

Patterns and Meanings in Discourse: Theory and practice in corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS)

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Alan Partington, Alison Duguid and Charlotte Taylor, 2013. *Patterns and Meanings in Discourse: Theory and practice in corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS)*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

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Recently published in John Benjamins's Studies in Corpus Linguistics series, *Patterns and Meaning in Discourse* is an interdisciplinary text that introduces ways to utilise corpus techniques for practitioners of discourse studies and, for seasoned corpus linguists, acts as a reminder of the expanding number of non-linguistic fields in which corpus techniques have been put to use. Follow up to Alan Partington's *Patterns and Meanings* (1998), a volume that mixed theoretical discussion with practical demonstrations of corpus technology in linguistics and language teaching, this work sees Partington joined by Alison Duguid and Charlotte Taylor, who reference research from a variety of disciplines that have benefited from corpus studies in the intervening 15 years, a period in which Partington himself utilized corpora beyond 'linguistics' towards paralinguistic, political and social issues (e.g. Partington, 2006; Partington and Taylor, 2010) - Duguid's research in diachronic studies and newspaper analysis inform the latter stages of the text, while Taylor's research on identity representation studies and the construction of politeness combine to result in an authorship trio with extensive research in corpus-assisted discourse studies.

"There is no limit to the sorts of discourse types CADS can take an interest in (p. 330)".

The authors discuss the eclectic range of CADS research in chapters 2 to 11, but this is preceded by two important chapters in which a theoretical linguistic stance is outlined. Anchoring the text are John Sinclair's theory of discourse organisation (the idiom principle vs the open choice theory) and Michael Hoey's notion of lexical priming in the organisation of utterance and text. These chapters include concisely written analogies made between the idiom principle, lexical priming and schema/script theory – something which is no mean feat, and they arm the reader with the conceptual knowledge required to understand the following chapters on evaluation of lexis, explicit/implicit humour and stylistics. The plentiful case studies used are modern and references are strongly connected to British text analysis research – filled with insights from the likes of Baker, Fairclough, Hunston, and Krishnamurthy. Whether this is sufficient reason to 'trust' this text, or not, the studies referenced clearly reveal that while the idiom principle was still 'under-described' a decade ago (Sinclair, 2004, 140-41), the imbalance between language learning studies on grammar (logic) and the idiom tendency (schemata) has been much reduced.

Much has occurred in a short time and the authors might have made better use of glossaries, tables or timelines for the uninitiated. There is the possibility of confusing concepts with multiple terms: the idiom principle (also known as the collocational principle and the phraseological tendency) could have been summarised in tabular form and the term evaluative prosody is also referred to as discourse prosody and semantic prosody (see page 58), but having been primed with knowledge of this field, it was less confusing than it might have been - indeed, the initial

chapters refreshed me sufficiently with the concepts necessary to understand themes throughout the book: i.e. evaluation in discourse (chapters 2-3), rhetoric in discourse through irony and metaphor (4-5), textual stylistics (6-7), spoken discourse (8-9) and diachronic studies (10-11). Unquestionably, the authors skilfully organise chapters to maximise a sense of theoretical flow. Examples are how the chapters on evaluation segue well with those on rhetoric to show how evaluation can be a device that fuels irony and metaphor, and the well-chosen example text (*How Whitehall Helped Hitler*) which allows them to expound upon the interplay of evaluation (and priming) within a small text to discuss embedding, harmony, nesting and prosody – inside one concise paragraph. They clearly show how a lexical unit possesses inbuilt evaluations and exhibits positive or negative prosodies that are bolstered or weakened according to who uses it within a conversational/textual environment - most clearly shown through their corpus-assisted investigations on the word *control* and its frequent collocates.

Moving to rhetoric in discourse, the writers use corpora to note markers such as adverbial intensifiers within explicit irony, but of more interest was their use of corpora to uncover patterns in the construction of *implicit* irony. This holds relevance to those interested in using Anglo-American media texts with foreign language students. Aware of the gains and losses that accompany the use of ‘authentic’ foreign cultural scripts in the classroom, and having met success and failure in my explorations with them, their connecting of irony to evaluation and their description of how their press briefings corpus revealed a form of implicit irony underrepresented in recent research – *litotic irony* (i.e. understatement) - was of much interest. Through discussing explicit, implicit and phrasal irony, the authors explicate ways to analyse the construction of humour, presumably, for researchers and students interested in the study of rhetoric. In the chapter on metaphor they use corpus data to outline how metaphor can be understood by readers/viewers who are successfully primed by relationships created by familiarity with both genre and register signals within a text, which, in turn, allows for an irony frame to be applied to process meaning (p. 161). This is applicable to multiple foreign text styles: awareness of cultural familiarity, genre-based knowledge and register differences are all required (alongside vocabulary knowledge) to fully understand foreign ‘texts’. Their discussion made me reflect upon my own methodology in teaching foreign humour, viz, through pre-teaching activ-

ities on characters, context and schema, as well as working on core vocabulary and phrases.

If the interdisciplinary nature of CADS had not already been evident, it comes through firmly in the chapter on stylistics. Using a P.G Wodehouse prose-corpus, they note that their findings are corpus-assisted as their results are enriched by “intuitions, impressions and suspicions arising from ... knowledge of (his work)” (p.185). In other words, literary knowledge is required alongside corpus linguistic techniques. Similarly, when the authors investigate the phenomenon of *forced priming* (as used by lawyers, journalists and politicians in corpus texts), institutional, journalistic and political knowledge is called upon. Closing chapters highlight recent developments in modern diachronic studies through which the authors encouragingly note that studies need not only highlight differences in lexical usage: similarities, particularly in comparative CADS research, can be equally noteworthy.

The authors succeed in showing how CADS has influenced several disciplines, but although they convey this coherently, the use of tables and visuals would have brought added clarity when presenting key theoretical terms and concepts. Despite this the book is an excellent (re)introduction into an area that holds possibilities for interdisciplinary-minded researchers. It provides several areas in which further investigations might be pursued and includes a useful appendix that shows where corpora (referred to in the case studies) can be found. For myself, a series of research possibilities took form and began to manifest during the reading of this book - a text of worth for experienced and inexperienced corpus linguists alike.

References

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