Studying ideological worldviews in political Discourse Space: Critical-cognitive advances in the analysis of conflict and coercion

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Abstract

My paper discusses the current nexus between spatial cognition and critical discourse analysis (CDA), assessing its strengths, limitations, and prospects in the area of political/ideological discourse studies. In the first part, I review the models of spatial cognition that have made the most significant contribution to CDA. Discussing Deictic Space Theory and Text World Theory, among others, I argue that cognitive models reveal further theoretical potential which has not been exploited yet. Focusing on how representations and ideologically charged worldviews are established, they fail to provide a pragmatic explanation of how addressees are made to establish a worldview, in the service of speaker's goals. The second part of the paper outlines Proximization Theory, a discursive model of crisis and conflict construction in political discourse. I argue that, unlike the other models, it fully captures the complex ideological positioning in political discourse space and, crucially, the dynamics of conflict between the opposing ideologies of the space.
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1. Introduction: critical discourse analysis and cognitive linguistics

A significant part of today's CDA reveals a cognitive element, drawing on work on spatial–temporal cognition and conceptualization (Talmy, 2000; Fauconnier and Turner, 2002; Levinson, 2003; Evans and Chilton, 2010; among many others) in various interdisciplinary studies of ideologically motivated construals of meaning within different discourse domains (e.g. Cienki et al., 2010; Hart, 2010; Dunmire, 2011; Kaal, 2012; Filardo Llamas, 2010, 2013). The cognitive-linguistic (CL) approach to CDA offers a disciplined theoretical perspective on the conceptual import of linguistic choices identified as potentially ideological. It thus affords a new and promising lens on persuasive, manipulative and coercive properties of discourse, worldview and conceptualization which have hitherto been beyond the radar of CDA (see also overviews in Hart, 2014; Hart and Cap, 2014; Filardo Llamas et al., 2015).

As expressed by Levinson, the cognitive-linguistic approach to discourse presupposes the fundamental role of spatial cognition in relativization and subjective representation of processes and attitudes that involve a deictic point of view to 'anchor' ideas (2003). Werth (1999) and Gavins (2007) adopt a similar stance in explaining 'deictic coherence' in terms of 'text-' and 'discourse worlds'. They argue that all language use, and therefore also discourse, involves the (re-) construction of a mental space which functions as a cohesive conceptual frame for the representation of geographically

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and culturally bounded (social) realities. These assumptions have been operationalized in models that link thought patterns in the mind to their linguistic and discursive representations, revealing ideological meanings. They have made a particularly rich contribution to theories of the basic, 'center-periphery' conceptual arrangement of the Discourse Space (DS) (Chilton, 2004, 2005) and recently also to theories of the dynamic re-arrangement of the Space involving a strategic, context-bound deployment of lexico-grammatical choices (Cap, 2013).

The present paper is structured in two main parts. In the first part (section 2), I describe contributions of the cognitive-linguistic research to the account of the core deictic architecture of the Discourse Space. I particularly acknowledge the role of that research in elucidating the DS center-periphery arrangement underpinning ideological and value-based positions in discourse. At the same time I argue that the best known, 'formative' models such as Chilton's or Levinson's, have not exploited the potential that CL reveals with regard to the critical description of all complexities of the Space. While delivering a much-needed focus on *how people establish* representations and ideologically charged worldviews, they have nonetheless failed to explain *how people are made to establish* a worldview, in the service of speaker's pragmatic goals. I work on this issue in the second part of the paper (section 3), providing answers from Proximization Theory and its applications in the urgent discourses of anti-terrorism and anti-migration (Cap, 2013). Having assessed the explanatory power of proximization in the account of the spatially grounded legitimization and coercion strategies, the paper closes (section 4) by defining new domains to be explored from an integrated critical-cognitive–pragmatic research perspective.

2. Formative models: *representing* worldviews in discourse space

The most comprehensive of the established CL models of discourse and (critical) discourse study seems Chilton's (2004, 2005) Discourse Space Theory (DST), though we must not brush aside several other approaches, such as Levinson's (2003), Werth's (1999) and Gavins's (2007).

In Chilton (2004:57) a central claim is made that in processing any discourse people 'position' other entities in their 'world' (Werth, 1999; Gavins, 2007; Gavins and Lahey, 2016) by 'positioning' these entities in relation to themselves along three axes in three dimensions, 'spatial', 'temporal', and 'modal'. This arrangement presupposes the primacy of the spatial dimension as the remaining dimensions involve conceptualizations in spatial terms. Time is conceptualized in terms of motion through space ('the time to act has arrived') and modality is conceptualized in terms of distance ('remotely possible') or (deontic modality) as a metaphoric extension of the binary opposition between the close of the remote (see below). The origin of the three dimensions is at the deictic center, which includes the symbolic Self, i.e. *I*, *we*, etc. All other entities and processes exist relative to ontological spaces defined by their coordinates on the space (s), time (t) and modality (m) axes (Fig. 1). This makes it possible, Chilton argues, to conceptualize the ongoing kaleidoscope of ontological configurations activated by text.

Fig. 1 represents the basic interface of cognition and language shared by most of the CL models trying to account for the construal of discourse. At the heart of the account is the concept of deixis and, what follows, deictic markers. The spatial markers, such as *I/we* and *they*, 'located' on the s axis are the core of the linguistic representation, which is usually a representation in terms of binary oppositions extending into all three dimensions. Typically, entities and processes construed as 'close' in the spatio-temporal dimension are assigned positive values within the deontic modal dimension, while those construed as 'distant' are at the same time (or as a result) assigned negative values. In models other than Chilton's, the central status of the spatial deixis is reflected at theoretical and terminological levels, where 'US-good/THEM-bad' is more of a conceptual than solely linguistic dichotomy (cf. Text World Theory in Werth, 1999; Gavins, 2007; Kaal, 2012).
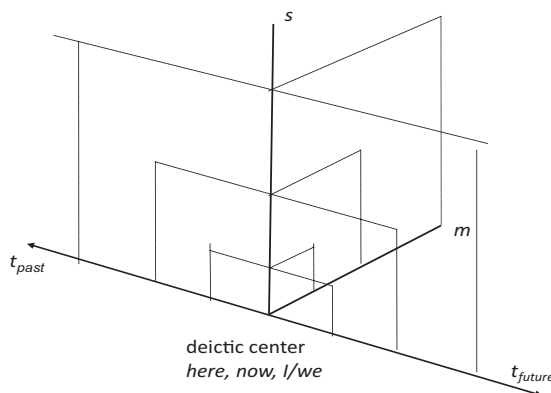

Fig. 1. Dimensions of deixis.
Adapted from Chilton (2004:58).