INTERVIEW WITH GUNTHER KRESS[1]

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HISTORY OF CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Rebecca Rogers: Can you start by talking about the history of critical discourse analysis?

Gunther Kress: Well I can talk about what I see as my history in critical discourse analysis. For me it does start with the work which became known as critical linguistics, done by a number of people at the University of East Anglia from about 1973 and to, umm, well, into the 1980s because Roger Fowler stayed at East Anglia. Roger Fowler stayed at East Anglia. But it was really, I think, initially done by four people, myself of course working with three friends and colleagues. One was Tony Trew, who worked in, he was a philosopher worked in political philosophy. One was Bob Hodge who was a literary critic, and one was David Aires who is also a literary scholar, and within, through co-teaching we developed what became known as critical linguistics in an attempt to develop a linguistic methodology for making sense of the social meanings of texts.

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[1] This interview was conducted by Rebecca Rogers on May 22, 2004 at the Critical Discourse Analysis conference held at Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, USA.

RR: How do you see that development running parallel to or intersecting with some other things that were going on in society as you talked about earlier today?

GK: Well, as must have happened at every university in the Anglo-Saxon world, it was a time in which people attempted again to understand relations based in superstructure, that is super structural categories such as literature and law and in my case, language, and the socioeconomic base. So I became part of a Marxist reading group and we read mainly Marxist literary scholars such as Lou Kasson, people like that. And I, from that, developed the notion that one could really apply the same thinking to language itself. I co-taught two classes, or two seminars, one with Tony Trew, the political philosopher, and one with Bob Hodge. With Bob Hodge we focused on the seventeenth century and the seventeenth-century texts and attempted to understand the social, political, ideological construction of those texts, a very interesting period in English history socially speaking and politically speaking. And with Tony True we focused on contemporary issues. At that time the maybe, most important contemporary issue was the struggle for liberation in what was then called Rhodesia. Which is now Zimbabwe. And Tony Trew was a South African, had been imprisoned as a student by the South African regime and had been told to leave. He was a member of the African National Congress and very active politically in England in left wing organizations and national groups. So we focused on the reporting of the war in Rhodesia. And in various parts of Africa and various English-speaking media around the world. And we did kinds of analyses and comparisons to see how it was recorded and Tony Trew wrote two

chapters from that in a book called *Language and Control*. And Bob Hodge and I did our

work on which became published as *Language as Ideology*. Although we did a first

paper in which was published in 1973 called *Models and Processes* in which we outlined

the project which was to become published in a book, *Language and Ideology,* and I

imagine much of the texts we used were contemporary political texts, newspaper texts,

as well as a number of texts from the seventeenth century and some other literary texts

as well. So we would which were around us in the era and we were looking at the texts

that our students were engaging with in their courses.

RR: What is your training as a linguist?

GK: Well, my training as a linguist, my first degree was in English literature and I became

dissatisfied with what I thought was an a-theoretical approach in English literary

criticism and I thought linguistics would offer and add an understanding of how

literature worked. Now this is the early 1960s and so I became interested in the work of

Chomsky, reading syntactic structures with my tutor, sentence by sentence. Then

reading a book called *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. And then in 1966 I left Australia

and went back to Europe and had a job at the university of Kiel in Germany, and there I

fell in with people who sort of were in close contact with people at MIT and got daily

sort of rations of mimeographed papers from MIT on the latest kind of stuff from the

presses there, and so I became a transformationalist. But I was dissatisfied with

separation of form and meaning, syntax without meaning, and the semantics without

form. Semantics is a kind of a marginal activity, really, in relation to syntax, syntax being central in transformationalist grammar, semantics being an afterthought I thought, in the theories really until the late 1970s and maybe still recently. And so from Kiel, I went to, I was offered a job as a researcher in England. I went to the University in Kent, in Canterbury in England, and while I was there I thought I would do a further degree, only having a first degree at that stage. I went to London, where Mikhail Halliday was professor of linguistics at the University College and enrolled in the postgraduate diploma in linguistics and did that with him there. And Halliday's linguistics I felt seemed completely congenial to me, it seemed to answer, at least the way I read it or took it, it seemed to kind of satisfy me in relation to the connection between the social and the formal, the realizational in his schema. Although the course I took also included transformational grammar and linguistic theory, as did other courses there as well. So that's my linguistic training. A fairly solid training in structuralist linguistics, leading to transformational grammar, with a solid immersion in transformational grammar into the late 1970s, but sometime, I started the course in London in 1969, so an immersion with Halliday concurrently with that. And I came to see how those two things related. That's my linguistic background.

RR: How does CDA build on or incorporate SFL?

GK: For me, I attempted, I was, as it were, the linguist in the group at East Anglia. The others were literary critics and, as I say, philosophers. Roger Fowler was a kind of a

structuralist linguist, he wasn't interested in Halliday. But I, the Hallidayan linguistics, the notion of choice, meaning as choice in context, appealed to me. It made the use of the system active in a real way, and you kind of could see context as the social environment so that appealed to me. But at the same time, I attempted to understand what transformational grammar might actually contribute. So I introduced terms from transformational grammar into my use of systemic functional linguistics. Which was actually taken over by the systemic functional linguists without them, I think, reflecting very much on it because they were extremely hostile to them, as you can imagine, the transformational grammar but they adopted my use of the term nominalization, for instance, which you will find prominent in their writing since. So, but it's really I think I sort of made Halliday kind of prominent in relation to the critical linguistics that we developed. The Hallidayan schema says "here is the socially located person he she has particular connections. Here is a realizational path to the form and it is really a semiotic system." It says "form is connected to meaning; form signifies and is connected to the social, as that which is to be signified." Halliday's linguistics at that time existed only in papers, well he had written the book on applied linguistics with Peter Strevens and Angus McIntosh. But he himself hadn't set out his linguistic theories. I collected all of his writings together and did a book called *System and Function of Language*. Until then, and that was published in 1976, Halliday's linguistics didn't exist in a book form. And also Halliday's linguistics was described as system structure theory and system function theory. And I thought whatever was distinctive about Halliday was the functional aspect so I called it systemic functional in language. And since then it's been systemic

functional linguistics but it would have been systemic structural linguistics had it been an open kind of question. But at that stage we were doing critical linguistics. And I mean by that we were less focused on what texts were like, and we were less focused on, although we had read Foucault, we were less focused not at all focused on the notion of discourse but rather we were interested in how power gets realized in linguistic form. But of course then, the question of how power gets realized in linguistic form, but in systematic ways and selections of this kind and selections of this kind and selections of this other kind and the systematicity only appears when they appear in texts. So that's where I began to think more about how does one talk about texts and discourse and what is the difference between them, are they merely kind of synonyms for the same phenomenon or is there a distinction? Halliday hadn't really done much about that, except insist that one should think about texts as isolated linguistic entities. So it really was my Hallidayan training, which brought systemic functional linguistics and its descriptive apparatus into critical linguistics. When others, for instance Norman Fairclough, somewhat later came to it they more or less adopted the Hallidayan apparatus because it had been embedded in the two books *Language as Ideology*, it's strongly there, and in the other book *Language and Control* because it's there in various ways.

RR: Can you talk about the emergence of the term *critical discourse analysis*?

GK: Well in 1978, I left to go back to Australia and the job I took was, until then I had

been teaching linguistics, and the job I took in Australia was a job in communication

studies and cultural studies. But I continued my linguistic work but in that new context

focused more and more on textual objects, on different kinds of texts that are

interesting from the perspective of communication and from the perspectives of

cultural studies. And I was working then with two colleagues, one Stephen Muecke and

the other Noel King who were readers of French theory, and so I was reintroduced after

having read Foucault in the 1970s, and at that stage it became clear to me that the

notion of discourses in the Foucauldian sense was actually the answer to my question

what is the difference between text and discourse? Discourse was kind of a social

category, which emerged in texts. And so it also became clear to me that one should not

only focus on critical linguistics, which was focusing on the discipline of linguistics, but

also on the object, which was the object of investigation which was discourse, really.

That was before, before, I had an interest in genre at the same time but I thought really

the focus should be discourse. I began to think of the idea of discourse more and more.

The other problem I had was that in the early critical linguistics work we thought we

could read ideology from the texts though our linguistic analysis but it was quite apparent

that when you look at texts very closely, you will find what seems like different

ideologies. That became a problem for me. How could it be that you had different

ideologies in the same text?

And the subordinate, superordinate ideologies—how could you kind of talk about this

seriously? The Foucauldian notion of discourse became a very helpful device for saying

actually, what there is, is this intermediate layer of discursive organization, and yes, you have different discourses appearing in the texts because people are located differently institutionally and bring together these different discourses in specific ways in texts. Around about that time, 1984, although by that time I'd moved to Sydney, I read a book called *Linguistic Processes in Sociocultural Practice*. There, I looked at a number of texts and looked at how discourses actually operated in texts, and how multiplicity of discourses operated in texts. It showed how that worked. It was clear, to me, that what I was doing was actually still ideological work, but done through in an attempt to show what discourses appear in texts and an attempt to show what linguistic realization these discourses had in their textual appearance. I thought I was doing work that was more focused on texts, discourse, and ideology rather than simply linguistic phenomena, with ideology being directly readable through that. And that was this little book, like I say— *Linguistic Processes*—and in that discourse and genre became prominent. So I thought what are the categories that constitute textual genre on the one hand and discourse on the other. Then when I went back to Australia—I was in Australia—I was asked by a man called Michael Kline, who had been commissioned by the Australian Council of Humanities or something like that, to do a description of linguistics in Australia. He asked me to write a chapter on discourse studies in Australia. And I said, "I can't really do a chapter on discourse studies in Australia because it's a field I'm not that familiar with. But I could do a chapter on critical discourse studies in Australia because a number of people were doing related sorts of work." And in that chapter I said that I didn't want to recruit the work of people who did not see themselves working in critical discourse

analysis. Nevertheless, it was quite easy to see how feminist work around gender and language had really very similar kinds of aims and practices of analysis and the work of Dale Spender, for instance, in her book *Manmade Language* seemed to me very close to either critical linguistics or critical discourse analysis. And the work of Robin Lakoff similarly in the early 1970's. And so I said although I didn't want to recruit them against their will to it—that was the first time that I had published something in which I used the term. I think unbeknownst to me, Norman Fairclough was developing the term in England. And, in a sense, I think things are about, in the air, and you sort of pick them up because it's inevitable, really like picking up something in the air, like a virus.

RR: So this was in the late 1980s. When was that article published?

GK: I wrote it in 1988. It wasn't published until 1991.

RR: Can you talk about the meeting in Amsterdam in 1991?

GK: Well, in 1991 I went back to England. And by that time, I became more interested. I mean, the job I went to in Sydney was a job as Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences but mostly focused on media studies and media production. And so media and cultural studies were very strongly present. And it was difficult to pretend that linguistics or linguistic forms of analysis would actually enable you to understand these prominent, important, highly foregrounded texts in the culture. At that time, in

1986, I began to work with Theo van Leeuwen, sort of saying, well, what can we do about images?

In a book which I wrote in 1979 published in 1982, a book called *Learning to Write,* I had a little preface in which I said "I'm really sad that I can't say anything about the images which accompany the early writings of children." It was a concern of mine that we as linguists we couldn't say anything about these images, except something very superficial about them. From about 1983, I went to Sydney; I began to look at texts which were constituted in image and language at the same time. So my interests were moving a little bit away from a focus on language alone, or the notion that ideology is lodged in language and not in other forms of representation. But nevertheless, Teun van Dijk had invited me on a number of occasions to contribute to things that he was doing. And so, he was familiar with the *Language and Control* and *Language as Ideology* book. When he knew that I was back in England, he had invited a number of people, Ruth Wodak, Norman Fairclough, Theo van Leeuwen, who happened to be in Europe at the time and myself to this meeting in Amsterdam where we met and talked about critical discourse analysis.

RR: Were there frameworks set at this point or was it exploratory?

GK: It was exploratory. I mean we gave papers; there was an audience of people who were doing research, PhD research and others. We gave papers that represented our positions. One of the problems that had become somewhat crucial for me was this

issue, how can we legitimately connect the linguistic with the realizational matter? And I thought that it could only be done if we, well it goes back to this Hallidayan notion of realization, if we said that the connection between realization and linguistic form, and that which is to be realized, the meaning that is to be realized, is actually done by somebody who acts agenticly in that and realizes what they wish to realize, not in an arbitrary fashion but in a motivated fashion. So, I gave a paper in which I said the criticisms which were leveled against critical linguistics and critical discourse analysis in our readings were unfounded and not really legitimate and had to be met and in any case we had no legitimation ourselves for making these readings unless we could show how the action of individual agents in the linguistic processes actually worked. And so I gave this paper, others gave other papers. In fact, I can't remember now. van Dijk gave a paper where he set out a very elaborate framework. Teun's approach had been much more cognitive, as you know. His work in the early 1970s was an attempt to translate Chomsky's formalism to the level of texts and so he had worked with Kinch and used cognitive kind of frameworks. Ruth Wodak had come with her interests in prominent issues in her context in Vienna—racism and anti-Semitism. And Theo van Leeuwen gave something that came out his PhD work, which was on how people fashion accounts of specific events. So, we brought our interests and kind of brought them together. Of course, there were conversations about whether we should we have an integrated, ironed out framework, but we didn't. We didn't. We talked about it but didn't do it. But instead, we said that we should meet regularly. And so that set in train a meeting of

people doing critical discourse analysis that sort of migrated around Europe at various places.

RR: You talked of bringing aspects of Chomskyan linguistics into SFL. Did you think about SFL in a different way because of these different theories?

GK: There are certain problems in SFL, but for instance, the notion of nominalization in SFL or rather in system structure theory. It was dealt with with Rank shift. The notion of ranks, here are the privates, captains. So the sentence may have been the level of captain. Beneath the level of sentence was clause, and you could turn a clause a phrase, rank-shifted down. This is nominalization. It was done in a way that the Hallidayans, although they hated Chomskyan. Sleight of hand, and it's in there. It solved a problem in SF theory. Well any theory has its problems.

RR: What was the problem? The rank order?

GK: The notion of rank is for me not an apt way of thinking about the fluid and dynamic way we use the resources of speech. It's not rigidly ordered in that way. The hierarchical order of things, is still there in systemic functional.

RR: Is that something you've unraveled?

GK: It's not my concern to do it. I haven't worked in SFL since … you have to work where you lie, and leave other things alone.

CDA AS APPROACH, STANCE AND METHOD(S)

RR: You've mentioned other people's approaches. Can you characterize your own approach and how you have seen that change over time?

GK: It was founded in kind of a Marxist approach, which says that social and economic organization is that which generates the cultural forms. Cultural forms are an outcome of how the society actually is organized. My attempt was to show how that would actually work out. It's like a medieval master painter who paints the outline of the big painting and then sets the apprentice to work at coloring the toe of the angel. I see myself as the person who colors in the toes of the angels, showing how linguistic form actually happens—that process, the connection between the linguistic form and the social. And worrying about it and saying "what kind of theory do we need in order to do that?" And then because of the context in which I work, first of all in media studies and cultural studies, saying, well language alone is not enough, and attempting to convince my colleagues in the critical discourse field about things like: We need a theory of sign. We need a theory of the motivated sign which rests on the agentive action of individual sign makers. We need to attend to other forms of representations. I remember having arguments, good-natured arguments, with van Dijk, for instance, who thought that

ideology rested in language but not in image, for instance, and then challenged to show how images are ideologically constructed.

Then of course since 1991, I've worked in an educational context. There the question posed to me in relation to critical discourse analysis was, how does critical discourse analysis say something about the constitution of subjectivity? Education is, in the end, about the constitution of subjectivity. That's what it's aiming to do—produce subjects that kind of fit into the cultural environment. And, I sort of wondered how that enterprise actually said something about the constitution of subjectivity. Which of course was also an issue for me in media studies. Media actually being the biggest educational institutions in our societies and constituting a crucial role in the formation of subjectivities. It's maybe specific types of interests that distinguish what I do from what other people have done. Ruth Wodak, I think, is less concerned with linguistic form, with showing the operation of discourses. van Dijk who I think is more kind of cognitively oriented. My sort of interests, which are maybe sort of more humble, kinds of how do we actually kind of demonstrate what a discourse is like and how is semiosis working through the constitution of signs and in many modes.

RR: Can you talk about analytic approaches? What tools of analysis do you bring to bear on particular texts?

GK: Well, I brought to bear the tools much as I talked about making meaning through what is to be had. I suppose I made theories through what was to be had. So the

linguistics, which I had, I used. In co-fashioning critical linguistics, the paraphernalia of

the Hallidayan theory or methodology, as well as the paraphernalia, interpreted in a

particular way, of the Chomskyan methodology, up until when I stopped reading

Chomsky, 1978, 1979. In a sense, a kind of an accident in which I used to fashion my

approach to it. If I were doing linguistics now I would bring different kinds of tools to

bear. Maybe they would be better or maybe they would be completely useless. It's in a

sense an accidental collection of things. Although I think the things I've retained, the

focus on transitivity, modality, are general in the sense that they describe—or attempt

to describe—things that have a homologous existence in the world, in the social world.

And then using those very general abstractive principals to approach other modes of

representation. And then saying we must be very clear that it's the materiality of those

modes which makes these principals get realized in particular ways. That has another

affect on what I do, which is to move entirely away from abstraction and towards a very

concrete, materially bound form of analysis. So now I don't, in fact, in the article that

was published in 1993, the talk in Amsterdam of 1991. At that time, I said something

like, that it's quite likely, it's quite plausible to say that grammar is a fiction, or that

language is a fiction. It's a fiction because language is a fiction. I mean language consists

of a multiplicity of modes, if you think of speech. Speech, for instance, what is the

relation or the similarity between pitch movement and syntax? There is simply no

relation. They are entirely different, materially different things. What is the relation

between vowel quality and pitch movement? Not all that much. What is the relation

between vowel quality and lexis? Not all that much. That which we regard quite easily,

and confidently as language, is actually a collection of different things held together by the socially constructed entity called grammar. There is no real inherent reason why pitch movement ought to be part of that which we call syntax.

My analytic move has been away from such abstractions towards the concrete realizations. And of course in moving away from such abstractions, is also moving away from the idealizations and the abstractions towards the embodiment of meaning. So analytically, I'm now very interested in how meanings are embodied and what the difference is between getting meanings through the eye as against getting meaning through the ear, or getting meaning through the touch of fingers, or through the taste on your tongue and in your mouth, or through smelling in your nose. All of these are, for me, equally important routes to meaning. Meaning made in the mouth being as important as meaning made in the ear or through the ear.

RR: What does that look like when you sit down to analyze? Can you describe your actual analytic procedures?

GK: This is, I think, the big problem for a multimodal semiotic approach now. There are no good procedures. I mean, linguistic analysis of the kind that I did it before and that discourse analysts, if they do linguistic analysis, not many actually do linguistic analysis. That is in itself enormously time consuming and open ended. I mean, if everything means, than even the linguistic analysis, if we except for a moment the fiction of linguistics, would be enormously detailed. A multimodal analysis is multiplying that by

the factor of enormous dimensions. What we do practically, and you may have seen some of this, is we say let's identify the modes that can be identified. Always accepting the provisionality of the notion of mode. So to take the visual, to take image as mode, is also a fiction. It's the same as taking the speech or writing as a mode. I no longer think of language as a mode because the material constitution of writing and of speech is so different. For me, therefore, image is as much a fiction, in a sense. Does one regard color as being part of image or is it a separate mode? You can regard color as a separate mode. It's up to the analyst to decide to a large extent what is mode. Or the practices of the community of practice decide what should be mode. A photographer, for instance, would be horrified by seeing a photograph lumped together with a painting or a drawing or etching or something else. But to get back to your question. What we do is we attempt to identify, say for instance, work in a science classroom. We attempt to identify those things which seem through the teacher's practice or the students' responses and practices, to be modes which can be identified as being somehow autonomous enough to be seen means for making signs in that mode. We identify them and then say, what are the signs made in this mode? We have attempted to develop a form of transcription in which you show the concurrence of modes all at the same time. You can no longer, for instance, assume that in many transcriptions what you have is a linguistic transcript showing what goes on in the classroom with little things interspersed in either brackets or in different lines, showing other things going on. Well that's the impossible. In any case it privileges the linguistic as being the core of what goes on and in a multimodal approach, that's impossible to do. The linguistic might be

central or it might be entirely peripheral. So as a device, if you have a number of columns on the page, each column corresponding to a mode. We've made it a practice in the work we do in London not to put the linguistics—say the spoken—on the left hand as if it were the kind of guide against which these others are scored, but rather the linguistic might be, well, anywhere. The gestural might be on the left or the image or whatever. We have a time that runs down the left hand side of the page, and against that time we then have what happens in these different modes. What is the teacher doing gesturally? Or positionally? Where does she or he position himself when she or he says a certain thing? Or makes certain kinds of things? Or uses a certain kind of apparatus? Because it matters whether the teacher speaks from the back of the class or from the front of the class. So position, action, gesture, speech, of course, use of models, images on the board, images from a book. All of these would be represented and shown. What you'll see is that there are always a number of modes in play but sometimes one mode may not be present. For example, speech might not be there. But something is happening with the teacher manipulating a three-dimensional model on the bench in front of you. So that is what we are attempting to do there.

RR: What are your thoughts on the level of analysis and the extent to which it is systematic? As you know, there are critiques of CDA that say that small bits of texts can be taken out of context. What are your thoughts on being systematic in the analysis?

GK: I would shrug my shoulders and say, do what you want to do and let me do what I want to do. If you have large amounts of data, you will know, most ethnographers, anybody who deals with large amounts of data in a qualitative way will tell you in the end that you work on hunches. You look at the stuff and look at the stuff and you look at the stuff and then you say, this seems really interesting to me, and then you focus on it. And you focus on it and you work on it and work on it then you go back and look at the other stuff and say: This is what I have just come up with. Does my analysis make sense in relation to the other stuff? And the answer is either yes it does or not quite or it doesn't at all and then you look at something else. And so, my Dutch colleagues will say, you need your stomach, your stomach tells you about it. A lot of ethnographers say it's hunch, it's intuition. You can't deal with huge amounts of data in the same way and in any case, it doesn't make sense. So the description in any case would be open ended. You wouldn't know what to describe. So even Gertz's thick description is a fiction. There isn't a limit to what you could describe. There isn't a frame that would show what you should or should not attend to. Other than some type of hunch. So the attempt to say, I describe everything completely, neutrally that happened is silly. It's not the case. What's important is that when you have a hunch about something you do a really detailed analysis of it, and in any case you have a question. You come to the stuff that you've videoed or the stuff that you've described in some other kind of form, it isn't data, it's just stuff. It might be like leaves in the park that you've kicked through. It's not data. It's just stuff. It becomes data when you have a question. The question turns stuff into the

possibility of being data. It's focusing some bits of that which is emerging as data, that turns it into an interesting analysis which might reveal something about what this stuff is about, in relation to your question, behind which stands your weakly formulated theory. When you have some satisfaction about it, you go back to it again and look at it again. You say yes. And you did that, you have passes through your material. And in the end you say 'hey I understand what's going on.' So it's a systematicness of a quite different kind. Not the sort of seeming objective and seeming rigorous account of let's count everything that happens here. I think it is simply a lie. You can't count everything that happens because you don't know what there is to count. Right? So to accuse that kind of qualitative work of not being systematic seems to me sort of a profound misunderstanding of what systematicness and theoretical work is like.

ETHNOGRAPHY AND CONTEXT

RR: Can you talk about the relationships between ethnography and CDA?

GK: Well, I should say I no longer think I'm doing critical discourse analysis. I think I'm doing multimodal social semiotics. I hope to drop the social off fairly soon. Semiotics, which is socially founded, in relation to a multimodally constituted domain of representation. This is what I think I am doing. Now, when I was in my critical linguistics phase, I thought that critical linguistics could describe everything in the world that was worth describing. Maybe I kept that idea for quite some time. But now what I think, is that a theory, of a course a theory produces its own domain. The domains don't exist

waiting for the theory to come along and describe it. But the theory produces its own domain. Critical discourse analysis produces its own domain. Social semiotics produces its own domain. Multimodality produces its own domain which did not exist before as an integrated kind of domain. The theory produces its domain. I think if you say a theory produces its domain, and what you have to say is then if another theory comes along it also theory produces its domain. A theory has produced its domain, which in some ways seems to overlap with your domain, the domain of your theory, then you can either say "hey this is a competitor in relation to my domain and I've got to knock it out," or you can say "is that the theory actually producing something in my domain but in a different form?"

I think for instance, that ethnography looks at practices, and it seems to be operating in the same field I'm operating in but in quite different ways. I don't look at practices in the same that way that an ethnographer does. I look at semiosis. Ethnographers aren't interested in how the stuff of representation works. When I talk with Brian Street he isn't really convinced that there was a difference in representing through image or through speech or writing. Because the ethnographer has a different kind of look. He, she, they look differently. Or when I talk to a Vygotskian. A Vygotskian is interested in being a psychologist, he is interested in notions of mediational means, and in concepts. And I'm interested in signs. How is a sign different from a concept? I can see that where a Vygotskian talks about concepts she or he is talking about quite similar things but from a quite different perspective. And I can either say what we are doing is complementary or is competing. I think they are, but if one can accept, and I

think you have to—you can't do otherwise—that theory constructs and projects their own domain, and then what you have is either a willingness to say, that theory has constructed its domain which seems to be quite similar in relation to mine but differently. Is it a complementary kind of thing? Should I be making use of it? Does it do better then what I ever could do? Should I expand semiotics to take in what an ethnographer looks at? Or would it actually be doing it far worse than the ethnographer can? Should I leave the ethnographer to do what she or he does and continue to do my semiotics but forge alliances with the ethnographer? So in relation to literacy, I am very friendly with Brian Street because I think what the ethnographer does is different and complementary to what I do.

RR: You had said this morning that your work is not to be characterized as critical discourse analysis but as critical language theory. Did I get that right?

GK: I would not use the phrase "is not to be" because I'm not a lawmaker (laughter). And this road is not to be driven on right or the left. I would not say that. People can do whatever they want. But I myself don't think that I do critical discourse analysis.

CHANGES IN APPROACH

RR: And why is that? Can you talk about the transition between CDA and what you do now?

GK: For a start, what I said this morning, was one of my aims has been to produce a theory of language or a theory meaning, which would get beyond the notion of the critical. The word critical marks marginality. There is linguistics, and there is a marginal thing called critical linguistics. I would like to have a theory of language, which would do, but would incorporate those kinds of things. That, alas, has not happened. That was an ambitious undertaking. What I would like now is to have a theory of how we make meanings—we in the social and in the cultural—make meanings, both outwardly in representation and inwardly in interpretation. That is what I would like. A full account of how that works. Because I work in an educational institution, I think about that in terms of subject and subjectivity, and in terms of learning. I think what I am doing is sort of akin to what Vygotskians talk about but from a semiotic perspective.

Critical discourse analysis, I think it can do what it imagined it would set out to do. It hasn't managed to kind of move into, becoming, into constituting a mainstream theory of meaning making in relation to language. For a start, I think, of course people have begun to look at images. But the linguistic is quite dominant in an unspoken and implicit way in critical discourse analysis. The other is kind of marginal. In terms of theory of how meaning is made, I think there is a problem with that. I think the field of meaning is larger than the linguistic alone. And in any case, as I said this morning, the notion of critique is no longer the issue. Critique is, as I said, bringing things into crisis. When things are *in* crisis, you don't pour petrol on the flames. When things are in crisis, I think the agenda is how can we provide, using the old-fashioned term as a means of empowerment. Empowering the young with a means of having a shaping role in relation

to their lives in their society. That's one thing. And I think the notion of design is important in that. Not giving up the aims of critical linguistics and critical discourse analysis but rather incorporating them into the project of design. I can only design if I fully understand the resources that are available for designing. I can only design if I fully understand the environment in which I design. I can only design if I fully understand my own interests and for those whom I am making the design. That is how I conceive of the new enterprise.

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS IN EDUCATION

RR: Can you talk about how this fits into education?

GK: It fits completely in with education. The question is: What is the society likely to be like? On the one hand: What is it like now? And what is it likely to be like? Now critical discourse analysis, just to voice my—one other critique of critical discourse analysis is … in critical discourse analysis you look at what has happened. You look at texts which have been made. You look at the past. You look at texts that have been made by others. So you look at the texts that have been made out of the agendas of others have had. It is a backward-looking enterprise. Inevitably, that's what it has to be. You look at these textual objects that were made and they were made out of the agendas of others. Well that's fair enough but I want to look at what could be done to shape the future. I want to be able to say in relation to the kinds of aims, political aims, let's say, that I have for the future I would like those who pass through educational institutions to have the

means to influence, to be able to shape not only me but those other people, too to shape their futures. Now, of course, I know the means to shape his or her future is infinitely small for any one individual. And yet it is important that each individual—in the small way that he or she can—has the means for shaping the future.

It's like you're on a sailing boat. You've got the rudder with the long handle. Is it sufficient if the rudder of your society has only one hand on it? Or should there be three hands on it? Or should every hand be on there? And the direction of the boat is actually then the effect of the sum total of all the hands that are on there. But all the hands can only be on there if all who have their hands on there have a sense of what could be done or where the boat might be going. That, for me, is the point about education. I see curriculum, curriculum not now as it had been seen as the means for reproducing the young in the image of their culture—that's silly. Because by the time we've attempted to do that, the culture is already somewhere else. It's moving too fast to have curriculum as reproduction. So curriculum now has to be designed … curriculum is the design for social futures. We have to shape a curriculum that provides the generative means for the young to have a role in shaping their futures.

RR: And what does that look like in terms of a theory of learning?

GK: It looks like this, that the transformative action of all of us in making our meanings has to be put into the foreground. If in the past, we've had theories of acquisition which really came out of the notion of stable systems of representation, stable systems of

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signs and ourselves fitting into it which is really the notion of reproduction in terms of what is.

Now we have to recognize—what has probably always been the case but maybe wasn't socially functional—is that we always transform that which what we engage, and transform that which we have taken into ourselves and transformed. So our actions are always transformative. So in fact, everything we do is new, everything we do is new, innovative and creative. Instead of having creation is a sort of thing, which is assigned to the privileged view of the poets, musicians, or the rock band, or the advertisers, creativity is completely ordinary. Creativity is the most ordinary thing that there is. Innovation is simply a given. Transformation is normal. And if you put that at the center of a learning theory, what you have is a completely different form of pedagogy as a result. Completely different kinds of curriculum as a result. You have a learning theory that conforms to the rhetoric of politicians that says "our societies need the innovation in the creative, the adaptability to change. The ease with change." At the moment, what we are doing is using nineteenth-century notions of meaning and learning, which are about fitting in to authoritative, stable structures, to meet the fluid and dynamic social givens of the immediate future. That's how my notions of learning and theories of meaning would fit into that. In every act we do is transformative. Work is transforming. Work changes that which is worked on. Work changes the tools that you use for working with. Work changes the worker. It is fully transformative. If you were to put that at the center of your theory of meaning making and your theory of learning, you would have something entirely different than what you have at the moment.

RR: Does that change the demands of the analyst?

GK: Yes, the analyst would no longer say: To what extent does this conform to what I imagined what should happen? But, rather, in what ways has this been transformed? It's a completely different focus.

RR: And how am I transformed in the process?

GK: Yes, how has the maker been transformed? The object been transformed? What you are measuring is transformation rather than conformity. At the moment, our assessment systems measure conformity. This is completely paradox in relation to what politicians are demanding from educational systems.

RR: Can you describe your teaching?

GK: I do it much in the way I did it today. I bring texts and things to class and say, "what's going on here."

RR: What theories of learning do you bring into your own practice. Are there particular issues that come up every semester?

GK: For a start, most of my teaching now is doctoral level. It's engaging with PhD researchers and their work. I do a little of master's level. I don't teach a semester course in anything. I used to encounter the strangeness of these ideas. Working formally or formalistically. For example, today, when these other images that were introduced. Jerry Harste put on the overhead. People engage with them not in the formal way that I attempted to show briefly. Getting people to focus on the different way of getting into something. Getting away from the common sense reading. Going behind something else. Looking at something else.

RR: Because CDA is different approaches.

GK: Yes.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

RR: Could you talk about future directions for CDA?

GK: Well, I have no comments to make on the future of CDA. I can comment on what I think is the generative work. It is to understand fully, of the representational resources in which culture has made available. Well the agenda for me would be to say what are the resources for making representations in the culture and the society in which I am? What are the … I would take a two-pronged approach to this. What are the social, economic, political conditions? What are the representational resources? And how do these intermesh? Of course technology comes in to this, not as a determining factor but

as a factor which has a huge impact in the end on these things. So I would say in the absence of the kinds of frames which existed before. If you choose to represent that, you do it through these genres, and through these discourses, and through these modes. In the absence of that, or the kinds of things we value are these kinds of things, and the kinds of things we devalue are these kinds of things. In the absence of aesthetic framings, ethical framings, representational framings, or other kinds of social framings, with frames being gone, how can we nevertheless attempt to understand what representation and communication will be like?

With globalization, not just only in the economic domain, but of course also hugely in the representational domain, what does that entail? How do we make sense of the profoundly different representational resources and practices of other cultures? You don't even have to have globalization. Because in a school in London, you will have children from 40 or 50 different cultures and languages and all kind of bunched up together, being treated as if they were actually culturally, linguistically, representationally, semiotically homogenous. They are not. They bring different resources. How can we even begin to construct a form of curricular pedagogy that deals with that in the microscopic situation of the London classroom or the macroscopic sense of the globalizing world? So I think that there is an agenda there.

RR: This morning you talked about this in terms of stability and instability. Can you address this?

GK: Well, there isn't anything else for them to fit into. The notion of critique is becoming irrelevant. Critique only works in relation to a relatively stable system. Critique begins to break down when there is no yardstick, or nowhere to apply the lever of critique. When these things have dissolved, the notion of critique becomes too local, too kind of momentary. I'm not saying that we shouldn't understand the potentials of resources and how they are used by any one person in relation to others. I'm not saying that at all. We must keep that in our bag of essential requisites for any member of society. But the notion of critique implies that here is something that is stable and now I can apply my critique to that. And anyways it's a sort of backward looking enterprise. I've lost track of the question.

RR: How you see multicultural and multilingual population in London, how you see the different resources people bring to bear … How that impacts your project of design or redesign.

GK: As someone said, in the meeting today, you need to take stock of the available resources. What are the resources which are here? And how can these resources be used? Why are certain resources not used? Why are they disregarded or disvalued? If you take specific cultural domains, say music, the music scene in London. Where you get the cultural resources actually being brought together. Indian music being brought together with Caribbean music and forming places, with other forms of music. They're called hybrids, hybrid is for me the wrong term because hybrid assumes a stable notion

somewhere in relation to where these things are not quite the norm. These things are

completely normal now, ordinary things. It goes back to the notion of creativity. You

bring different resources together and you get the new. And so, the notion of design

implies for me intensifying awareness of what the resources are and what the potentials

are and how they might be used and what the conditions of constraint are and how

these conditions of constraint might be overcome or bypassed in my class.