. He acknowledges that this critique is not new, but he argues that the ways in which discourse analysis researchers try to address this critique do not go deep enough. Thus, Cresswell cites Potter, Edwards, and their colleagues to show that although these discourse analysis scholars try to take into account broader outside social discourses, they actually separate out and bracket these broader discourses from the studied local discourse at hand. Such scholars view broader outside social discourse as orienting the discursive actions of participants. Together with some other critics of discourse analysis, Cresswell argues that although this is a methodological move forward 'because it enables researchers to avoid a hegemonic tendency inherent in referential approaches'

(p. 555), it is still problematic because these ‘discursive psychologists downplayed the role of communal practices: sociality beyond dyadic interaction’ (p. 555).

Based on the work of Garfinkel, a founder of conversation analysis (CA), which, as Cresswell argues, was a precursor of discourse analysis, Cresswell states that broader outside social discourses reveal themselves through breaching local in-situ talks that achieve taken-for-granted communal practices. These breaches of taken-for-granted communal practices occur in two ways. The first way is when this breach occurs *between the researcher and the participants* in the studied discourse through a special act of the researcher’s ‘estrangement’: ‘In order to apprehend the accomplishment of accounts’, Garfinkel wrote, ‘one must either be a stranger to the “life as usual” character of everyday scenes, or become estranged from them’ (1967: 37). In terms of our discussion, this means that one must somehow breach the way that social discourses are tacitly enacted in order to study them, and this he did in his ‘breaching’ studies. He deliberately breached taken-for-granted communal orders by doing something that was unnatural and attended to the accounts that people gave in light of the breach (p. 558).

The second way is when such a breach is noticed by the researcher as occurring *among the participants* of the studied discourse. As practitioners of CA, we looked at the many small-scale breaches that occur during a conversation and the explanations/accounts that were put forward with regards to those breaches. Attending to such features in conversation pointed to ‘theories-in-use’ about taken-for-granted communal practices (p. 558).

In our careful reading of James Cresswell’s illustration and its analysis, we failed to notice any such breaches revealing broader outside social discourses in the extract from his case study of Chinese immigrant ethnicity in Canada. Instead, he fills the space of his article by showing how a CDA of this extract would focus on what the referential structure would look like (pp. 562–564). He then promises to apply his own conceptual analysis based on Garfinkel but instead, in our judgment, he focuses on non-verbal expressive means of how the two participants in the extract articulate their first- and second-generation Chinese immigrant ethnicities in Canada (p. 564). In our view, it is rather characteristic that he drops the term ‘breach(ing)’ from his analysis of empirical illustration as apparently not important for what he is doing. In short, his ‘espoused theory’ – based on Garfinkel’s very inspiring methodological ideas – was apparently not used in his (Cresswell’s) own methodology.

Here, we take up James’ theoretical challenge and try to apply (i.e. enact) his conceptual ideas to his own empirical material.

Researchers’ act of estrangement: A breach between the researchers’ and the participants’ taken-for-granted communal practices

Let us follow Garfinkel’s suggestion and create an act of researchers’ (i.e. Eugene’s and Katherine’s) estrangement and see what we can learn from it about immigrant ethnicity. Cresswell’s extract starts with Jim, the research interviewer, asking Linda, a first-generation Chinese immigrant in Canada, a question about the importance of her ‘Chinese ethnicity’ being passed on to the next generation of Chinese-Canadians, arguably her (future?) children (the latter seems to be implied).

Extract 1

Turn	Speaker
1	Jim: yeah . ((looking at Linda)) why do y'think it's important . for the Chinese way BE be passed on? (1.5)
2	Linda: simply because . I GREW up in uhm in th' . CHINese culture in'the Chinese community .

We found this discourse 'strange'. Metaphorically speaking, it hurts our ears. We will now try to reflect on what is so strange and irritating for us. We could say to each other, 'Instead of talking about some important parental decisions possibly faced by Linda in raising her future children (e.g. to teach or not teach her children Chinese, to take or not take them to China for a summer vacation on a regular basis), Jim and Linda seem to be involved in a broader discourse, so common of North American middle-class culture, of considering everything as a consumer choice – in this case, to pass or not pass on 'the Chinese way'. It is highly likely that Linda's future children will be thrown into becoming second-generation Chinese immigrants (by, for example, being forced to reply to and address their parents' 'Chineseness'), whether they – the children and the parents – want it or not. Thus, neither Jim's question nor Linda's reply, which she elaborates on in the extract, make sense to us. It would be as if Eugene (the first author) asked Katherine (the second author), 'Why do you think it's important for motherhood to be passed on to your daughters?' and Katherine replied, 'Simply because I was a mother for 18 years.'

Of course, in this act of estrangement with our bizarre and possibly inappropriate comparison of motherhood and Chinese immigrant ethnicity, we might over-finalize Jim and Linda and also the breach that we are constructing here, in our estrangement, could be imaginary. But in any case, we argue, it creates an interesting hypothesis that requires further investigation among the researchers (i.e. Eugene and Katherine) and the participants (i.e. Jim, Linda, and Paul) to reveal the taken-for-granted communal practices shaping the meaning of their local discourse.

Researchers' noticing a potential breach among the participants' taken-for-granted communal practices

We noticed an interesting breach among the participants' taken-for-granted communal practices in observing Paul's peculiar position of being a second-generation Chinese-Canadian. While Linda and Jim were talking about Linda's 'children' and dealt with issues of immigration from China to Canada, not directly experienced by Paul, it seemed to put Paul in the position of Linda's 'future children', about whom she indirectly talked with Jim, and to put Linda in the position of his parents, namely first-generation Chinese immigrants to Canada. We could be wrong, but judging by the discourse, Paul seemed to be aware of this double nature of the discourse (second-generation immigrant children = Paul and Paul's parents = Linda) and tried to reply to it, while Linda (especially) and Jim¹ apparently were not.

Extract 2

-
- 26 Linda: so then . -w-w-when I came to Canada. I jus' thought about oh ok I am here in Canada I'm going to do everything like a CaNADian . but actually no I can't .
- 30 Linda: y-you can't jus' change over night a' all
- 32 Linda: OK . out' of that culture into another culture.
- 34 Linda: no you can' . gradually get into the other culture . but .the the BASE is still FIRM .
- 36 Linda: inside .
- 37 Jim: I see . whadda you think?
- 38 Paul: I think tha's probably true uhm . 'cause li-like you said your sons . they speak Cantonese but they don't WRITE like that's exactly like me I ca- I SPEAK Cantonese but I' can't write it .
- 40 Paul: ['cause uhm I'm'not sure WHY I can't write it jus' because I was'never taught maybe 'cause there is no PRACTical value to me? but in Canada we DO write an' speak in English.
- 42 Paul: I'also find tha'my parents yes uhm . it's'a deep part of who they are an' I still fin' myself having to tell my parents like . you're no' in China any more this is the way we do it in Canada (.5)
- 44 Paul: an' then . actually n'tha'I think of it it really opens my eyes HOW like I'm getting a differen' point'o view now . an'I can see WHY it's so important to them so . to WHY they wanna do stuff a certain way.
-

Notice how Paul uses 'also' in line 42 when he talks about his parents – also like who? Like Linda? Probably. Also, see his revelation about his new learning, apparently about his parents, that seemed to come from Jim's interview of Linda in line 44. It would have been interesting to further investigate whether our hypothesis was correct that there was a breach between Paul's awareness of the double nature of the discourse and Linda's and Jim's lack of awareness, and the reasons for Paul's sensitivity to this double nature and Jim's and Linda's *insensitivity* to it. Paul and Linda appear to be teens or young adults, so we wonder if the double nature of Paul's discourse is his sudden realization that his present youth culture replacing his parents' culture is not *the* culture, but one of many possible cultures, as he steps into Linda's perspective and connects that experience with that of his parents. Instead of there being a breach, another potential breach has a new connection.

In sum, we found Garfinkel's and Cresswell's call for noticing and constructing breaches in taken-for-granted practices in local discourses both fruitful and doable.

Depth concern: The embodiment of discourse

In our view, Cresswell's theoretical position on what the embodiment of discourse is, and how to address it methodologically, is murkier than in the previous concern. He accuses discursive psychologists of using 'referential experientialism' when the participants of discourse talk about their personal or social experiences or when they get involved in 'situated constructions of the body' (p. 565) in their discourse. Cresswell shares the desire of

these discursive scholars to avoid any extra- or pre-linguistic material in a discourse analysis. However, he criticizes them for essentially bracketing out embodiment from discourse – a notion that he defines as ‘speech genre’ after Bakhtin: ‘To speak means to embody the expressive generic style of a community. A speech genre is lived as if it were the natural way of living and I extend this principle to the realm of broader social discourses’ (p. 566).

A socially defined speech genre is a social affordance for a person to express herself in a certain way and to be easily understood by the relevant community audience: People cannot express just any account of the world, because they are caught up in speech genres that already afford particular embodied experiential purviews. It feels impossible that the state of things could be any other way and it would feel wrong to give an account that is unfaithful to what one sees as obviously being the case’ (p. 567). Thus, if our interpretation is correct, Cresswell expands on such notions as ‘object valences’ and ‘psychological fields’, initially developed by German Gestalt psychologists (e.g. Lewin and Cartwright, 1964) and then passed on to American ecological psychologists as the concept of ‘affordances’ (e.g. Gibson, 1979) from an individual’s actions with objects to social discourse. Not only do objects afford/demand/unfold participants’ certain actions and not others, but speech genres afford/demand/unfold participants’ certain articulation–understanding relations and not others: ‘People rarely come to a situation with a specific propositional script in mind; but they do come with an embodied disposition of how things should unfold in their participation in speech genres. The world does not seem like a foreign place, yet it is not experienced in terms of stringently executed rote, because people have cultivated a socially embodied kind of know-how. For example, we do not know exactly how to discuss race or ethnicity but we are compelled to do it in a generic manner according to social discourses that we participate in. We feel offended when someone expresses it in the kind of manner that feels unbecoming ... For Bakhtin, living is always done in rhythm with others in the ongoing flow of life (Bakhtin, 1990: 112–132)’ (p. 567).

This embodiment penetrates social discourse so much that it becomes invisible for the participants and the researcher. However, according to Cresswell in his reference to Bakhtin, a social genre does not have ‘internal territory’ and exists only at the boundary with another social genre, that is through its breakdown and the participants’ attempts to fix it and return to a smooth discursive flow: ‘Consider the countless breaches and faux pas that occur in the course of our [i.e. researchers’ – the authors] dialogue with our [research] participants. These regular occurrences in dialogue could be interpreted in terms of how we come to dialogue with embodied dispositions as to how life should unfold and what certain terms mean, but we come into points of confusion or misunderstanding where our dispositions are inappropriate as they are no longer taken for granted by everyone. The small breaches and repairs in conversation could be understood as the ‘bumps in the road’ that occur in the juxtaposition of social discourses. Such breaches are followed by working them out in order to achieve communal order, or intensified in recognition of difference’ (p. 568). Again, Cresswell talks about ‘breaches’. How different are breaches pointing out embodiments (= social affordances of speech genres) from breaches pointing out broader outside communal practices and discourses? It remains unclear from our reading of his article. However, putting his insights together, we wonder if the difference between these two discursive breaches is in ‘inappropriateness’ (for

embodiment) and ‘strangeness’ (for broader outside discourses). We hope that Cresswell will clarify this in his future writings.

Again, when he tried to illustrate his concept of embodiment with the extract from his case study, we could see only a traditional definition of embodiment that he, himself, criticized. For example, he noticed Linda using her gesture to metaphorically articulate her notion of building Chinese ethnicity into her childhood (p. 569, and Figure 1 on p. 570). What this has to do with social affordances of speech genres and breaches revealing them remains unclear for us. Was Linda’s gesture evidence of a breach? If so, with and for whom?

Nevertheless, we are attracted to his theoretical concept (in our interpretation) of social genre as embodiment revealed in its breach perceived as ‘inappropriateness’ and collapse of the smooth discursive flow. So we decided to test it using our own example (as we did not find James’ extract interesting enough to complete that task for us). Several years ago, the first author and his wife Ella (pseudonym), both white, middle-class immigrants from Russia and professionals in the USA, were buying a house in Philadelphia. They were sitting in the back seat of their realtor’s car (Nancy, pseudonym, a white, middle-class woman, formerly a suburban school teacher) and discussing the house that they saw on the previous day, saying that they were stuck, constantly returning back to it and comparing it with all the other houses they had seen since and before. While driving her car, the realtor checked her notebook and announced that there was only one house left to view that day. She kept looking at the road while making this announcement. Ella and Eugene told her that they kept thinking about the house they saw the other day. Nancy replied, ‘You won’t like the place’, and she looked at us through the rear mirror. My wife and I looked at each other and asked with surprise ‘Why?!’, our eyes meeting in her rear mirror. There was an uncomfortable pause. Finally, Nancy shifted her gaze from the mirror back to the road and announced, ‘OK, we’ll see it again after viewing this last house on my list’.

For an outside reader unfamiliar with US history and Philadelphia’s ethno-geography, it might not be clear that the participants of this discourse were discussing touchy race and social class issues. In her initial remark, Nancy apparently probed if my wife and I were aware of (or cared for) the fact that the house we liked was located in a predominantly black, African-American, working-class neighborhood of Philadelphia that many white, middle-class people would find undesirable for residence. Being somewhat a stranger to us and not knowing our political views, she probably did not want: (1) to waste her and our time in case we did not want to live in this neighborhood ‘infested with crime, poverty, decay, litter, bad schools, and race problems’; and (2) to be accused of racism in case we were a liberal couple. My wife and I were surprised because we saw the street on which the house was located as ‘culturally, ethnically, sexual orientation-wise, internationally, and socio-economically diverse with people being apparently socially active’, with affordable housing – a place we wanted to live.

It seemed to us that Nancy’s question revealed that she saw our desire to live there as ‘inappropriate’ for our social status of being white, middle-class professionals – a sense that she might pick up from working with other white, middle-class professional homebuyers in Philadelphia. Our exclamation of the question ‘why’ and certain rhetoric of this question supported by our direct eye-to-eye gaze through the car mirror articulated our tacit disapproval of her tacit disapproval of the neighborhood. While her remark expressed that we were *inappropriately* selecting a black neighborhood for our ‘white

folk' living, our counter question expressed that, in her own turn, Nancy was *inappropriately* making this remark from our point of view. There was a double breach of social genre appropriateness, creating an uncomfortable pause in the flow of discourse.

Finally, Nancy fixed this awkward double breach by accepting our wishes and dropping the topic, so our friendly chat could be restored while the decision to return to the house of our preference (located in a mainly black, working-class neighborhood) was made. Thus, through this double breach, we, three white, middle-class people, constructed a coded discourse about race and class issues in the USA. When I later asked my wife why she thought we were both used to such coded language about race and class and did not ask Nancy to explicate her points and did not explicate ours; she gave a good reply for both of us: 'I guess we felt that we needed to select our battles. We came to buy a house and not to make a fight about race and class with Nancy. Also, she didn't cross a line that would have pushed a button of "fight" for me. She seemed to professionally dance at the edges of a potentially explosive issue while negotiating our collective decision making.' We wonder how recursive Nancy's provocation would be now with her other white, middle-class clients in such situations, and whether this double breach discourse is not an embodiment for Nancy in itself, being an established professionally appropriate speech genre that she applied to Eugene and Ella.

The technism of James Cresswell's methodology

We think that one of the main reasons as to why James Cresswell failed to illustrate his very useful theoretical and methodological concepts, if our judgment is correct, was his methodological technism – a tendency to see research methodology as a set of 'immutable and combinable mobiles' (Latour, 1987) of methodological *techniques*² detached from the research goals and the researchers' subjectivities. He seemed to select the extract from his case study to figure out where broader social discourse and embodiment, as methodological detached techniques, were in this extract, rather than to discover what new and exciting things he could learn from the use of his conceptual methodological framework in his case study that he couldn't discover without this framework.

Cresswell's methodological struggle reminds me (the first author) of my own methodological struggle in my graduate school under the advise of the sociocultural scholar, Barbara Rogoff. I was most attracted to conversation analysis with its exciting formalism in capturing pauses, overlaps, intonations, false starts, and so on in people's verbal discourse. However, I felt that I was missing the non-verbal communication that accompanies any verbal discourse. I was hoping that there was some kind of non-verbal discourse formalism similar to verbal formalism, coming from sociolinguistics and conversation analysis. I asked my advisor Barbara Rogoff about that. She smiled and replied that things were much simpler than I thought. She said that I did not need to separate out verbal from non-verbal communication or to strive to describe each and every minute detail of verbal discourse and non-verbal communication, but rather to try to capture and describe what was interesting and relevant for me. I was in dismay. I liked conversation analysis with its linguistic formalism exactly because it was objective. Of course, one can never fully capture an objective linguistic reality that exists independently of the researcher, but at least one can approximate this reality by gradually improving the

applied formalism. Barbara called for a subjective construction of data (see numerous examples of her constructive descriptions in Rogoff et al., 1993). Later, through the work of Latour, I learned that data is actively and socially constructed not only in the social sciences, but also in the natural sciences through the process of inscribing reality (Latour, 1987). After that I stopped my zealous descriptions of the participants' verbatim and instead I have started focusing on holistic constructive descriptions of what was relevant and important for me, themselves subjects of transformation in my empirical studies.

With his emphasis on technique, it seems as though Cresswell is attempting to establish a methodology of embodied formalism, because though his analysis involving Linda's use of gesture to create intersubjectivity was interesting, it might have been more useful for illustrating the notion of breach to have seen an example of a gesture that resulted in a breach, as Cresswell's interest in 'bringing together discourses and phenomenologically immediate experience' is expressed in terms of their keeping apart issues of 'race, refugees, and ethnicity'. In addition, he raises an important point about people expressing their social affiliations more than verbally – in this example, the gestures involved didn't seem to accomplish *more* than the discourse did; we think rather that they were enacted *with* the discourse, as gesture analysis suggests that our supposed language centers are actually neurologically part of the whole body as expressed in gesture. For instance, gesture studies suggest that 'speech and gesture are mediated by a common set of language production processes (McNeill, 1985)' (Nathan, 2008: 378). So while we agree that embodiment is an important issue, we are not convinced from this analysis that it adds more value to verbal analysis than that which already exists.

We would prefer Cresswell to stop focusing on developing detached methodological techniques and to start focusing on new ideas about issues of race, refugees, and ethnicity, and specifically on the breaches among the participants and between the participants and the researchers that he seemed to be concerned with, and focus on 'a breach of what?'. We think that a grounded analysis (and synthesis) of these issues would bring him to the theoretical and methodological concerns that he discusses in his article. We are not sure that James Cresswell would agree with our interpretation, criticism, illustration, and its analysis but we are eager to hear his reply.

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Notes

1. Of course, James Cresswell, the author of the article, is aware of that (see p. 571), but we are not sure when he got this awareness: then or now.
2. In his article, he uses the term 'technique' 24 times and we argue that it was exactly in the sense we describe here.

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