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Instrumentalisation of critical discourse studies: a linguistic analysis of public relations concepts in the CDS journal article abstracts (2000–2020)

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Driven by its problem-oriented nature, research of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) employs an interdisciplinary approach to addressing social problems and concludes different levels of discourse practices. Among the disciplines that CDS scholars touch on, public relations (PR) stands out as one of the most inspiring, whose studies have implied the practicality of CDS to critique PR, explicating how institutional and media discourses shape stakeholders' attitude toward the management process and further negotiate their identities and power relations. Nevertheless, little research has tackled the opposite, which is how the interconnected discipline of PR and its theories benefit CDS research. By adopting van Leeuwen (2005)'s integrationist model of conducting interdisciplinary research, the present case conducts an analysis of PR concepts used in the CDS journal article abstracts during 2000 and 2020, with three terms of "image", "stakeholder", and "strategy" as a case study. It argues that the use of PR concepts instrumentalises CDS, which offers analytic tools of communication for CDS scholars to refer to and helps to interpret the management power use and its discursive patterns in a CDS project. This ontological study not only offers insights into developing an interdisciplinary contribution during the institutionalisation of CDS but shows how both disciplines of PR and CDS have fostered a two-way development from linguistic and non-linguistic perspectives.

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Introduction

Driven by its problem-oriented nature, research of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) employs an interdisciplinary approach to addressing social problems and concludes different levels of discourse practices. Among the disciplines that CDS scholars touch on, public relations (PR) stands out as one of the most inspiring regarding four related issues, i.e., media image, crisis communication, strategic management, and corporate social responsibility. Studies of these aspects imply the practicality of CDS to critique PR, explicating how institutional and media discourses shape stakeholders' attitude toward the management process, negotiating and/or confirming their identities and power relations. Nevertheless, little research has ever tackled the opposite situation, which is how the interconnected discipline, i.e., PR, together with its theories has benefited CDS research and development.

Adopting van Leeuwen (2005)'s integrationist model of conducting interdisciplinary research, which advocates integrating equal but interdependent disciplines into a holistic study, the present conducts a linguistic investigation of PR concepts used in the CDS journal article abstracts during 2000–2020, with three terms of "image", "stakeholder", and "strategy" as a case study. It argues that the use of PR concepts instrumentalises CDS research, which offers analytic tools of communication for CDS scholars' reference and helps interpret the management power use as well as its discursive patterns. Fundamentally, analysing the use of key PR concepts helps to taxonomise semiotics in the CDS academia, which presents an opportunity to cross-fertilise CDS (Wodak & Chilton, 2005). To further explore this issue, the present research summarises the history and development of CDS as an interdisciplinary school, highlights the public relations consciousness embedded for long in the CDS academia, and justifies the use of the three designated PR terms before their linguistic analysis and discussion about the instrumentalisation of CDS.

Defining critical discourse studies: an interdisciplinary history and development

Critical discourse analysis (CDA), currently coined by Teun A. van Dijk as Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), has been a widely recognised linguistic school to study how discourse dialectically relates to power relations, ideologies such as hidden values and beliefs, and identity throughout the process of constructing, legitimising, and transforming social reality (Herzog, 2016; Wodak & Meyer, 2016; Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018). Driven by a problem-oriented nature, CDS becomes an interdisciplinary programme for scholars to integrate linguistic and social theories, and elaborate on different discourse practices and topics via a series of CDS approaches (Wodak & Chilton, 2005, p. XI, p. XIII; Catalano & Waugh, 2020, pp. 247–248). Dating back to its origin in the early 1990s, (C)DS had often attached importance to establishing theories and exploring its interdisciplinary nature (Weiss & Wodak, 2003), since proposing interdisciplinarity offers opportunities to produce knowledge via innovative and creative skills, initiating a holistic approach to and comprehensive viewpoint of

CDS research (Weingart, 2000, as cited in Weiss & Wodak, 2003, pp. 16–18).

With the flourishing development of CDS-related studies, numerous monographs and special editions have been published in the academic field, such as *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction* (van Dijk, 1997), *Critical Discourse Analysis: Theory and Interdisciplinarity* (Weiss & Wodak, 2003), *A New Agenda in (Critical) Discourse Analysis: Theory, Methodology and Interdisciplinarity* (Wodak & Chilton, 2005), *Critical Discourse Analysis: An Interdisciplinary Perspective* (Lê, Lê & Short, 2011), *The Routledge Handbook of Critical Discourse Studies* (Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018), and *Critical Discourse Analysis, Critical Discourse Studies and Beyond* (Catalano & Waugh, 2020). Built as a large "interdisciplinary enterprise" (Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018, p. 1), CDS has witnessed the process of "cross-fertilisation" (Wodak & Chilton, 2005, p. XI) between language studies and other disciplines especially of humanities and social sciences, e.g., psychology, social cognition, ethnography, anthropology (Wodak & Chilton, 2005; van Leeuwen, 2005; also see Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018 and Catalano & Waugh, 2020 for specific domains such as education, business, health, media, tourism, and gender studies).

Against this interdisciplinary backdrop, van Leeuwen (2005) outlines three theoretical models of conducting (C)DS research, i.e., the centralist, pluralist, and integrationist models. A centralist model considers each discipline as a separate and distancing branch with overlapping knowledge. He further discusses how this model can be realised by three means: (1) "maps" of various fields of knowledge in which disciplines consider themselves as the centre and define others in terms of their differences; (2) editions and collections of research papers rearranged based on their distances from the "core" theories of the discipline; (3) introduction to the historical context in the paper using other disciplines. Although this model has established fundamental methodologies and frameworks, it is method-oriented and neglects issues which cannot be handled by each autonomous discipline (van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 5). In a pluralist model, problems rather than methods are the focus, implying a cooperative yet self-sufficient role of each autonomous discipline in discussing the same issue from multiple perspectives. Regarding the principle of "triangulation" this model has followed, different disciplines work as equal partners to achieve "mutual intelligibility", whose realisation includes any project, edition, or proceedings which address the same problem from different perspectives (van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 7). Despite the academic influence, the pluralist model does not seem to indicate any new effects or changes made by the disciplinary collaboration (ibid.). An integrationist model, which treats disciplines as equal but interdependent partners, is most recommended in CDS research in recent times. The key point is that the autonomous but integrative disciplines are transformed into specified skills to benefit the problem-oriented research, e.g., interpreting statistical findings based on their own disciplinary theories (van Leeuwen, 2005, pp. 8–9). In this respect, Fairclough (2005a, p. 67) adds that any interdisciplinary research of CDS should attempt to foster the interconnections between

	Orientation	Dependency	Hierarchy
Centralist model	method-oriented	autonomous disciplines	disciplines not equally valued
Pluralist model	problem-oriented	autonomous disciplines	disciplines equally valued
Integrationist model	problem-oriented	interdependent disciplines	disciplines equally valued

Fig. 1 Three models of interdisciplinarity.

disciplines without abandoning specialised insights from each. See van Leeuwen (2005, p. 10) for the summary of three models of interdisciplinarity (Fig. 1).

Public relations ideas or 'Consciousness' in modern critical discourse studies

Agreeably, the institutionalisation of CDS has been accompanied and even guaranteed by the accommodation of creative approaches, scholarships, theoretical models, and research topics (Weiss & Wodak, 2003, p. 18; Catalano & Waugh, 2020, p. 247), among which public relations (hereafter as PR) constitutes one of the most theoretically and empirically inspiring disciplines. Specifically, previous CDS studies have touched upon four PR issues: official media image, crisis communication, strategic management, and corporate social responsibility. Media image management deals with the strategies and tactics of image (re)building, such as concerning official media image representations of stakeholders (specified social actors such as countries, cities, or individuals) (see Edwards & Ramamurthy, 2017; Olesen & Karlsson, 2018; Gu, 2019b; Rahbari, Longman & Coene, 2019; Dolea, Ingenhoff & Beju, 2021; Xu, Shen & Xu, 2023). CDS research into crisis communication concerns how institutions adopt response strategies to realise their ideologically vested communication goals (see Boukala, 2014; Fonseca & Ferreira, 2015; Hansson, 2015; Boyd & Kerr, 2016; Öhman, Nygren & Olofsson, 2016; Kalim & Janjua, 2019; Krzyżanowski, 2018; Zappettini & Krzyżanowski, 2019). Strategic management, whose communication efforts rest on institutional reputation, is realised via linguistic and non-linguistic PR activities as social practices (see Vaara, Sorsa & Pälli, 2010; Merkl-Davies & Koller, 2012; Higgins & Coffey, 2016; Edwards & Ramamurthy, 2017; Cummings et al., 2018; Oruh et al., 2020; Zhou & Qin, 2020; Sveinson, Hoeber & Heffernan, 2021). CDS studies of corporate social responsibility (CSR) focus on the discursive process of legitimising CSR activities targeting staff safety, charity, and environmental sustainability, during which corporate identities are conveyed, negotiated, and confirmed in and through institutional discourses (see Wirgau, Farley & Jensen, 2010; Joutsenvirta, 2011; De Burgh-Woodman & King, 2013; Brei & Böhm, 2014; Drebes, 2014; Rajandran & Taib, 2014; Hayhurst & Szto, 2016; Caddick et al., 2017; Sherratt, 2018; Nwagbara & Belal, 2019; Bernard, 2021).

The aforementioned studies imply the practicality of CDS research and CDS-related theories to critique PR as a social practice, explicating how institutional and media discourses contribute to shaping stakeholders' attitude towards the management process, negotiating and/or confirming their identities and power relations as an ideological product. In fact, some linguistic and PR scholars, especially those in favour of rhetorical and critical paradigms, have stepped further to initiate an integrated approach, elaborating on how institutional and media discourses relate to the execution of power and ideology in PR practices. The methodological endeavours include proposing a critical realist social ontology to organisational studies (Fairclough, 2005b), and applying a critical PR approach to domain-specific studies such as in strategic management (Phillips, Sewell & Jaynes, 2008), crisis communication (Dunn & Eble, 2015, Wang, 2022), education management (Darics, 2019). Nevertheless, little research has ever mentioned the opposite situation, which is how the interconnected discipline, i.e., PR, together with its theories benefits CDS research and development, as required by van Leeuwen (2005)'s integrationist model of conducting interdisciplinary studies.

Marshalling public relations perspectives: context and concentration

To explore the possible influences vice versa, it becomes necessary to revisit the definition, basic principles, and research realms of PR as the contributing discipline. Edwards (2014) has identified the differences between academic and practitioner definitions of PR, the latter used interchangeably with "organisational communication" and "corporate communication" (Edwards, 2014, p. 7). Historically, American scholar Rex Harlow collected 472 definitions of PR available at that time and summarised the following information: "Public relations is a distinctive management function, which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organisation and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinion; defines and emphasises the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilise change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and sound ethical communication as its principal tools" (see Fawkes, 2012, p. 5; Wolstenholme, 2013, p. 4). Another influential definition can be found in the Chartered Institute of Public Relations from Britain: "Public relations is the discipline which looks after reputation, with the aim of earning understanding and support and influencing opinion and behaviour. It is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics" (see Fawkes, 2012, p. 5; Wolstenholme, 2013, p. 5; Edwards, 2014, p. 7). Both definitions share the common view that PR is about maintaining positive relationships with the stakeholders (also called publics) for the sake of institutional reputation (interchangeably as image), whose strategic goals must be realised through successful communication strategies via different channels, e.g., media as "gatekeeper of communication" (see Watson, 2017, p. 4).

Specifically, PR measures government and corporate levels of practices, covers commercial and non-commercial industries, and comprises different sub-domains like "issues management, public affairs, corporate communications, stakeholder relations, risk communication and corporate social responsibility" (L'Etang, 2009, as cited in Fawkes, 2012, p. 6). Current PR studies have focused on genuine technicalities of the institutions and their stakeholders' behavioural aspects of performance with quantified evaluation, though taking into consideration the political, social, and cultural factors (Heath, 2010; Edwards, 2012; Edwards, 2014, p. 6). Consequently, the effectiveness of measuring behaviours enables PR scholars (and practitioners) to pay attention to how stakeholder institutions conduct their strategic communication and actions to realise their ideologically vested goals, which coincides with the significance of conducting CDS research in terms of power use and ideological impact. Moreover, PR renders a toolkit of concepts for critical discourse analysts to address the social problems that they are keen on, which technically narrows down the focus of discussion, e.g., power use, to a more central topic like stakeholder relationships.

Use of public relations concepts as instrumentalisation of critical discourse studies

As Weiss and Wodak (2003, p. 20) said, the interdisciplinary research does not merely focus on establishing a theory or framework, but also "extends to the practice of research and application". The present paper argues that the use of PR concepts contributes to instrumentalising CDS research, which offers analytic tools of communication for CDS scholars to refer to and helps interpret the management power use and its discursive patterns. These PR concepts enable CDS researchers to efficiently identify the focal point of the analysis and benefit the ultimate step to critique a social phenomenon, whether it is a PR case or viewed from a broad PR context. Previous studies have

mentioned a series of definitions of "instrumentalisation", referred to as the strategic adoption and utilisation of discursive toolkits with an underlying goal or interest, e.g., to promote students' desired mastery of content knowledge in classrooms (Janík et al., 2020), to proclaim rights in political contestations (Clifford, 2019), or to legitimise the policy-making process (Boezeman et al., 2014).

Notwithstanding contexts for instrumentalisation, such procedure subscribes to the pursuit of systemisation of a particular discourse, with an intent to hegemonise an entirety of meanings (Roudakova, 2008; Selvik & Høigilt, 2021). Unlike the above empirical focuses, the conceptual use of instrumentalisation does not necessarily connect to any social phenomenon or behaviour in the present study, whose aims are rather ontological whether in terms of PR or from a CDS perspective. Specifically, Smudde (2004) mentioned that the ontological view of PR research indicates "what it means to be a field of study", i.e., the PR essence, and "what it means to be an arena of professional practice", i.e., the work as a PR practitioner. Also, Regmi (2017) integrates the linguistic and critical aspects of CDS research into the discussion of its philosophical underpinnings, concluding the major ontological assumption of CDS: there does exist a relationship between language (i.e., the means of communication) and society. Under these circumstances, the process of instrumentalisation means that analysing the use of key PR concepts helps to taxonomise the semiotics in the CDS academia surrounding discourse, power, ideology, and identity, which presents an opportunity to cross-fertilise CDS (Wodak & Chilton, 2005). More specifically, when the most-frequently used PR vocabularies are extracted and dissected from recent CDS research, it becomes clear what topical aspects have been centralised and which discursive patterns are worth a continued study, accompanied by the theoretical development of CDS and PR.

In fact, two meta-analyses have been conducted concerning the academic publications in the PR discipline, capturing the key trends of development during the past 20 years (see Pasadeos et al., 2010; Ki et al., 2019) and implying three essential issues concerned: to maintain or restore *image*, to manage relationships with *stakeholders*, to construct or implement effective *strategies* in order to persuade the recipients into understanding the messages. As one of the first few attempts from the interdisciplinary aspect, the present study intends to analyse the utilisation of these three PR concepts, namely "image", "stakeholder", and "strategy", which are employed in CDS research to co-define how identities are projected, how power relationships are negotiated, and how discourse patterns are manipulated, respectively. The selection of the concepts has been confirmed against two PR reference books, i.e., *Encyclopaedia of Public Relations* (Heath, 2005), *Key Concepts in Public Relations* (Franklin et al., 2009), and within the relevant PR literature (see next).

Justification of three PR concepts: "Image", "Stakeholder", and "Strategy"

Correspondingly, studies incorporating PR concepts into CDS research are conducted in three main aspects. First, CDS research on image representation centres on how institutional image, being governmental, corporate, or individual actors, can be depicted in a series of media channels, taking into consideration manifested attributes or dimensions of these actors. Second, stakeholder analysis or treating social actors as stakeholders, helps to identify the discursive roles they play in producing the ideologically embedded texts and in conveying political, cultural, and social values to the target audience. Lastly, analysing the use of strategy in communicating and managing a social practice has become a routine practice, in which CDS scholars pay special

attention to its consistent managerial patterns in realising the expected outcomes (such as persuasion). A detailed discussion of the three concepts follows based on the above-mentioned PR references and literature.

The term "image", sometimes used interchangeably with "reputation", has a series of definitions across the disciplines. Developing beyond its original meaning of visual representation, the concept of "image" in PR refers to what the organisation intentionally says about itself or what it claims to do (not actually does), whose studies centre on "words" than "actions" (Coombs, 2005, p. 406). The organisations include the country (the government in a sense), corporation, or any other institution, with functional (tangible) and emotional (psychological) attributes manifested (Bidin, Muhaimi & Bolong, 2014). Compared to expressions of reputation and impression, the term "image" is preferred in the present study due to its specified representations in CDS, such as (non)media representations of institutional images and identities.

The notion of "stakeholder" was originally proposed by Professor Edward Freeman, who paid sufficient attention to the moral values of business and organisational management and published his works in 1984 entitled *Strategic management: A stakeholder approach*. Technically depicted as "publics" in PR, "strategy" is defined as an individual or group who exerts influence on or can also be influenced by the target organisation in terms of behaviour and action (Freeman, 1984, as cited in Ulmer, Seeger & Sellnow, 2005, p. 809). The only difference between stakeholder and publics is that the former is a "passive" group, while the latter adopts a more "active" or "aggressive" approach to their reaction and appeals for organisational change (Grunig & Pepper, 1992, as cited in Franklin et al., 2009, p. 183). For PR and CDS researchers, identifying stakeholders or interest groups (also known as social actors in CDS) is a crucial task to conquer, necessitating the use of stakeholder theory in analysing their perception of as well as values within the organisation.

Initially proposed to tackle military obstacles, the term "strategy" (comprising specified 'tactics') in PR refers to the intentionally designed methods and skills for the organisation to make adaptations to the changing and developing circumstances (Franklin et al., 2009, p. 224). Five related definitions are made by Mintzberg (1991, as cited in Moss, 2005, p. 824), arguing "strategy" as a plan, a ploy, a pattern, a position, and a perspective (including shared perceptions, intentions, norms, and values). Vague as the concept is, "strategy" has different definitions due to the distinctive features in PR and (C)DS. It can mean a linguistic tool only in (critical) discourse studies, but it is considered as a (non-linguistic) social action in typical PR where the PR team implements strategies, i.e., strategic actions. The only channel that connects both fields lies in the use of "discursive strategy", covering linguistic and non-linguistic aspects of discursive practice. Thus, "strategy" is defined as a PR term in the phrase "discursive strategy", either from a typical PR case or in a broad sense of PR.

Noticeably, other PR concepts, which are relevant to and prominent in current CDS research such as persuasion, legitimisation, branding (advertising), propaganda, sponsorship, censorship, publicity (promotion), relationship (partnership), do not fall into the research scope of the present study for the following reasons. Some present a vital part of information about modern PR practices (e.g., persuasion, legitimisation, branding, propaganda, publicity), yet without covering or defining the overall situation of PR like their counterpart "strategy". While the term "relationship" refers to all levels of discourse practices embedded with ideological underpinnings, the concept "stakeholder" covers the affected actors within more of a mutually beneficial connection in PR, not necessarily targeting the commercial nature of either sponsorship or censorship.

Theoretical foundations, research questions, methodology, and data collection

Adopting van Leeuwen (2005)'s integrationist model of conducting interdisciplinary research, which advocates integrating equal but interdependent disciplines into a problem-oriented study, this paper aims at a linguistic analysis of PR concepts used in the CDS journal article abstracts during 2000 and 2020, with "image", "stakeholder", and "strategy" as a case study. Theoretically, the problem-oriented nature of interdisciplinarity suggests that CDS and PR contribute to analysing the social problems based upon the specific "analytical and interpretative skills" that both disciplines have in their interdependent research (van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 8). These equally valued disciplines collaborate by interpreting data and statistical findings based on their own theories.

Given the equal importance of each discipline attached to the interdisciplinary project and that previous CDS research has been conducted to critique PR, the present study strives to explore how PR together with its theories, benefits CDS research and development. Empirically, the three PR concepts, namely, "image", "stakeholder", and "strategy" are examined in terms of its use to embark on a CDS study, elaborating on the ways that social actors are represented in media and institutional discourses, projecting different power relations, identities, and ideologies typical in CDS research. Arguably, the use of these PR concepts contributes to instrumentalising CDS, which offers analytic tools of communication for CDS scholars to refer to and helps interpret the management power use and its discursive patterns. The research questions are presented as follows:

(1) How are the three PR concepts employed to taxonomise the semiotics in the CDS academia reflected in the abstracts of CDS-themed journal articles between 2000 and 2020?

(2) How does the use of the aforementioned PR concepts contribute to instrumentalising CDS research and interpreting the management power use as an ideological product?

Technically, the present research chooses abstracts instead of full journal articles as collected data of investigation for two reasons. First, as a part-genre within a full research article, the abstract of a journal article "tells" the brief information of the article as a "description or factual summary" (Bhatia, 1993, p. 78, cited in Samar et al., 2014). Expectingly, the central idea demonstrated in a CDS abstract reflects the main goal of the research project, thus contextually representing the PR view of an ideological product. Second, a journal article abstract aims to justify the crucial value of the research by "sharing" its results and findings in an effective way (Yoon & Casal, 2020; Tankó, 2017). Consequently, the process of presenting PR and CDS research in an abstract is accompanied by getting the target audience within the academic community convinced of the integrated view. Methodologically, this study is featured by a quantitative and qualitative review of the journal article abstracts about CDS published in the past 20 years. Several phases are utilised in this systematic review, including establishing the criteria for data selection, literature searches, data identification and screening, corpus-based data analysis. Within the timeline of 2000–2020, relevant journal article abstracts were searched with a CDS topic focus, on a peer-reviewed basis, and in the language of "English".

Specifically, the abstract data were collected from Web of Science (WoS), one of the most popular databases in the academia, and limited to two indexes as indicators of quality journal articles, i.e., Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) and Arts & Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI). After entering "critical discourse analysis" OR "critical discourse studies" in the search blank, the result hits 2878 articles in total. During the next stage, these articles were screened through by checking their titles, abstracts, and keywords, in case any of them

were irrelevant to CDS. The present study partially refers to Nartey and Mwinlaaru (2019)'s selection criteria in a systematic review of corpus CDS research, paying special attention to accessibility of studies and theoretical orientation in order to compile the final data. Only available published abstracts with a clear CDS focus (instead of DS) are collected from the database, which mention "critical" and "discourse" in their titles, and/or alternatively include a critical dimension of analysing power, ideology, and identity issues in the abstract. If it is questionable, full-text documents were downloaded and individually identified. As a result, 377 articles were removed and 2501 articles were yielded for further analysis.

When data collection was completed, AntConc (Anthony, 2020), a concordancing software, was used to analyse the collected data for word frequencies and other word co-occurrence information. Firstly, the abstracts of the above-mentioned 2,501 articles were imported to AntConc (the latest version 3.5.9). Then the three keywords of "image", "stakeholder", and "strategy" were searched to identify the frequencies. For those words grammatically and semantically equivalent, they were manually grouped as members of a keyword set, such as "image" and "images", "stakeholder" and "stakeholders", "strategy" and "strategies". Moreover, the search window size was set to 150 characters to the left and right, so that the sentences in which the search terms appeared could be further reviewed. Noticeably, the three PR concepts collectively account for the commonly read PR concepts in the CDS research journal abstracts, with 227 cases of "image", 84 of "stakeholder", and 701 of "strategy". While each PR concept was coded sentence by sentence, not all the examples are calculated for the final-round analysis. There are situations where the examples do not fall into the semantic category of a traditional PR concept or the research does not tackle the above-mentioned PR topics, i.e., official media image, crisis communication, strategic management, and corporate social responsibility. The specific criteria of data selection are listed as follows:

(1) The present study deletes the examples which only convey the literal meaning of the concept instead of traditional PR meaning;

(2) The present study includes the examples whose use relates to PR in general, either from a typical PR case or in a broad sense;

(3) The present study selects the examples where the same level of conceptual use has already been applied in the abstract content.

For instance, "image" can be literally understood as visual representation, such as "image" of a vivid photography or "image" constructed by newspapers, which are excluded in the process of data collection. The study only calculates the expressions related to institutional reputation, e.g., "image" recreated by official media as a PR practice. In addition, the use of "stakeholder" does not only refer to a typical PR context, such as "stakeholder" of the affected group in a crisis; it can still be viewed from a more general angle emphasising shared interests, e.g., considering students as "stakeholder" in higher education management. Finally, as mentioned before, the concept of "strategy" consists of different interpretations, such as "strategy" as discursive practice in both PR and CDS. For the sake of research applicability, the expressions denoting linguistic realisations or behavioural actions only are excluded. The data about "strategy" are collected from "discursive strategy" either from a typical PR case or in a broad sense of PR. Ultimately, 77 examples of "image", 77 of "stakeholder", and 370 of "strategy" are finalised for a two-part discussion: (1) their linguistic tactics of realisation; (2) their discursive use as contributing to the instrumentalisation of CDS research.

Table 1 Image as PR concept.

No.	Social actor	No. of examples	Percentage
1	Country, government, city	42	54.5%
2	(Non)commercial organisation	13	16.9%
3	Individual	22	28.6%
Total		77	100%

Analysis

Case One: Use of "Image" in the CDS journal article abstracts. Out of the 227 examples of "image" (image, images), there are altogether 77 cases falling into the PR category defined above, addressing the generated impressions of a country/government/city (54.5%), (non)commercial organisations (16.9%), and other targeted individuals (28.6%) as social actors elaborated in the CDS journal article abstracts (see Table 1). These examples were identified to have taxonomised the semiotics in CDS research: (1) linguistically by negotiating the semantic use of "image" as a PR concept, being it either positive, negative, or neutral in different contextual topics of CDS research; (2) discursively by correlating the concept of "image" to revealing the "identity" or "brand" of a country, government, city, commercial or non-commercial organisation, and social individuals in order to critique the image rebuilding efforts by the researched targets.

Linguistic realisation: to critique "image" building via semantic negotiation. Example 1 A comparative media discourse study of China's air pollution representations

> This article presents a corpus-assisted discourse study of the representations of China's smog in one Chinese (i.e., China Daily) and three Anglo-American (i.e., The New York Times, The Times, and The Guardian) English-language newspapers from 2011 to 2014. The findings suggest that they converge in representing China's smog as a kind of severe air pollution that has some consequences on residents in China and poses a problem that the government must tackle. However, the Chinese English-language newspaper prefers to represent it as a kind of weather phenomenon without serious impact on public health and to construct a positive and responsible image of the Chinese central government. The Anglo-American English-language newspapers are included to dramatise it as a disaster with a huge health impact, and construct a negative image of the Chinese government with a view to pressurising it to take responsibility in the context of climate change.

The frequent use of the PR concept "image" contributes to taxonomising the semiotics in CDS research firstly by negotiating the conceptual use towards a positive, negative, or neutral orientation. As shown in the example above, Liu and Li (2017) attempt to critique Chinese and Anglo-American media report practices about China's smog and conclude their contrasting constructions of the government image. By analysing the lexical choices of reporting China's smog which define the problem, the cause, the consequence, and the solution/action, their study suggests that China Daily tends to represent it as a natural phenomenon without causing severe impact on the local residents; Anglo-American media are inclined to claim it as a disaster contributing to climate change and affecting public health. Under this circumstance, positive appreciations of the Chinese government are well expected in the state-sanctioned media such as China Daily, presenting the mainstream ideologies in the Chinese English-language sources to the external world. It can be recognised as part of China's image rebuilding, a national PR practice (official media publicity) where expressions regarding

a positive appraisal are employed in the abstract content such as "positive and responsible" (Liu & Li, 2017), "peace-loving" (Zhang & Wu, 2017), "desirable" (Gu, 2019a). In addition, a negative evaluation of China's PR management efforts can be seen in the abstract, where the Chinese government has been criticised for shouldering major responsibilities for climate change according to the Anglo-American media sources. The way that these reports frame China's smog reflects what Liu and Li (2017)'s mentioned as the so-called "anti-China ideology" deeply rooted in the western-centric reportage exemplifying political factors behind their media representations. Consequently, the use of the PR concept in the process of semantic negotiation acts as a useful tool in CDS research to critique the discourse of what van Dijk proposed as "positive-self" and "negative-other".

Instrumentalisation of CDS: to correlate "image" to "identity" and/or "brand". Example 2 A critical analysis of the Swiss media discourse on migration and populism

> The construction of certain country images and identities is traditionally studied in relation to public diplomacy, strategic communication, and nation branding practices of state and non-state actors. However, we notice the increased instrumentalisation of country images and identities in debates on issues beyond strategic promotional practices, such as those articulated around elections, referendums, or migration. We analyse how Swiss media constructed Switzerland's image and identity in the debate following the 2014 referendum on 'stop mass immigration' initiative, in times of populism, a communication phenomenon and ideology discursively articulated by political and media actors. Thus, we: (1) bridge streams of research on country image, identities, migration, and populism that have yet to be integrated; (2) propose critical discourse analysis to identify specific discursive strategies (offering insights into alternative methodologies for studying populist political communication content and style); (3) highlight the role of media in reproducing populist discourses on country images and identities (Note: the word "instrumentalisation" here refers to Switzerland's media and PR practices instead of the thematic focus of the present study).

Apart from the linguistic realisation of describing "image", the dataset finds its discursive use in instrumentalising CDS research, where the term has been employed to correlate to the "identity" or "brand" of a country, government, city, (non)commercial organisation, or individual. As shown in the case above, Dolea, Ingenhoff, and Beju (2021) analyse how the two leading Swiss newspapers projected the ideology of populism in reporting the 2014 referendum on "stop mass immigration" initiative. It follows a typical CDS procedure of three-level analysis, where the second-level analysis touches on discursive strategies and argumentation schemes used by the Swiss media in constructing Switzerland's images as an institutional PR practice (media framing). Their study suggests that the dominant use of perpetuation strategies contributes to establishing the external identities of migrants, the EU, and other EU countries as a potential threat as well as danger to Switzerland, and internally to constructing the identity of Switzerland as a threatened nation undergoing a divided society. Analysing its media image construction is accompanied by highlighting the embedded ideologies behind the media representations, where the co-occurrence of "image" and "identity" has become reasonably common. The former is heavily addressed in conducting the first-level analysis of media representations, while

the latter constitutes the third-level analysis of the projected ideologies behind the representations. Thus, the presentation of research findings indicates an inevitable co-occurrence of both terms, which are combined to deal with the mental perception of designated social actors in CDS research such as country image and identity (see Cramer, 2022 for the case of Australia), individual image and identity (see Mbaye, 2020 for the case of LGBTQ+ in Senegal; Kelly, Fealy, & Watson, 2011 for nurse). In fact, previous cases have proved the constructive correlations between image building and identity projection (Kelly, Fealy, & Watson, 2011), for which the use of "image" visualises the social actors in CDS research and accelerates the process of interpreting individual and institutional identities. Despite this, the specification via the concept "image" triggers problems with comprehension, e.g., other aspects of Switzerland's (media) identity that are relatable but not of PR. Research on identity construction equates itself with how specific images are established and negotiated through projections among selective events and scenarios.

Case Two: Use of "Stakeholder" in the CDS journal article abstracts. The second PR term to be discussed refers to "stakeholder", with 77 examples (i.e., stakeholder, stakeholders) in the corpus, where CDS researchers address the discourses of political governance, (higher) education, tourism, corporate communication, healthcare, agriculture, environment, law, and other fields (see Table 2). These concepts were identified to have taxonomised the semiotics in CDS research: (1) linguistically by labelling the focus group of "social actors" as stakeholders in a typical CDS project, being it either the manager-in-chief or the affected group of the researched institution; (2) discursively by applying stakeholder theory or the use of the PR concept "stakeholder" frequently to non-commercial industries instead of traditional business contexts in order to critique the PR practices by the researched targets.

Linguistic realisation: to label social actors as stakeholders. Example 3 A critical discourse analysis of NHK's racial prejudice against the Paiwan people

> This study analyses the legal action taken for defamation in the case of the 'human zoo', an alleged defamatory portrayal of the Paiwan people, a Taiwanese indigenous group, by Japan's public broadcaster, NHK. The analysis of this case is presented in two stages, the first of which employs a critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine the covert racist discourse regarding the Paiwan people in a four-episode NHK documentary series on the history of the modernisation of Japan. Second, the study evaluates the discursive patterns of the legal documents resulting from

the subsequent lawsuits. The analysis incorporates the findings of interviews with key stakeholders in the human zoo case in its investigation of the presence of insidious racial prejudice against the Paiwan people, combined with a lack of sensitivity towards indigenous peoples in general, both in the documentary and in the responses from NHK in the subsequent lawsuits.

The linguistic use of the PR concept "stakeholder" contributes to taxonomising the semiotics in CDS research by locating the focus group of "social actors" in a typical CDS project. As shown in the case above, Chu and Huang (2019) conduct a critical discourse analysis of the defamation case in Taiwan, which involves racial prejudice against the Paiwan people right reflected in the Japanese documentary series on the historical development and modernisation of Japan. In the abstract of this study, the underlined phrase "key stakeholders" refers to all the interest parties in the investigation, including the scholars of indigenous research, the plaintiffs, the Paiwan locals, the officials, and the production team. These text producers are recognised as social actors in the project analysis, which are responsible for spreading the ideologies either against or for the indigenous people. The partial selection of the so-called key stakeholders can be subjective in terms of justifying this PR crisis, but the process of selecting and labelling sharpens the analytic focus of the study via framing the interest group. Contextually speaking, Chu and Huang (2019)'s investigation about the key stakeholders of the indigenous case aims to prove the arguable potential of NHK's documentary report in justifying its modern racist ideologies even though the Supreme Court concluded no damage in the final-round. Deemed as subjective, the judgement of stakeholder circles in a way helps CDS researchers redefine what happens, who is involved, and which is informed in order to prove their central argument about the social phenomenon they critique.

Instrumentalisation of CDS: to apply "stakeholder" to non-neoliberal contexts. Example 4 An exploration of internal branding in higher education from the CDS perspective

> Most studies on branding in higher education focus on external branding or image-building towards external stakeholders such as students. Internal branding is an underexplored topic, even though it should be considered as important as external branding. Internal branding is about achieving the necessary internal support for the external brand. Drawing on the theoretical concept of discursive legitimation, we explore the strategies that contribute to an internally supported new brand with student diversity as brand value. We conducted a case study of a Flemish university college that has (largely) succeeded in achieving internal support for its new external brand of student diversity. Analysing the case from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis, we specifically zoomed in on the dialectical tensions underlying the discursive legitimation of this new brand. We identified three specific tensions, which illustrate the inherent complexity of the internal branding process: authorisation as (dis)empowerment, normalisation as (dis)empowerment and moralisation as (dis)empowerment.

Apart from the linguistic realisation of describing "stakeholder", the dataset finds its discursive use in instrumentalising CDS research, where the term has already been applied increasingly to non-neoliberal contexts. As shown in this example, Mampaey et al. (2019) analyse the case of internal branding in a higher education context and critically discuss how one Flemish university college promoted its policy of student

No.	Discourse category	No. of examples	Percentage
1	Political governance	14	18.2%
2	(Higher) education	12	15.6%
3	Tourism	11	14.3%
4	Corporate communication	11	14.3%
5	Healthcare	9	11.7%
6	Agriculture	8	10.4%
7	Environment	5	6.5%
8	law	3	3.9%
9	Others (i.e., art, sports, family, philanthropy)	4	5.1%
Total		77	100%

Table 2 Stakeholder as PR concept.

Table 3 Strategy as PR concept.

No.	Category	Strategy type	No. of examples	Percentage
1	Linguistic	Linguistic tool (only)	23	6.2%
2	Non-linguistic	Social action	85	23.0%
3	Both	Discursive	262	70.8%
Total			370	100%

diversity based on semi-structured and in-depth interviews with the colleagues. Three discursive strategies are summarised in the process of legitimising its diversity policy when the student body and the staff team are narrated in the abstract as "stakeholders" instead of other neutral expressions like "members" or "roles" in a university-level branding context. Due to the marketisation of (higher) education in the decision-making or policy implementation, the student body has become the key interest group of the college PR team instead of traditional learners who accept whatever they are offered in the learning environment. Treating students as consumers in education discourse contributes to spreading neoliberal ideologies to the educational system, and Mampaey et al. (2019)'s study has proved this new yet risky brand of ideological value in accepting student diversity as a factor of policy consideration. On the one hand, the use of this PR concept in the abstract points directly at and reminds the audience about the ideological topic of neoliberalism, which motivates the CDS scholars to evaluate the effectiveness of justifying the policy-making. On the other hand, it poses a potential threat to confusing their initial aim to critique PR, normalising the conceptual use of "stakeholder" in analysing more non-neoliberal contexts (see Table 2).

Case Three: Use of "Strategy" in the CDS journal article abstracts. The last term refers to "strategy", whose quantitative use has been defined above, predominantly as discursive practice (262 examples, 70.8%), less frequently as social action (85 examples, 23.0%), and the least often as a simple tool or tactic (23 examples, 6.2%). These examples have taxonomised the semiotics of CDS research: (1) linguistically by demonstrating an unbalanced use of "strategy" in the process of discussing both linguistic and non-linguistic performances; (2) discursively by packaging a strategy-bound study via research questions. The analysis of the present research only selects the PR-context examples referring to the discursive practice in a typical CDS project. Other linguistic tools and behavioural strategies are excluded as irrelevant to the interdisciplinary focus.

Linguistic realisation: to mediate the strategic use of "strategy". Example 5 A quantitative and qualitative CDS of Facebook's UGC production on racism

> Facebook has faced growing criticism regarding its handling of hateful user-generated content (UGC) with research revealing how the platform can foster both covert and overt racism. This research has tended to focus on racist content while relying on abstract references to the general logics of social media platforms. In this article we consider how Facebook shapes the production of racist discourse in more concrete ways by integrating a concern for the platform's architectures and affordances within a broader analysis of the immigration-related discussions of a large Swedish Facebook group. We combine a quantitative topic modelling of a large dataset of the group's UGC with a qualitative critical discourse analysis (CDA) of a sample of that dataset. Our findings show how Facebook enables and influences various discursive strategies of identification and persuasion

—within which covert and overt racist discourses are embedded—through processes of cybertyping, role-playing, crowdsourcing and (counter-)reaction.

The mediated use of the PR term "strategy" has focused upon both linguistic and non-linguistic performances of the analysed social actors in CDS research. A typical case can be seen in Merrill and Akerlund (2018)'s study, which constitutes a quantitative and qualitative study of Facebook's user-generated content and its production platform relating to racism discourse. By collecting large data of Facebook discussion regarding immigration, the research examines the use of two discursive macro-strategies, i.e., identification, persuasion, in producing racist discourse. Merrill and Akerlund discuss how they are realised by different linguistic tools, e.g., nomination, referential, predicational, perspectivation. What follows lies in the behavioural actions recommended to improve Facebook's PR management, ranging from banning online discussions to hurting freedom of speech. Under this circumstance, this abstract has mediated the use of strategies and tactics in discussing how Facebook normalises the racist discourse as a mainstream online channel. However, statistics also indicate that CDS research does not pay much attention to linguistic tactics or behavioural actions as to discursive strategies, as shown in Table 3 for the percentages of 6.2%, 23.0%, and 70.8%. This unbalanced use of "strategy" reflects a changing routine of CDS research, paying less attention to language use but more to a critical discussion.

Instrumentalisation of CDS: to package a project via "strategy-bound" research questions. Example 6 A critical discourse analysis of Nigeria's legitimacy in employment relations

> Irrespective of the fundamental role of legitimacy in industrial relations as well as social and organisational life, little is known of the subtle meaning-making strategies through which organisational concepts, such as employment relations and engagement, are legitimised in modern world of work, particularly in developing countries such as Nigeria, which results in managerial capture. As a result, this paper explores the discursive legitimisation strategies used when making sense of employment relations in Nigeria's conflictual, non-participatory employment relations terrain. Relying on Leeuwen's legitimisation strategies, critical discourse analysis (CDA) and call by Bailey, Luck & Townsend, and Legge to widen employment relations discourse, we explore interview, focus group, and shadow report data, and distinguish and analyse five legitimisation strategies. The strategies include authorisation, moralisation, mythopoesis, rationalisation, and management. Therefore, we contend that while these specific legitimisation strategies appear in separate data source, their recurrent manifestation and application underscores legitimising discourse of managerial capture in Nigeria's employment relations.

The discursive use of the PR term "strategy" in instrumentalising CDS research is reflected in the way that CDS scholars package their project solely via research questions throughout the

process. As shown above, the narration of "strategies", being it either meaning-making or legitimisation, can be identified extensively here in the abstract. Oruh et al. (2020) conduct a critical discourse analysis of Nigeria's employment relations, specifically how this has been legitimised based on a qualitative, interpretivist method of data analysis. The PR concept "strategy" has been repeatedly employed as a workplace PR method and labelled as being "discursive". Simply by answering pre-set questions about what strategies to use and how they function, CDS researchers manage to explore the generic goal of ideological control in institutional behaviour. Oruh et al. (2020)'s study shows that Nigeria's employment relations are normalised by inputting managerialist ideologies and shareholder interests into workplace, which results in management coercion and discouraging equal communication. To some extent, the "question-answer" mode facilitates the process of exploring the discourse patterns of managerial power: the "strategy-bound" question entails one of the possible ways CDS research on PR practice can be addressed, specifying those skills and methods of exercising power, shaping identities, and transferring ideologies. Nevertheless, over-emphasis on this presumably effective use and application of strategy including its linguistic realisations may distance researchers from other components of a CDS project such as social actor relationships, mechanism of discourse production and audience reception.

Discussion and conclusion

Adopting van Leeuwen (2005)'s integrationist model of conducting interdisciplinary research, this paper conducts a linguistic investigation of PR concepts used in the CDS journal article abstracts during 2000 and 2020, with "image", "stakeholder", and "strategy" as a case study. They appear in CDS research to co-define how identities are projected, how power relationships are negotiated, and how discourse patterns are manipulated, respectively. The present research argues that the use of PR concepts contributes to instrumentalising CDS, which offers analytic tools of communication for CDS scholars to refer to and helps interpret the management power use and its discursive patterns.

To answer the first research question, the use of the abovementioned PR concepts contributes to taxonomising the semiotics in CDS studies via the following linguistic realisations: (1) negotiating the semantic use of "image" towards a positive, negative, or neutral orientation, which therefore acts as a useful tool in CDS research to critique the discourse of what van Dijk proposed as "positive-self" and "negative-other"; (2) locating the focus group of "social actors" as stakeholders in a CDS project, which helps to sharpen the analytic focus of the study and reframes the interest group so the CDS researchers are able to redefine the PR practice and prove their central argument; (3) mediating the use of "strategy" especially as discursive practice, with less attention to the analysis of language use but more to a critical discussion.

As for the second question, the following is a response: (1) the instrumentalisation of CDS has witnessed the discursive process of correlating the PR concept of "image" to revealing the "identity" or "brand" of those researched institutions and individuals, when its use visualises the social actors in CDS research and accelerates the process of interpreting the institutional and individual identities; (2) the use of another PR concept "stakeholder" has been applied to reveal the ideologies of the core interest groups to various discourses, increasingly to non-neoliberal contexts in which CDS scholars are motivated to evaluate the non-business text producers' effectiveness in justifying the strategies they employ; (3) the term "strategy" has been employed as a workplace PR method, with which CDS researchers package a

project via "strategy-bound" research questions in order to explore the generic goal of ideological control realised through specific skills and methods.

Nevertheless, the present research points out some problems with conceptual use, e.g., towards a potential "self-instrumentalisation". Using "image" to represent the notion of "identity" may cause CDS researchers to ignore other relatable aspects but not of PR, which then equates itself with image representation only within a limited social event. The heavy use of "stakeholder" poses a potential threat to confusing CDS researchers' original goal to critique PR, which to some extent becomes normalised in more non-neoliberal contexts. Over-emphasis on strategy exploration may as well distance CDS researchers away from other components of a CDS project. Observations like these imply an obstacle to pursuing the perfect model proposed by van Leeuwen (2005) concerning both "integrating" disciplines. Under this circumstance, there is supposed to be a self-improvement in CDS research especially in terms of regulating its interdisciplinary use of concepts. CDS and PR are problem-oriented, interdependent, and most importantly, equal partners instead of acting as an academic burden to each other. Fairclough (2005a) also argues in his transdisciplinary approach that the interdisciplinary goal should be set towards "a development of both (disciplines) through a process of each internally appropriating the logic of the other as a resource for its own development" (Chiapello & Fairclough, 2002, cited in Fairclough, 2005a, p. 53). It is realised through "an internal elaboration of categories and relations within CD(S) which allows such categories to be translated into, operationalized within, new theorisations and methods of analysis which are specifically those of CD(S)" (Fairclough, 2005a, p. 66).

Overall, the ontological study of the paper, which analyses the linguistic and discursive uses of three PR concepts in CDS research, not only offers insights into developing an interdisciplinary contribution during the institutionalisation of CDS but shows how the interconnected disciplines of PR and CDS have fostered a two-way development from linguistic and non-linguistic perspectives. For one thing, CDS research aims to critique PR as a social practice by highlighting the institutional ideologies embedded, the power relations negotiated, and the stakeholder identities established via typical PR strategies. For another, using PR concepts in this process has also institutionalised CDS research, which enables CDS researchers to efficiently identify the focal point of their analysis and benefit the ultimate step to critique the social phenomenon. The present research still has limitations: first, three concepts were selected for analysis, without paying attention to other lexical choices in PR; second, the study selected the abstracts of the journal articles rather than the full paper, which constitute only a small part of CDS literature. Future studies can continue to work on these aspects.

Data availability

The datasets analysed in the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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The author declares no competing interests.

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Informed consent

The author declares that no human or animal participants are involved in the research.

Additional information

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