

Eva M. Gomez-Jimenez and Michael Toolan (Eds.), **The Discursive Construction of Economic Inequality: CADS Approaches to the British Media**, London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020, 228 pp., \$130.00 (hardback), \$39.95 (paperback).

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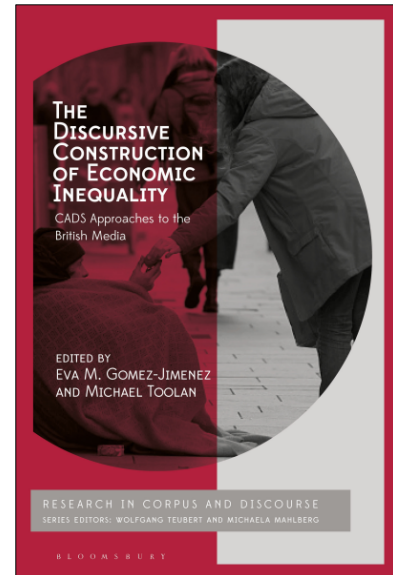
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While critical discourse analysis (CDA) has traditionally centered on various forms of inequality generating discrimination specifically sourced in gender, race, religion, and country of origin (e.g., Wright & Brookes, 2019), studies on different forms of economic inequality are relatively new. Although academic interest in the way different forms of economic inequality are mediated to the public has begun to gather momentum in recent years (e.g., Rieder & Theine, 2019), discourses around economic inequality should play a more central role in CDA, not only because the wider divide between the rich and poor has been causing great harm, but also because this form of inequality is discursively more acceptable than others (Toolan, 2018). Against this backdrop, editors Eva M. Gomez-Jimenez and Michael Toolan pick up the momentum with a vibrant collection, **The Discursive Construction of Economic Inequality: CADS Approaches to the British Media**, aiming to reveal the linguistic representations of economic inequality in public discourse in the context of major events in modern British history. Readers will experience its landscapes through nine studies, which we structure into three larger parts based on the types of data used, thus not necessarily starting from chapter 1.

In part 1 (chapters 3–5 and 7), newspaper coverage, the *Times* in particular, is the data source for researchers to explore different forms of discursive representations of exclusion, inequality, and discrimination. These four classic studies, though focus on different subtopics, exemplify the effective synergy of corpus linguistics and discourse analysis to the utmost. Chapter 3 investigates the coverage in the *Times* from 1940 to 2009 about the *welfare state*, the British government policies providing a safety net for the unemployed, access to education and nationalized health care, while chapter 4 compares how the *Times* reported children living in poverty in the 1970s and 2000s, revealing that state intervention was endorsed in the earlier decade, but that poverty was represented primarily as the responsibility of individuals in the 2000s.

British national newspapers are at the core of chapters 5 and 7. In chapter 5, Ilse A. Ras probes how inequality, responsibility, and accountability were discussed between 2004 and 2016 in the coverage of *corporate fraud* and *modern slavery*, crimes committed by and primarily benefiting those belonging to an



economic elite community. Her analysis finds that relevant reports were often presented in a “neutralizing” manner, suggesting that they either ignored the question of where responsibility lay or implied that regulatory bodies and governments rather than corporations should be responsible, thus allowing those already economically powerful to continue enriching themselves at the expense of those not (p. 104). In chapter 7, Lesley Jeffries and Brian Walker compare the coverage of *austerity* in 2009–2010 and 2016–2017. Both the quantitative analysis of keywords and qualitative analysis based on the main textual-conceptual functions of Jeffries’ critical stylistics show readers clearly how to carry out CADS (corpus-assisted discourse studies). The study is to be commended for the clarity of the rationale for data collection and the detailed presentation of the criteria for keyword extraction.

While part 1 exclusively focuses on newspaper reports, part 2 (chapter 8) enriches the diversity of data in this book by exploring TV coverage. Different from those studies introduced above methodologically, Richard Thomas first codes and categorizes news about *PWSIE* issues (poverty, wealth, the squeezed middle, and income inequality) by the BBC and ITV, using content analysis, and then qualitatively interprets news examples based on the CDA approach. It is notable that the study does not end at textual analysis, as most studies do, but rather provides deeper insights into the results of the textual analysis, attempting to decipher the root causes of the lack of coverage of inequality by both stations, especially the BBC, and offers hope for the future.

Unlike the previous parts, part 3 (chapters 1, 2, 6, and 9) approaches official documents, not only boosting data diversity but also involving multimodality. Therefore, data triangulation is formed between the different studies in the current book, enhancing both rigor in these empirical linguistic studies and readers’ understanding of linguistic phenomena. In chapter 1, Nuria Lorenzo-Dus and Sadiq Almaged examine the mechanisms and ideologies behind the discourses on *poverty* and *social exclusion (PSE)* by British Conservative and Labour Party leaders in their annual conferences in three historical periods, finding that bipartisan leaders highlighted the challenge of *PSE* as an issue requiring action, but deflected attention from its causes and often shifted responsibility to third parties, thus evading their own. In chapter 2, Joe Spencer-Bennett explores whether the discursive strategies of the ruling elite on inequality can be understood as a moment of increased egalitarianism in 20th-century British discourse, by critically analyzing metalinguistic sources from the British Ministry of Information and Mass-Observation project during World War II. What differentiates this study from other studies is that it focuses not on political texts per se, but on the metalinguistic practices surrounding these texts, which were taken by the Ministry of Information as an effective means of addressing social inequality in the particular historical period.

In chapter 6, Jane Mulderrig focuses on how obesity policy and the Change4Life anti-obesity campaign have addressed the issue of obesity. What is noteworthy is multimodality and CADS are combined in examining a corpus of advertisements broadcast on TV and social media as part of the Change4Life campaign, convincingly uncovering the fact that those advertisements depict the working class as the culprit for the increase in childhood obesity, thus preserving the freedoms of the food and drink industry and placing ultimate responsibility on the individuals, the philosophy of which is aligned with neoliberalism.

In chapter 9, Wolfgang Teubert delves into the relationship between economic inequality and the current democracies. By tracing the origins and evolution of the concept of *democracy* and quoting the

discussions on the reform bills (1832, 1867, 1884, 1918, 1928) in Hansard, he concludes that the Western democracies do not actually empower their citizens to collectively decide public issues; rather, citizens are exposed to a public discourse that represents the ruling class, a hegemonic discourse used to defend the ruling class.

In the introduction, the editors indicate that the nine studies are organized in a chronological order, but it is clear that the data used in chapter 9 dates back to earlier times, seemingly breaking the structure of the book. However, what distinguishes this chapter from the previous studies is that it is more of a deep qualitative study, one that offers thought-provoking reflections on concepts such as democracy, rights, minorities, hegemony, and class inequality; thus, this chapter can be taken as an in-depth summary of the previous studies. Besides, after Teubert engages readers in pondering over the big picture of inequality and democracy, it seems more natural for Danny Dorling to close the book with a sobering reflection on economic inequality in the afterword, arguing that the book reveals how the media portrays economic and related matters in such a way that we believe inequality is natural or inevitable, thus enabling us to see how we are being fooled by the media.

Overall, this informative and insightful volume is an up-to-date contribution to the existing literature in CADS and economic inequality, with both methodological significance and wider socio-political impact. On the one hand, while specifically aligned with the combination of CDA and corpus linguistics, the book is also an excellent example in showing discourse analysts how other different approaches, including content analysis, multimodality, stylistics, etc., may be integrated into the methodological toolbox of CADS. On the other hand, by providing critical analysis of authentic discourse on a range of topics relating to inequality, this timely edited volume showcases the power of linguistic tools for investigating how mediated media discourse has influenced and shaped public perception of inequality.

The nine studies, both well received as standalone chapters and as complementary parts to the overarching aim of this book, are written in a lucid style, making the content accessible to and analysis replicable by a broad spectrum of readership, including both beginners interested in discourse analysis and experienced researchers in the fields of CDA, corpus linguistics, and political discourse.

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