

5. Conclusions

Since the main objective of the current project was to separate the basest methodological goals of CDA from the socially- and politically-charged backdrop that has become endemic in carrying out CDA-related research, it is important to discuss the results which came from the methodological steps described above. The general purpose of the current study was to determine whether the methodological approach proposed and utilized here could be a viable methodology for carrying out future CDA research while simultaneously providing a response to some of the criticisms that have been brought up against traditional CDA approaches in the past. Because of this, the discussion presented here consists of three parts, each of which focuses on a different facet of the findings.

With this in mind, the research questions which formed the basis of the project presented here will be addressed in kind. These will then be discussed in more detail in the sections that follow. In response to the first question, the combination of aspects of Methodological Synergy (Baker et al., 2008) and Semantic Prosody was determined to be a feasible option in analyzing texts in two separate languages. In addressing the second question it is important to note that it is impossible to thoroughly and accurately judge the relative objectivity of one's analysis of any findings, especially without something to compare the analysis to. Thus, it seems too early to say whether or not the results of the study were less subjective than traditional CDA research. However, based on the research process and findings here, it can be said that the methodology itself provides a comprehensive, objective approach to the goals of traditional CDA research. Without a doubt there are still improvements to be made, but the methodology was able to respond to

some doubts related to data selection and analysis which have been raised in the past (see, e.g., Mautner, 2009).

The final research question was centered on the potential for future application of the methodology laid out here. It is obviously too early to accurately judge whether the methodology presented above is widely applicable or not. In order to definitively judge practicality in related research, it should first be applied by an outside researcher in order to determine whether or not it is replicable. Nonetheless, when looking at how CDA has progressed from its roots to the present day, it would seem that the future application of this methodology is possible.

The results themselves were broken into two main parts, each focusing on a different way of approaching corpus analysis using the methodology presented above. The first analysis was intended to provide an overview of the language used in each country's print media discourse regarding 'drug-related violence' as well as to highlight any differences or similarities therein. The second part of the corpus analysis was based on a micro-analysis of shared concepts between the corpora. This segment was undertaken with the intent of examining only the discourse common to both corpora in order to examine the differences or similarities present in writing about concepts which were present in both countries. These sections are discussed individually below.

5.1. Frequent Node Analysis

The first set of analyses was based on nothing more than examining the prosodic features of the most common node words in each corpus. As was discussed above, this served the dual purpose of presenting the general language use in each corpus (based on

raw lexical frequency) as well as the general prosodic characteristics of each corpus (based on the prosodic analysis of frequent nodes and their collocates). The results of this analysis were two-fold. That is, both general and specific instances of noteworthy prosodic characteristics were found in examining frequent nodes in both corpora. It bears repeating that the results presented here were representative of the individual features studied. The features studied were all statistically salient based on their occurrence in the corpora (either through examining raw frequency or collocate strength); however, they are only some of the hundreds of features that hypothetically could have been studied.

One of the striking findings related to general prosodic features in both corpora was found in examining the use of the nodes MEXICO and MÉXICO. Although a place name can carry no inherent prosodic value, both corpora seemed to include negative prosodies when Mexico was present in the text. In the case of the English corpus, not a single overtly positive collocate was found to co-occur with MEXICO, and in the Spanish corpus very few positive collocates were found to be present with the node MÉXICO. It should be made clear that many neutral collocates in the English corpus (there were no overtly positive collocates) occurred in negative syntactic environments while in the Spanish corpus both overtly positive and neutral collocates occurred in negative environments. Together these prosodic characteristics would seem to suggest a general negativity portrayed in both countries' print media discourses with regard to Mexico.

Insofar as specific prosodies are concerned, the analysis of the nodes BORDER and FRONTERA highlighted interesting prosodic behaviors, as well as what appeared to be a conceptual difference between both countries' print news media. That is, the US media portrayed the border between both countries as a sort of political boundary as well as a

division between the US and the ‘drug-related violence’ present in Mexico. This was evident not only based on the high number of prosodically negative collocates (as compared to those found in the Spanish corpus), but also on the collocates themselves. While the English corpus featured many LIs as collocates which focused on the border as a division (*security, long, state, agent*), the Spanish corpus tended toward the use of collocates based on spatial relations (*estados unidos, norte, ambos, lados*). Beyond this use framing in which there are conceptual difference in portrayal, the corpora additionally featured prosodic differences in relation the nodes BORDER and FRONTERA.

This difference was principally centered on the high preference for negative prosodies in the English corpus as compared to the Spanish corpus. This was considered to be of particular relevance due to the fact that not only was the set of English collocates examined found to have many overtly negative LIs, but even those collocates which were deemed to be neutral or positive were found to have overwhelmingly negative prosodic features when viewed in context within the corpus. The most obvious example of this was *security* as a collocate of BORDER (discussed in Section 4.1, p. 88), in which a LI which was seen to have overtly positive prosodic features almost exclusively occurred in negative syntactic environments.

Despite these findings, it is important to consider the fact that the texts analyzed here were representative of a specific discourse as well as a very specific genre of language use. Because of this, it is difficult to assert that these characteristics are representative of a greater discourse. It is entirely possible that the negative prosodic features found in examining otherwise prosodically positive LIs is due to the overall discourse and not

necessarily author intention; however, this differs according to authors' stances (see, e.g., Carvalho, 2008)

5.2. 'Shared Concept' Analysis

The second portion of the corpus analysis was dedicated to the examination of nodes which were present across both corpora. This was done in order to study the differences and similarities in the common discourse between both countries' print news media. This section was based on the perceived necessity of focused analysis from an objective perspective. This was accomplished by avoiding the explicit selection of features to be examined. Nodes in each corpus were paired with their conceptual equivalents (shared concepts) in the opposite corpus and these were then analyzed based on the overt prosodic characteristics which they each possessed. As a result, the shared concepts which were analyzed were those which possessed neither overtly positive nor negative prosodies and which had a high frequency of occurrence in the corpora.

In many ways, this analysis was not groundbreaking in its findings. Nonetheless, some interesting features were noted in comparing the presentations of certain items in both corpora. The clearest example of prosodic contrast found in the shared concepts analysis was that of the nodes POLICE and POLICÍA. This shared concept was found to have a marked difference in prosodic characteristics based on the corpus in which it appeared. While in the Spanish corpus POLICÍA were presented in a generally positive light and as the victims of events, the English corpus presented them in a generally negative light and as criminals. This distinction was seen to be particularly important in that the POLICE/POLICÍA being described in both corpora were Mexican. Because of this there is

obviously the possibility that this prosodic portrayal would change if the nodes referred to American law enforcement personnel.

This striking difference in presentation was further underscored by the analysis of the nodes AUTHORITIES and AUTORIDADES, where there was found to be a marked tendency toward either positive or negative prosody in the Spanish corpus, but in which a positive preference was found in the English data. Referring back to the example of POLICE, though, it is worth noting that in the case of AUTHORITIES and AUTORIDADES, the ‘authorities’ being referred to were both Mexican and American; thus bolstering the possibility that the nationality of both the ‘reporter’ and ‘reported’ may have an influence on prosodic characteristics in a text. However, a definitive response to this possibility is beyond the scope of the current project and would require further research.

Aside from these isolated instances of notable prosodic contrast, the shared concept analysis did not turn up hard evidence of any broad tendencies encompassing *all* of either corpus. Nonetheless, this should not be seen as a disadvantage. The study presented here did in fact find marked prosodic differences that can be seen to be related to the overall discourse in each county’s print news media. However, what must be kept in mind is that there was never an expectation to find anything in the analysis (something missing in other, similar studies, which set out to document characteristics already believed to exist). Generally speaking, the present study was based on a corpus approach which was applied to CDA research and not the other way around. As such, it can be inferred that the current study was successful in encountering concrete critical discourse characteristics (most notably in the cases of POLICE/POLICÍA, BORDER/FRONTERA and

AUTHORITIES/AUTORIDADES). However, when compared to similar studies, these findings may seem unimpressive since traditionally CDA research has set out to find what was already assumed to be present (e.g., Salama, 2011) or has found what it ‘wanted to’ based on the ideologies of researchers (Poole, 2010). Indeed, this is the strength of the current methodology. With no expectations to influence what was examined, the researcher can be almost entirely removed from the analysis process (at least in an ideological sense). Because of this, the present approach—at the very least—could be used to define a general discourse and select items to be analyzed in a traditional sense; but it could also be used as the analysis process itself. In this sense, then, the methodology demonstrated and discussed here can be seen as a viable step forward in improving CDA-based research. Regardless, various factors must be addressed in moving forward. These factors are discussed in the following section.

5.3. Discussion

As is mentioned above, the current study was seen as successful on many fronts. Nonetheless, in order to be able to not only move forward with this style of research but also to rest assured that it is a replicable, viable and accurate approach, three methodological issues must first be addressed. Principle among the issues to be addressed in moving forward is the question of corpus use; namely, is it appropriate to use a comparison corpus, when, and why? Secondly, it is vital to examine the findings themselves in terms of accuracy and implications. Finally, SP research in general is addressed in reference to how it is currently used in research, was used in the present study, and can be used in future studies aiming to carry out CDA-style analyses through the

combination of Methodological Synergy-style analysis (see Salama, 2011; Baker et al., 2008) and Semantic Prosody.

5.3.1. Corpus Issues

The present study was successful in assembling and analyzing representative corpora for a specific language area, and because of this the corpora should be seen as representative of nothing more. The corpora which were analyzed here were ‘snapshots’ of a single month of texts, from a single type of writing, referencing a single topic and meeting very specific requirements. Therefore, while—in theory—the corpora analyzed here could be seen as representative of greater print media discourse, they should be seen as they are. This is particularly true in that most similar studies have used mega corpora and are thus able to make more generalizable arguments in favor of the applicability of their findings.

Because of this characteristic of the corpora examined here, it cannot be said that the findings laid out above are representative of all uses in the media discourses of either country. This is a particularly important point to address in the future in relation to the use of Google since it would seem (although it is not explicitly indicated) that Google restricts searches to 160 pages. However at the same time, a comparison of the corpora here and a mega corpus (Salama, 2011; Orpin, 2005; Stubbs, 1997) proves difficult in that a comparison corpus would have to be representative of the same linguistic arena discussed in the present study. In this sense, the use of the corpora should be seen as both an advantage and a disadvantage in terms of methodological characteristics. On the one hand, the present study may not be comparable to other sources and may not be universally

applicable. On the other hand, though, the corpora used here represent a new possibility in CDA research in which micro uses of language can be examined critically without the need for entirely subjective analysis.

5.3.2. Strengths and Weaknesses

Overall, the present study was a success. This was primarily true in that it was capable of responding to many of the issues highlighted in common CDA approaches. That is, data selection was made objective (at least as much so as was possible), research was carried out on a small, practical set of texts and analysis was principally carried out using SP.

However, this is not to say that the methodology had no weaknesses. In fact, the approach discussed here had a variety of methodological weaknesses which must be addressed in order to effectively apply the approach in the future. Many of these weaknesses in the methodology have already been mentioned in other parts of the study and so, in the interest of economy, only the most pressing issue will be dissected here.

One of the most far-reaching weaknesses present in the current research was related to the use of SP. Part of the problem in using SP is that it is not terribly common in the literature and that when it does appear it is used as a way to document specific semantic uses, not to measure general discourse characteristics. Because of this, the present use of SP as a methodological tool was novel. The main issue in using SP in an approach like this is the scope of its use. Since it is nearly impossible to examine every use of every node or collocate it becomes difficult to generate concrete findings. One possible solution to this would be to utilize semantic tagging in the corpus analysis; nonetheless, the question of having to assign prosodic value to LIs would remain an issue. While the findings presented

here are certainly concrete insofar as they are true of the language studied, it should be noted that many findings here did not come from the LIs themselves, but rather from their context within the corpora. Because of this, future research may need to take the enormity of some corpora into account in order to completely address CDA issues (similar to Prentice's (2010) use of semantic tagging). A more complete approach in this respect would also help make broader corpus assessments more accurate.

For example, having examined the corpora used in the current study it would seem that the US press utilized more prosodically negative language than did the Mexican press. This is important in that it indicates a non-objective discourse in both countries' coverage. This would be a necessary piece of information in approaching future research because LIs with positive and neutral prosodies were found to very frequently take on negative prosodic characteristics depending on their context of use; thus, it would be very important in future studies to address as many potential prosodic characteristics and behaviors as possible as soon as possible.

Despite this possible methodological weakness, the present study is still seen as having potential for future application. In looking at the current project and the potential applications it has in CDA research, it is important to remember that CDA is interpretative. This interpretation is not in itself bad; and is quite impossible to escape. However, it is possible to improve upon how interpretation is carried out in order to put more rhetorical weight behind any claims made in the field. The difference in this respect between the study presented here and past studies in CDA is that the approach to interpretation, necessary to carry out any CDA study, was changed.

While traditional CDA involves the selection of features to be analyzed by a researcher (based on their personal criteria), the current study relied on the use of statistics to ‘select’ items for study, and attempted to streamline a form of interpretation which eliminates the use of researchers’ personal criteria as much as possible. As a whole, the current study addressed the CDA issues that it set out to, and—at the very least—showed that it is possible to carry out an almost wholly objective study based on some of the goals traditionally held by CDA. Further, the study had many strong points which can hopefully be applied to future CDA studies. Even if only the weak points appear important to the reader, the field will still benefit from the methodology presented here. After all, it was weak points which motivated this study to begin with.