# Original Paper

# A CiteSpace-based Analysis of International Advances of

# Critical Discourse Analysis Study (2014-2023)

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# Abstract

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has developed into the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is necessary to visualize their evolution and envision their future development. By utilizing the visualization software CiteSpace, this paper makes a scientometric analysis of SSCI journal papers in Web of Science core database of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) from 2014-2023. Through analyzing the quantity of journal papers, the high productivity authors, the research institutions, published journals and the research focus key words, the study tries to figure out the general trend and characteristics of the international CDA researches and depicts a holistic insight of international CDA researches in recent 10 years. The paper presents the latest international research advances and tendency as well as provides references for the CDA study in the future.

# Keywords

Critical discourse Analysis, CiteSpace, research advances, scientometric analysis

## **1. Introduction**

The birth of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) can be tracked back to 1979, in which Rodge Fowler with his colleagues first proposed a new orientation of linguistics, Critical linguistics in their book *Language and Control* (Tian, 2019). Since 1980s, Critical discourse analysis has been developed into a brand-new phase under the great contribution made by Fairclough and other critical linguists (Mu, 2016). "Why is the language the way it is?" is the central question of critical discourse analysis. It focuses on the meaning of the discourse, and at the same time it gives a vital emphasis on the production of the discourse. CDA aims to find out the latent influence of ideology behind the linguistic forms. There are three basic focuses of CDA: discourse and ideology, discourse and control & power, discourse and society (Zhang, 2012). In recent years, critical discourse analysis has been applied into various discourse studies, which has made a great achievement.

This paper makes an investigation on the SSCI journal papers of critical discourse analysis in Web of Science core database from 2014-2023. The study is assisted with the visualization software CiteSpace to form a whole skeleton of the latest research advances and tendency of international CDA researches in these 10 years. And The study will answer the following question:

(1) What are the publishing trends in the field?

(2) Which are the most productive authors and institutions in CDA research?

(3) Which are the journals that publish the most CDA research? What are the categories of journals that are published?

(4) What are the hotspots and emerging trends of CDA study?

### 2. Research Method and Data Source

The analytical tool to be used in this study, CiteSpace 6.3.R1, was developed by Chaomei Chen, Drexel University, USA. It is a tool which can visualize the characteristic and trend as well as the difference within the development of some researches in one field on the basis of a deep analysis of citation and co-citation footprint in the reference (Chen, 2006). The citation and co-citation of an article is defined as intellectual bases. By implementing the CiteSpace, the emergent and underlying research issues can be revealed, which refers to research front or research advances.

The data source in this paper all comes from Web of Science core collection and index is from Social Science Citation index (SSCI) and Science Citation Index Expended. The searching topic is set as "critical discourse analysis" and document type is "article". Language is selected as "English". The publication data ranges from 2014 to 2023. Based on these searching conditions, 5625 articles can be retrieved. After filtering out some irrelevant data, this paper has final data of 2845 CDA articles. These sources were downloaded and kept as txt format preparing for the following CiteSpace analysis. Then, the data are imported into the CiteSpace 6.3.R1, set the relevant parameters, set the Time Slicing to "2014-2023", and Years Per Slice to "1" year. After the software runs, the several visualized co-occurrence knowledge graphs are generated. The next section will give a detailed analysis.

### 3. Results and Discussion

On the basis of previous preparation, the data has been analyzed through a scientometric analysis and got the quantitative results. This section will make a detailed quantitative and qualitative analysis of these results, which mainly focuses on volume of publication, highly productive authors, research institutions and journals of publication as well as the co-occurrence of key words, trying to present a general trend and research advances in recent 10 years of international CDA studies.

# 3.1 Volume of Publication

According to the annual number of publications, we can see the recent publication showing an upward trend. Based on Figure.1, it shows that from 2014-2023, the number of journal publication are on a rise. There are slight fluctuations in some years, however, in recent 10 years, all the annual number of

publications is over 100 and even more. Especially, the studies in CDA field have exceeded 300 in recent 3 years. These data fully indicate that critical discourse analysis study continues to receive attention from international researchers, and seems to become a rather hot field in recent 3 years.

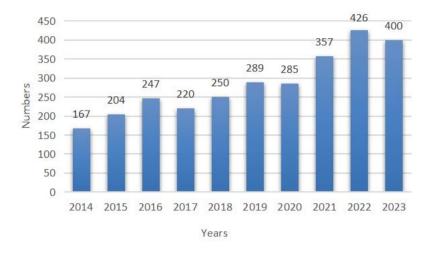


Figure 1. Number of Publications of CDA Research from 2014-2023

### 3.2 Highly Productive Authors

After a general look of the trend of the publication of CDA Journal papers, this section will discuss two detailed information, highly productive authors and the research institutions of CDA studies.

With the analysis of collected data in terms of the authors who has published more than 6 SSCI articles in WOS, Figure 2 can be organized, from which we can see that David Machin, Goran Eriksson, Gavin Brookes, etc., are the main researchers in the field of international CDA studies in recent 10 years. These scholars have published over 10 SSCI journal papers in the field of CDA studies either independently or collaboratively.

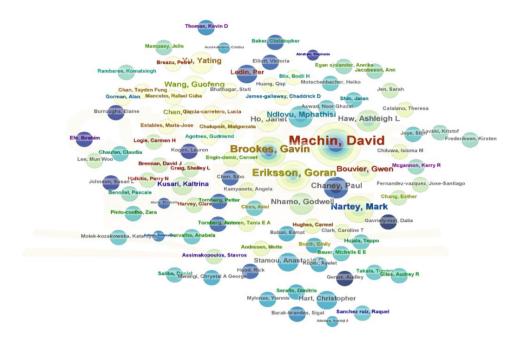


Figure 2. Map of Authors

Rank	Authors	Publications
1	Machin, David	22
2	Brookes, Gavin	11
3	Eriksson, Goran	11
4	Hart, Christopher	9
5	Yu, Yating	8
6	Wang, Guofeng	8
7	Bouvier, Gwen	7
8	Petre Breazu	7
9	Nartey, Mark	7
10	Kuper, Ayelet	6

Table 1. Top 10 Authors in Terms of CDA Research from 2014 to 2023

David Machin who is working in the field of Critical Discourse Analysis and Multimodality makes a great contribution to the refinement of multimodal critical discourse analysis theory and many of his works are among the most cited references. In 2013, he gave a detailed introduction to the framework of Multimodal Critical Discourse Studies. Furthermore, David has explored which concepts, theories and process of multimodal analysis are suitable for the need of critical discourse studies, which has become the most cited reference of him (2016). And in another paper, he emphasized multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) can best draw out the ideology as it is realized through different

semiotics resources (Machin, 2006). Gavin Brookes is a scholar who is interested in corpus linguistics, discourse analysis and health communication. Gavin tends to apply a corpus-based approach to critical analysis, and he explored the language of violent jihad, focusing upon lexis encoding concepts from Islam (Machin, 2020). Goran Eriksson is a professor of Media and Communication Studies. His research is situated within the field of discourse studies. He has written extensively in the areas of politics and media. He has studied a Swedish reality television adopting a MCDA approach (Goran, 2015). And in 2019, he made research on the making of healthy and moral snacks through performing a MCDA of a corporate storytelling (Goran, 2019).

All the papers mentioned above has been cited over 20 times by other researchers. Thus, from these three scholars who have published the most SSCI journal papers in recent 10 years, it can be seen that the more cutting-edge research field CDA studies mainly focus on multimodal critical discourse analysis, corpus-based critical discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis of social media.

#### 3.3 Research Institutions

In this section, this paper counted the institutions which have published the related papers. Based on Figure 3, it can be found that the main research institutions of CDA are University of London, Lancaster University, Orebro University, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, University of Sydney, and so on. Most of this university are known for their linguistic program, such as University of London and Lancaster University, which are prestigious institution for foreign languages studies and have the advantage of implementing CDA studies. However, the institution like, Orebro University, is not famous for their foreign language studies but other programs, such as medicine, computer science, and so on. They also process a high publication of CDA paper which attributed to the scholars from those universities are likely to make a mixture of CDA and other programs. The scholar mentioned above, Gavin Brookes, who utilized corpus-based approach to make a critical discourse analysis is the scholar from Orebro University and the publication of whom are the best two. It can be seen that the CDA studies have a tendency to cross-disciplinary research.

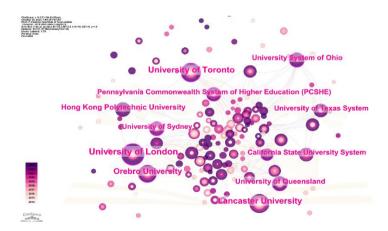


Figure 3. Map of Institutions

Rank	Institutions	Publications
1	University of London	68
2	Lancaster University	55
3	University of Toronto	54
4	Orebro University	44
5	Hong Kong Polytechnic University	40
6	University of Sydney	39
7	University of Queensland	36
8	University System of Ohio	32
9	California State University System	31
10	Pennsylvania Commonwealth System of Higher Education (PCSHE)	f 31
11	University of Texas System	31
12	State University System of Florida	30
13	University of Nottingham	30
14	Monash University	27
15	University of Melbourne	27

Table 2. Top 15 Institutions in Terms of CDA Research from 2014 to 2023

## 3.4 Journals of Publication

The Journals with the highest number of publications were also counted.

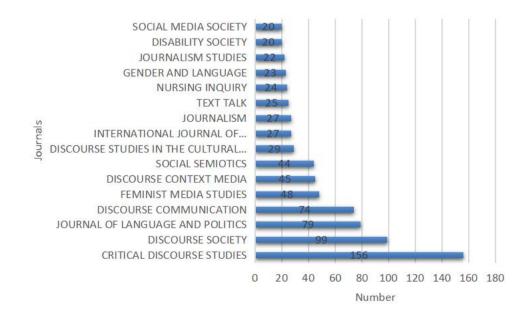


Figure 4. Top 16 Journals in terms of CDA Research from 2014-2023

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Through the classification statistics of SSCI journals, it is found that international critical discourse analysis is mainly published in the following ten categories of journals: Communication (745), Education educational research (473), Linguistics (400), Language linguistics (332), Sociology (260), Women's studies (153), Social sciences interdisciplinary (149), Psychology multidisciplinary (139), Public environmental occupational health (126), Political science (124). In the Figure.4, there are the journals whose publication has been over 20.

On the basis of the statistics of SSCI journals, several characteristics of CDA studies can be found: First, critical discourse analysis has gradually become an independent field of research in recent 10 years for that in Figure. 4, the journal with the highest publication is Critical Discourse Studies which concentrates on critical research that advances people's understanding of how discourse figures in social processes, social structures, and social change. The related studies are on a rise. Second, critical discourse analysis is mainly in the field of linguistic studies but always a transdisplinary one. In the ten categories of journals, there are two linguistic journals with relatively high publication of the papers. Although other journals have published in the educational, psychological or healthy journals instead, which are not within the categories of linguistics, the researches are centered on the discourse studies within different contexts, such as the educational discourse, discourse in social media, and so on, which makes their study always have to do with the linguistics. In this sense, critical discourse analysis is an important discipline of linguistics, also interdisciplinary with other disciplines. Third, CDA is featured with social and discursive characteristics. The top five journals are Critical Discourse Analysis (156), Discourse Analysis (99), Journal of Language and Politics (79), Discourse Communication (74) and Feminist Media Studies (48). These journals focus on the interaction between the discourse and society, and tries to explore the production or reasonable interpretation of various discourse under different contexts, which clarify the social and discursive characteristics of critical discourse analysis. Fourth, scholars in CDA, nowadays, pay more attention to gender research. In the categories of those journals, women's studies are ranked in top ten and published papers are up to 153. And the related journals in top 20 are Feminist Media Studies (48) and Gender and Language (23).

3.5 Hotspots and Research Advances

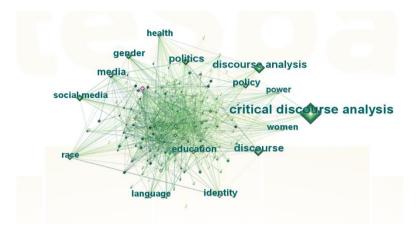


Figure 5. Map of Keywords

In this study, the data are imported into the CiteSpace 6.3.R1, set the relevant parameters, set the Time Slicing to "2014-2023", and Years Per Slice to "1" year. After the software running, the visualized co-occurrence knowledge graph of the research focus key words is generated in Figure 5. It can be seen that the most obvious node is "critical discourse analysis". To gain more detailed information, the statistical data of keywords in terms of frequency is listed in Table 3.

Rank	Keywords	Freq	Rank	Keywords	Freq
1	CDA	868	16	climate change	67
2	discourse analysis	285	17	higher education	66
3	discourse	261	18	experiences	65
4	politics	217	19	care	61
5	media	158	20	construction	60
6	policy	134	21	news	60
7	gender	128	22	coverage	58
8	education	122	23	corpus linguistics	57
9	identity	118	24	perceptions	56
10	social media	111	25	management	55
11	health	107	26	MCDA	54
12	women	101	27	work	52
13	race	99	28	communication	51
14	language	91	29	culture	51
15	power	77	30	impact	45

Table 3. Top 30 Keywords in Terms of CDA Research from 2014 to 2023

Based on the visualized knowledge graph and detailed statistical data, the hot spot in researches and

focused fields can be perceived and there are several features of international critical discourse analysis:

First, the research focusses on the basic constituent element of critical discourse analysis. CDA is a form of critical research which seeks to understand how contemporary capitalism in some respects enables but in other respects prevents or limits human well-beings and flourishing, with a view to overcoming or mitigating these obstacles and limits (Fairclough, 2010). It focuses on discourse, power and society. The power can be achieved in a discourse which represents an unfair relationship between people. Therefore, the power is a noticeable point in CDA studies. And the discourse is a social practice. Thus, the discourse producer will be an attention, and the identity, gender, race, and management of which will become a discussable topic. This is why these factors (power, identity, race, gender) are hot spots in recent international CDA studies.

Second, the researches focus on interdisciplinary study. In terms of research fields, international study mainly involves the fields of politics, social media, education and environment, etc. CDA is first created in the field of applied linguistics and discourse analysis though, Fairclough gives that CDA should be transdisciplinary analysis and have a transdisciplinary methodology (2010). The CDA of social media usually explore a media discourse, such as a news report or the posts on various social platform, to figure out how the discourse achieve an identity construction of individual or a construction of country image, and it also analyzes the ideology of a society behind through interpreting the feature or the deep meaning of some social media discourse. Bouvier and Zhao take the posts of influencers using parenting hashtags on Chinese Weibo as an example to study the tension between Confucianism and neoliberalism behind the discourse by exploring a MCDA (2022). The CDA of education which is an important field in CDA studies in the past several years and still a focused topic now, the scholars tend to discuss the way the ideology melt into the textbook or curriculum, effecting students' self-perception, values and so on. Hamid and Jahan conduct research to critically examines the role of language as medium of instruction in shaping students' self-perception, worldviews, and identities in a globalizing world (2015). The CDA also gives a great attention on power which is always be related to policy. Thus, the political discourse is always a hot spot in CDA studies. Amer and Howarth examines the construction of white British Muslims as a threat in six national and two Muslim British newspapers by drawing on tools from CDA (2018). Due to the impact of the pandemic, people's health has become a big concern in recent years. Many scholars have done the research on this field. For example, Waugh and some scholars try to explore discourses mobilized in discussion of sugar-sweetened beverage consumption and purchasing amongst residents of a middle-upper class neighborhood in Winnipeg, Canada (2023).

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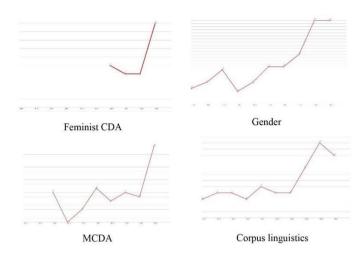


Figure 6. The History of Appearance (2014-2023)

Third, female is a crucial focused group in CDA research. With the feminist movement prevailing over the world, the awakening of women's consciousness reaches its climax. The women and gender issues have got more and more attention by CDA scholars. In Figure.6, there are the history of appearance of related keywords. It can be seen that gender research has been on the rise from 2014-2023. And a new approach to CDA study called feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) has been utilized since 2020, showing an upward trend. Feminist critical discourse analysis was first proposed by Michelle M. Lazar in her article in 2007. It is a theoretical framework which combines feminist theory with critical discourse analysis and focuses on the ways in which gender and power are constructed and reproduced through language and discourse (Lazar, 2007). Many scholars apply this approach to study the gender issues and women's rights through analyzing the different discourse. For example, Taher examined how femininity is constructed in the discourse of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) by applying feminist critical discourse analysis (2023).

Fourth, corpus building and multimodal approach have become popular in the field of CDA. According to Figure. 6, the appearance of corpus linguistics and multimodal critical discourse analysis have an explosion in number in recent three years. Multimodal discourse analysis is an approach to discourse which focuses on how meaning is made through the use of multiple modes of communication as opposed to just language (Jones, 2021). Therefore, the multimodal approach in CDA can be the best way to embrace meaning making in multimodal communication. For instance, wang and Feng made a study investigating how Xi'an, a second-tier developing city in China, constructs its digitalized urban imaginary using the popular social media platform of TikTok (2023). As for the corpus building, it offers studies new approach and tools for evaluating critical discourse (Xiao & Li, 2021). While CDA studies pay attention to examine naturally occurring discourse (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Thus, a corpus building will allow for the CDA study based on naturally occurring linguistics structures and forms rather than on intuitively perceived linguistic phenomenon. For example, Brookes adopted a corpus-based approach to CDA, examining the discourses that are used by the British press to represent

obesity in its coverage of coronavirus disease 2019 (2022). These two approaches provide CDA new theories and techniques to conduct research, which could help CDA deal with the new social problems and make the analysis completer and more credible.

### 4. Conclusion

This paper conducted a review of international CDA study utilizing the visualization software CiteSpace to analyze the data gathered from the Web of Science. The study has yielded the following conclusions with the hope of shedding a light on the way forward for the field.

First, in terms of the publication trends, research on CDA generally increased from 2014-2023, and it has gained increasing attention from enormous scholars, especially young scholars, and will get more in the future. This is a promising research field which will have more vigorous and diverse development with the efforts of more scholars.

Second, the analysis of authors and institutions indicates that David Machin who make a great contribution in MCDA is the most productive author in this period, and lots of his works are the most cited references. In terms of institutions, University of London was the most productive institutions in this regard. Meanwhile, Lancaster University and Toronto University also contributed significantly to the field.

Third, based on the analysis of journals publication, it can be found that *Critical Discourse Studies* has the highest publication in this period, which indicates that CDA has increasingly become a super-discipline. The journals of publication can be categorized into Communication, Linguistics, Woman's studies, Education educational research, Public environmental occupational health, Political science, which presents that CDA is a transdisciplinary study, which will require a transdisciplinary methodology.

Fourth, according to the analysis of keywords, the hotspots in the field can be identified, including study of power, identity, social media, politics, education, health care and gender issues and so on. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, different social problems call for different concerns which are significantly different from those that were the initial focused of CDA. Therefore, new theories and approaches need to be applied in the field. Therefore, response to the request, new theories and approaches have come into this field, which are the cutting-edge in CDA research, i.e. multimodal critical discourse analysis, corpus-based critical discourse analysis and feminist critical discourse analysis. The research methods for conducting CDA tend to be diverse and comprehensive.

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