1. **Introduction**

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a branch of Discourse Analysis (DA)\(^1\) which focuses on the connections and interactions between language use, ideology, power, discourse and sociocultural change (Fairclough, 1995). As a method of analyzing these issues CDA has existed and been prominently used for long enough to establish itself as a recognized and generally respected branch of Applied Linguistics research. CDA has not only helped to expand the broader linguistic field of DA, but has given rise to a few widely-used DA approaches such as Ruth Wodak’s *Discourse Historical Analysis* (DHA) (see Wodak, 2007 for discussion) as well as a variety of CDA approaches which examine issues such as racism and discrimination (see, e.g., van Dijk, 1988) and issues of ideology and power (see, e.g., Fairclough, 1995). Nonetheless, due to CDA’s patent connection to social and political issues—both at the level of commencing research and at the level of carrying it out (see Fairclough, 1995; Carvalho, 2008)—CDA research often spawns its own discourse, featuring the same sorts of underlying critical linguistic characteristics that it sets out to analyze (see Poole, 2010). Despite the fact that CDA is presented as a way to bring underlying ideological currents in discourse to light, it often harbors a discourse of its own in the form of its analysis and conclusions. The fact that CDA research is carried out and written by an individual with ideological leanings and that it is approached with specific ideological goals in mind results in a text with its own ideologically marked discourse—often similar in discursive features to the text(s) being analyzed. Because of this, linguistic claims put forth by CDA researchers are often diluted by the social and political commentary present on the part of the researchers themselves (Prentice, 2010).

\(^1\) For the sake of economy within the text, ‘CDA’ and ‘DA’ will be used throughout the present text when referring to these fields (*Critical Discourse Analysis* and *Discourse Analysis*, respectively).
The current study is intended as a means through which to propose a new approach to traditional CDA-style research. This approach is intended to allow for a more balanced, more objective, and less ideologically influenced manner of conducting CDA research. The methodology being proposed and described here is effectively a combination of the Methodological Synergy approach (Baker et al., 2008) and some elements of Semantic Prosody (SP) analysis (see Zhang, 2010; Morley & Partington, 2009; Louw, 2008 for general discussion). This research, whose theoretical and methodological underpinnings are discussed in more detail below, is focused on the analysis of Mexican and American newspaper texts reporting on issues related to the drug trade and resulting violence between the two countries. Specifically, the current investigation looks at print media discourse related to the violence spawned by the drug trade. For the sake of consistency, this topical focus will henceforth be referred to as ‘drug-related violence.’

The analysis of ‘drug-related violence’ in newspaper reporting was approached by embracing the possibility that carrying out CDA research which is not ideologically influenced or overtly subjective is viable through the use of a methodological approach which eliminates many of the ideologically tinged elements of traditional CDA investigations. Through the use of corpus linguistics tools, the statistical analysis of lexical features, and SP analysis, media discourse was compared and contrasted between the United States and Mexico. Through the use of this ‘Methodological Fusion,’ a representation of each country’s print media environment with regard to current ‘drug-related violence,’ will be analyzed and the methodological approach presented here will be found to be either be a viable approach to future CDA-style studies, or not.
Using the current research project as a starting point, it is proposed that it is possible to critically analyze the use of language in textual discourses from a more objective perspective than has been utilized in past CDA studies. This can be accomplished by employing a positivist approach to traditional CDA research. Through the use of a combined methodology based on corpus linguistic analysis and semantic prosody analysis, it will be possible to focus on underlying discourse characteristics across two corpora. This will additionally permit research to move away from the subjective political and ideological commentary which characterizes much of traditional CDA research and which has made CDA such a hotly debated issue in many academic circles (see, e.g. de Beaugrande, 2001; Stubbs, 2001a; Widdowson, 2001a; Widdowson, 2001b).

Many of the approaches to and conceptualizations of CDA and its place in modern applied linguistics research informed the present study. These approaches to CDA research are criticized in the present work because in many respects they are representative of highly subjective understandings of DA. Despite the fact that a critical reading of much of the past few decades’ worth of CDA research served as the motivation for the present investigation, it should be made clear from the beginning that some readings of CDA, such as Fairclough’s (1992) ‘assessment’ of discursive and social change or Bourdieu’s (2006) examination of discursive power relationships, in which, “utterances [are seen to] receive their value (and their sense) only in their relation to a market, characterized by a particular law of price formation,” (p. 481), are not overtly misguided. Nonetheless, the importance necessarily placed on the author’s subjective interpretation in these studies—what Wodak (2000) calls being ‘self-reflective’—detracts from the analysis which comes as a result of the research itself. As a response to this preponderance of subjective, ideologically based
analysis within the field, the present study presents a combination of methods which has the final goal of establishing an alternate approach to traditional CDA studies, and which is as near to being wholly objective as possible.

The application of some of the approaches which will be used in this study is not new, *per se*. For example, some authors (most notably van Dijk, 1988) have prominently applied semantic theory to areas of CDA in the past. More recently, there has been an increased interest in the use of corpus linguistics in CDA research. While research utilizing this approach initially lacked methodological cohesion (see Orpin, 2005), the use of corpora in CDA research has become much more consolidated with the introduction of the Methodological Synergy approach proposed by Baker et al. (2008) and subsequently employed by Salama (2011) and Freake, Gentil and Sheyholislami (2011). However, these types of approaches to traditional CDA research are not very common and inevitably employ many of the same subjective discourses in their analyses as do other CDA studies. For the purposes of the present study, this discourse ‘circularity’ (Stubbs, 1997) is seen as the result of the two basest tools used in carrying out a CDA-based study: the sample selection and the analysis itself. Because ideological factors necessarily inform both of these methodological steps, it becomes difficult to respond to weaknesses in CDA research without addressing both of them, something that has yet to be fully embraced in the field (for a simple discussion of ideology’s role in CDA research, see Wodak & Meyer (2009)). While some authors have chosen to more heavily focus on sampling issues (Freake et al., 2011) and others have placed more weight on issues of analysis (Prentice, 2010), few have attempted to address both of these issues in a single methodology. Although a more balanced answer to traditional CDA has been proposed and implemented by some authors
(Salama, 2011; Baker et al., 2008), it has yet to be applied to discourse in the same way as has been traditional CDA. That is, while many studies have focused on placing more or less weight on both of these points, they have either fallen short of giving equal weight to both, or have resulted in impractical methodologies—thus conflicting with one of the principal goals of CDA. These extremes in methodologies can be seen with particular clarity in many of Fairclough’s studies, which have focused heavily on sample selection at the cost of a balanced, objective analysis (see Poole, 2010; Fairclough, 1993) and in studies based on corpus assisted discourse studies (CADS) (see Freake et al., 2011; Salama, 2011; Baker et al., 2008) which have sacrificed practicality in the name of balanced analysis.

Even though each of these varied focuses on CDA research has taken great strides to make their findings more objective, they have each only addressed part of the issue raised when examining general subjectivity in CDA research. In van Dijk’s (1988) exploration of the application of DA, for instance, van Dijk uses semantic theory in order to improve the meaning analysis which is present in many CDA studies. However, in doing so, the data collection component of the research remains the same. Similarly, in the Methodological Synergy approach (Baker et al., 2008—discussed in more detail below) the researchers address the subjectivity traditionally present in data collection, but ignore the subjective pitfalls present in the data analysis. In response to this seeming methodological vacuum, the current project intends to piece together existing concepts within CDA, corpus linguistics, and semantic theory, with the end goal of establishing a more empirically sound form of CDA than has heretofore been utilized in the field.
1.1. Background/Description of Methods Used

In the interest of effectively establishing the precedents which informed the current research, it is first necessary to discuss and describe the theoretical and methodological foundations which will make this research possible. As has already been noted, the current project was based on a fusion of multiple approaches to DA that have already been used within linguistics. The areas (CDA, Corpus Linguistics and Semantic Prosody) are presented below and their theoretical and methodological backgrounds are briefly discussed.

1.1.1. Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA is a form of DA which came to prominence in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Wodak & Meyer, 2009; Blommaert and Bulcaen, 2000; Fairclough, 1995). The approach has since gained considerable popularity and is championed by authors such as Norman Fairclough, Teun van Dijk, and Ruth Wodak, among others. Generally, the approach analyzes written or spoken discourse by viewing and interpreting it through a lens of political culpability and social justice. As opposed to traditional forms of DA, CDA views discourses as reflections of the society in which they are created. In this way, CDA endeavors to bring to light underlying discourses within greater linguistic trends. This approach, and the goals that inherently come with it, make CDA a sort of tool with which researchers may ‘uncover’ discourses which affect the public in their everyday lives, what Fairclough (1995, p. 1) calls, “…a resource for people who are struggling against domination and oppression in its linguistic forms.” Indeed, the examination of ‘domination’ presented through discourse is one of the pillars of CDA research. This
‘domination’ is often seen as being connected to different groups within a society who put forth and participate in discourses. Wodak and Meyer (2009), for instance, view this connection as being predominantly caused by power—in their view an extremely important facet of CDA. In this sense, those in power are seen to be responsible for social inequality, and CDA investigators are seen to be, “…interested in the way discourse (re)produces social domination, that is, the power abuse of one group over others, and how dominated groups may discursively resist such abuse,” (p. 9).

Because CDA studies offer findings so closely tied to interpretations of socio-political matters (i.e. ‘power,’ history, race issues, politics, etc.), they are necessarily characterized by interdisciplinary research and, thus, informed by a wide range of approaches and methodologies. All of this is done while viewing language use and its presence in society through a critical lens. As Wodak points out, “critical does not mean detecting only the negative sides of social interaction and processes and painting a black and white picture of societies. Quite to the contrary: Critical means distinguishing complexity and denying easy, dichotomous explanations. It means making contradictions transparent,” (2000, p. 186, emphasis in original). Indeed, proponents of CDA hold that its position as a tool to fight the oppression and contradictions present in everyday discourses, allows it to serve as a way to see through the layers of discourse which shape the world we inhabit and, as a result, our perceptions of it (van Dijk, 2006; Fairclough, 1992). Yet others in the field see this use of CDA as a potential weak point due to its heavy reliance on interdisciplinary research methods (Jones, 2004) and the circular analysis which informs many CDA interpretations (Stubbs, 1997).
It is here that defining CDA becomes rather difficult. In examining CDA critically, it can be seen as simultaneously existing inside and outside of linguistics. That is to say that—as in Wodak’s discussion of what is meant by ‘critical’ (above)—there are many ways to conceptualize CDA and to put it into practice. While CDA has alternately been seen as a theory, approach, methodology and tool (discussed below) it is most often understood as being linguistic in nature. Nonetheless, for the same reason that there is a need for Wodak to clarify the meaning of the term ‘critical,’ there is leeway in how CDA research has been understood by researchers and how it has been carried out in research. To understand the sheer amplitude of the area itself as well as the ways that it has been employed in research over the years, it is first important to understand the underlying characteristics of CDA and how these tie into its methodological strengths and weaknesses.

1.1.1.1. **Approach/Characteristics**

Although CDA is often thought of and referred to as a ‘theory’ by many in the greater academic community, CDA researchers are quick to point out that CDA can be defined more accurately as a methodology, comprised of a set of interdisciplinary tools and approaches which are combined to analyze discourses through varied and shifting methodological strategies (see Weiss & Wodak, 2003; Wodak, 2000). Indeed, this is how it has principally been used in research despite any individual labels which have been placed on it. Regardless of the novel ways that CDA has been used (e.g. Ruth Wodak’s DHA (2007)), it is—in essence—a way of using varied linguistics-based approaches to expose underlying discourses as they pertain to and are derived from political and social issues. As Fairclough (1992) points out, although CDA and other linguistic research methods focus on some similar themes, CDA additionally focuses on social theory
applications and examines macro-features in language use. Because of this, it is very closely tied to ideological concerns. This is one of the most vital parts of CDA research, however, it is also what has generated disaccord in regard to how CDA should be carried out and what its place is within linguistics.

In fact, in looking at some of the criticisms which have been presented over the years with regard to CDA it becomes clear that many of them have been based on CDA’s reliance on the researcher’s personal criteria. This is especially true in cases where the researcher’s involvement in ideological components of CDA research have been called into question (Poole, 2010; Collins & Jones, 2006). Unfortunately for CDA researchers, though, it is quite difficult to separate ideology from methodological concerns due to the very nature of looking at discourse critically. As Fairclough (2003) points out, this separation is difficult because looking at discourses with critical eyes necessitates the presence of ideology, which Fairclough defines as, “…representations of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation,” (p. 9). In utilizing this definition, the use of ideology as a lens through which to view research becomes problematic because it is not only connected to CDA methodology, but is a pillar of CDA research. Because of this it proves difficult to address ideological components of CDA research without having to address the whole of CDA.

What is noteworthy in looking at CDA research based on the connection between ideology and methodology is that, although there would appear to be little agreement within the field in many respects, there is a general consensus among researchers that the inclusion of ideological concerns is vital in effectively carrying out CDA research. For instance, van
Dijk (1997) portrays discourse in general as being inexorably tied to cognition and cognitive processes saying that, “…although it is sometimes useful to abstract from the mental nature of grammars, rules, norms, knowledge or opinions in an account of discourse and communication, it is obvious that a fully fledged theory of discourse would be seriously incomplete without a mental (cognitive or emotional) component,” (p. 17). While this is a legitimate point concerning language—especially when it is examined within ideologically charged arenas—it is important to note that this sort of dependence on ideology as a component of CDA research is precisely what has been harshly criticized by outside researchers. In general, these criticisms have not come about due to the acknowledgement of ideology’s place within the discourses being studied, but rather due to ideology’s presence in the studies themselves as well as in researchers’ interpretations of results (Poole, 2010; Haig, 2001). However, while these criticisms have been leveled against the stances of the very researchers working in the area, others have criticized the method as a whole (Jones & Collins, 2006; Jones, 2004). This is because CDA is seen to borrow so liberally from other fields that on one hand it can be seen to lose itself in methodological approaches, while on the other hand it can be seen to benefit from not being seen as wholly linguistic in nature (de Beaugrande, 1997). That is, CDA can be seen as very applicable since it is involved in so many areas, but very credible since it is presented as part of one area (linguistics). It is precisely because of these factors that a new approach is being discussed, tested, and proposed in the present study.

The interdisciplinary approach taken in CDA research is wholly necessary since CDA research scrutinizes social and political problems while viewing them as having an effect on discourse in society (Carvalho, 2008). Since CDA examines power and ideology as
manifested in social and political contexts (Fairclough, 1995), it is of vital importance that authors confront the underlying social and cultural factors that affect not only the construction of discourses, but their interpretation by and effect on the greater society. Additionally, its interdisciplinary bent allows CDA to be applied to virtually any venue in which language is prominently used, making it not only applicable, but adaptable (Carvalho, 2008).

Since, as the above discussion suggests, CDA is a more or less linguistically based approach which can be applied to virtually any practical issue within the purview of linguistics or social sciences, it is a very important tool in research in that it can form a sort of theoretical bridge between palpable, everyday instances of discourse (political language, for example) and linguistic theory. This is especially true when looking at the research carried out by authors such as Fairclough (1992) and Carvalho (2008). Both of whom have proposed a sort of cyclical interaction between discourse and what Carvalho calls ‘Mediated Discourse.’ This refers to the connection between the greater societal discourse’s connection to ‘reality’ (in Faircloughian CDA) and society’s interpretation and perception of discourse as related to ‘reality’ (in the case of Carvalho). What both of these authors have in common (at least in the investigations which were included here) is a focus on the end result of their research. While it could easily be argued that all research is focused on achieving an end result, what marks these studies as unique is that they seem to focus on the enormous influence which discourse has in society and not as much on the linguistic features within the discourse itself.

In the case of Carvalho (2008), for example, CDA is seen as an interconnecting group of approaches which can be used to view discourse’s role within society. This can be seen
temporally, as in the cases of Wodak’s DHA and Fairclough’s Intertextuality (see Carvalho, 2008 for discussion) or by examining what Carvalho calls the ‘life’ of media representations in which, “understanding the evolution of matters such as war, terrorism or climate change, and the ways they are interdependent in relation to the media, is [seen as] one of the most important contributions to be made by social researchers,” (p. 164). What is important to note in these different approaches to CDA, is that while they all view the same sorts of features within a given discourse, they focus primarily on the macro features of said discourse (i.e. ideological concerns, effects on society, social influences, etc.) while the explicitly linguistic (micro) features principally serve as a stage in justifying findings.

In this sense, van Dijk (2006) goes a step further in inferring that—based on his research regarding the presence of racism in discourses—in general, discourse contributes to the formation and persistence of certain ideologies. Due to this proposed intimate connection between general societal discourses and society itself, CDA necessarily employs a broad-based multi-disciplinary approach which permits researchers to draw conclusions based on as many linguistic and non-linguistic factors as possible. CDA as a whole—in this respect—is essentially based on the connection and interaction between discourse, society, and cognition at both individual and collective levels. It is important to note here that this basis for the field almost entirely excludes linguistics from its methodological approaches, findings, and conclusions. This is discussed in greater detail below.

Although CDA is a wide reaching methodology insofar as it employs techniques and approaches from a variety of areas, at its heart it has fairly simple objectives. In its most basic form, CDA is comparable to standard DA. However, due to its interdisciplinary
approach as well as its critical slant, CDA deals with the same micro elements of discourse as does DA while focusing more prominently on social phenomena in a bid to make ‘hidden’ discourse strategies transparent (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). While this accounts for what makes CDA functional as a stand-alone approach to linguistic research, it also represents CDA’s greatest weakness; as a linguistics-based approach it is hard for authors to effectively make arguments in other areas, such as historical research (see Jones & Collins, 2006; Jones, 2004) while as a multidisciplinary approach it is hard to make sound linguistic arguments (see Poole, 2010). Further, the fact that no one ‘owns’ CDA—that is, that it serves as more of a tool than a theory, or at the very least a set of varied approaches each based in a separate theoretical foundation (see Wodak & Meyer, 2009)—has complicated the interpretation of its place in linguistics in that many things have been done under the guise of CDA, while there has been little in the way of establishing concrete procedures for carrying out CDA research; while this has led to an enormous quantity of studies carried out under the banner of CDA, it has yet to result in a concrete approach that can be used in a variety of situations to obtain comparable results.

1.1.1.2. Background And Shortcomings

The current project is centered on a perceived lack of empiricism and objectivity within CDA research as well as a traditionally poor application to linguistic research (according to many authors in the general research community). While it can be effectively argued that CDA research is not explicitly ‘linguistic’ research, it is applied to language issues with such frequency that it becomes difficult to separate the two. Thus, for the purposes of the current project, CDA is viewed as a means of conducting linguistic research. Because of this, the problems addressed here arise as a result of situations in which CDA is directly
applied to linguistic issues. There are, indeed, a number of problems in the CDA approach to linguistic investigation. Principal among these are the methodological and theoretical approaches taken by CDA researchers in selecting and analyzing texts. Many authors attribute this ‘weakness’ in CDA approaches to the very interdisciplinary characteristics that typify CDA as a methodology (Poole, 2010; Prentice, 2010). Oftentimes these criticisms are based on the underlying approaches and themes within a given CDA study. For example, CDA has been roundly criticized because of perceived weaknesses in its conceptualization and understanding of the application of historical methodology (see Collins & Jones, 2006; Jones, 2004). Additionally, the approach has come under attack because of its conceptualization of discourse’s place in text interpretation (Jones & Collins, 2006) and because of the underlying ideologies which inform the CDA research process (Poole, 2010), as well as for a wide variety of other reasons related to the approach’s methods and conclusions (see Haig, 2001, for discussion).

A common argument that all of these critiques of traditional CDA research share is that the aims of the field have become lost in the very multidisciplinary inclusion which characterizes it. However, as Prentice (2010) indicates, the shortcomings of CDA research are also related to what they characterize as ‘arbitrary text selection,’ paired with the approach’s characteristic subjectivity (see Poole, 2010; Prentice, 2010; Collins & Jones, 2006; Jones & Collins, 2006; Jones, 2004) and theoretical and methodological weaknesses (see, e.g., Stubbs, 1997). Regardless of the varied perspectives found in these criticisms, they share the common idea that CDA is based on subjective, political motives. While this is more true of certain CDA investigations than others, it can be seen in the very discourse of CDA research such as Fairclough’s (1995) assertion that the approach is a means to fight
oppression, Poole’s assertion (2010—in critiquing Faircloughian CDA) that the ideology of a text has a greater impact on findings than does the method itself, or de Beaugrande’s (1997) characterization of those whose discourses are analyzed by CDA as “… [CDA’s] opponents, the snobbish guardians and glib homeworkers,” (p. 45). Not only have these ideological characteristics within CDA characterized it and its development, but they have informed nearly all criticisms of the methodology to the present day.

The present research intends to address these issues by utilizing a more explicitly data-driven approach to research and an approach to DA grounded in theory. In order to accomplish this, a methodology founded in corpus linguistics will be used to collect textual data; and data will be analyzed using an approach based on semantic theory. These approaches, their connections, and their places within the current project are discussed below.

1.1.2. Corpus Linguistics

One of the newest approaches to conducting linguistic research and, indeed, one of the most frequently used methods in conducting modern CDA research is Corpus Linguistics (CL). CL is a widely applicable approach to linguistics research which utilizes computer programs to amass and analyze enormous collections of texts. Due to CL’s current popularity in linguistics research, it is assumed that the reader is familiar with the field in general as well as both its theoretical and practical underpinnings. For those unfamiliar with CL, Biber, Conrad, and Reppen (1998) and Kennedy (1998) offer simple and comprehensive introductions to the field, its applications, and its utility in conducting linguistics research.
One of the principle advantages of corpus linguistics is that it can be tailored to practically any experimental situation. The corpora to be studied in a given investigation can either be chosen by the researcher (from pre-compiled corpora) or can be constructed according to the type of language use being studied. Following text selection and/or corpus construction, corpus programs are capable of singling out specific language features within texts, and allowing them to be easily searched, categorized, viewed and analyzed by researchers.

Corpora are comprised of texts which are chosen according to certain criteria, ideally the smallest set possible (Sinclair, 1991), in order to form a representative sample of language use within a certain area. A representative corpus, in this respect, does not only have to be representative of language use in a particular area, but must be representative of language use with regard to a specific topic. Because representativeness in a well-constructed corpus applies to these two areas of general discourse, the construction of a representative corpus affords the researcher two principal advantages. First, any data gleaned from the corpus (assuming that it was well-constructed) will present the researcher with a statistically representative glimpse of language use within a particular area; and second, data analyzed from the corpus will be representative of the language generally employed in discourses regarding a specific topic. This thematic and linguistic representativeness allows corpus research to focus on language use characteristics in a measured and practical manner while discussing conclusions pertaining to it.

In the current research, for example, the corpora were representative of newspaper writing published online (linguistic arena) and language surrounding the ‘drug-related violence’ in Mexico and the United States (topic). Because of the criteria (discussed in
Chapter 3, p. 52) established for corpora construction, these corpora can be seen to be representative of newspaper stories, published online, reporting on ‘drug-related violence’ in Mexico and the United States\(^2\). When paired with the use of semantic theory, these corpora can be effectively analyzed on a more objective level than has been done previously.

1.1.3. Semantics

Semantics is a branch of theoretical linguistics (along with syntax and phonetics) which examines the meanings of words and the individual lexical features that make up and affect language. Every lexical item can be seen as a set of features which characterize it and, as such, semantic theory can be used to determine the basest (prototypical) meaning of a given word as well as how lexical items (LIs) contribute to overall linguistic meaning whether within a word, a phrase or a discourse. The first publication the discussion that would eventually become semantic theory was Katz-Fodor’s discussion of semantics in 1963, which was a response to Chomsky’s proposition that syntax was the foundation of language. The analysis of semantic-based linguistic thought offered by Katz and Fodor served as an answer to Chomskian generative grammar in that the authors proposed that, “…in no sense of meaning does the structural description which the grammar assigns to a sentence specify either the meaning of the sentence or the meaning of its parts,” (p. 173). That is to say that the meaning present in natural language is a product of the presence or absence of the individual LIs which make it up. In this sense, semantic theory is

\(^2\) ‘Drug-related violence’ is used throughout the present study to refer to a myriad of inter-connected issues related to the violence which has come as a result of altercations between the Mexican and US governments and drug-traffickers in Mexico since 2006. Although some texts included in the corpora report on civilian matters, all of them were connected to the violence currently occurring in parts of Mexico and the US, resultant of the drug trade in both countries (see Section 3.1.1.2, p. 64).
complimentary to many aspects of CDA in that it allows for a focus on the underlying meaning of a text through the use of verifiable linguistic theory.

As de Swart (1998) describes it, semantics looks at the linking of the *form* and the *content* of natural language. This conceptualization of semantics allows for the fact that competent speakers can both communicate ideas and understand language—as opposed to only one or the other. The difficulty in accurately delimiting the reach of semantic theory, as well as the dual importance of both ‘communication’ and ‘understanding,’ is made abundantly clear in viewing something as simple and common as paraphrasing, in which two distinct linguistic representations carry the same meaning based on the semantic uses which each features despite any surface syntactic differences. This balance between form and content described by de Swart is often seen as a split between semantic theory on the one hand, which posits that in saying anything there is an implicit meaning; and pragmatic theory on the other hand, which posits that the implicit meaning of a word can and is changed regularly according to a variety of linguistic, social, and contextual factors. An important factor in clarifying any confusion in this respect is that the *choice* of words may indeed hold a message, but that the words themselves are built upon a consistent and analyzable meaning which can in turn affect other parts of a given utterance (such as in the example of paraphrasing).

SP is, in many ways, an approach which responds to this understanding of semantics’ place in language by allowing for semantic analysis while still accepting underlying meaning and intended meanings of LIs used, manipulated, and avoided on the part of the author. In the case of semantic prosody, this is accomplished through the analysis of connotation. This is possible because the semantic meaning of a lexical item is, as Morley
and Partington (2009) put it, part of a word’s “DNA.” Set against pragmatics—which holds a similar understanding of intended meaning’s place in language—semantic prosody puts forth the idea that engrained connotations in LIs account for the shared understanding of utterances among humans. That is, where pragmatics relies on interpretation to understand a given utterance, SP proposes that underlying meanings are part of a speaker’s grammar (for a complete discussion of this distinction and related issues, see Morley & Partington, 2009; Partington, 2007; Partington, 2004).

1.1.3.1. **Semantic Prosody**

The use of a semantic prosody-based approach in the current project will allow for a focus on individual words within discourse and their connections to surrounding words, individual texts, and the corpora as wholes. As a part of the Methodological Fusion upon which the current project is based, semantic prosody will allow for broader and more objective conclusions than have other, similar approaches such as that taken by Baker et al. (2008). In fact, the use of semantic prosody in the current project combined with the corpora being used effectively utilizes the strengths found in the Baker et al. study as well as Salama’s (2011) study. That is, the present investigation uses a broader sample for analysis (as in Baker et al.) while using semantic analysis techniques in order to improve analysis (as in Salama).

This added objectivity comes from two features in the analysis. First, as some authors have pointed out, semantics is a theoretical part of linguistics which equates a scientific approach to understanding meaning and its interaction with syntax and other linguistic areas (see, e.g., Palmer, 1976; Leech, 1981); and second, the use of corpus analysis makes
it possible to apply the understanding of semantic meaning to a broader area of textual discourse. This is made more effective in that corpus linguistics and semantic prosody analysis are inextricably linked through their necessary methodological steps.

In fact, semantic prosody has its roots in corpus linguistic studies carried out by John Sinclair in the late 1980s. It was Sinclair who first put forth the idea that certain LIs occurred together time after time across many corpora and that these habitual collocations were analyzable. This consistent lexical behavior has been found in many linguistic areas over the years including in collocation, which led Sinclair to the investigation of schemata (Zhang, 2010) something that has since been expanded and altered to include what Louw (1993, as cited in Whitsitt, 2005) dubbed ‘Semantic Prosody.’ This initial foray into what would become semantic prosody was carried out through the semantic examination of irony. Although irony is still occasionally examined through SP (e.g. Partington, 2007), the field has expanded to include many other applications in more practical realms, such as studies of lexicographic applications (Ping-Fang & Jing-Chun, 2009) and the study of metaphor and idiom use in texts (Oster, 2010; Fillmore, Kay, & O’Connor, 1988).

Nonetheless, despite promising applications, SP has been predominantly discussed in highly theoretical terms. That is, very few studies have been carried out using it as a prominent component of their methodologies. The majority of SP investigations have focused on showing SP characteristics in specific examples (occasionally as small as one word) looked at throughout mega corpora. Although this has brought forth interesting findings and could one day lead to a more complete understanding of semantics, in many ways SP has been underutilized in terms of practical applications. The method being
proposed here would utilize basic forms of SP analysis as part of a separate methodology with the end goal of improving upon existing approaches to CDA research.

1.2. New Method

The following section analyzes various approaches to CDA research that have been taken in the past. Additionally, it features a discussion of related methodologies and areas such as media studies and frame studies. Based on the discussion of these diverse methods, an argument will be made for the necessity of a new approach which synthesizes features from many other CDA-based methodologies.

A modified approach to CDA research is an important first step in addressing many of the criticisms which have been directed at traditional CDA since its inception. It is not claimed that the new approach presented here will completely resolve any of the existing problems immediately, nor is it claimed that a new approach will be without similar theoretical, ideological or methodological weak points. However, an approach which makes use of methods chosen with the plain intention of achieving methodological objectivity and applied with the same intention, could serve to move the field forward. For these same reasons, the print media (in this case, newspapers) can be successfully utilized as a basis for investigation. This is the case because of the general characteristics with which print media is—in theory—endowed. An objective approach to studying media discourses could effectively single out instances of ‘non-characteristic’ media discourse (i.e. instances of bias or ideological posturing). This is particularly pertinent in that the news media is founded on the principle of being non-biased and that the CDA approach is
often focused on finding and highlighting bias or underlying discourse patterns which push
a point of view.

Aside from the fact that the news media is ideally objective, it is also a model medium
in which to carry out discourse research for other reasons, not least of which is its
connection with and availability to the public, something that is immensely important in
CDA research due to CDA’s being traditionally seen as a sort of tool for informing the
masses. Not only does the mass media represent the main outlet through which the general
public gets its information about the world; but, as many CDA researchers have pointed out
(Gutiérrez Vidrio, 2010; van Hout and MacGilchrist, 2010; Carvalho, 2008), media and
policy have a cyclical relationship in which policies are reported in the media, influencing
people’s opinions of them and, in turn, affecting future policy-making by way of public
opinion.

Because of this cyclical interaction with peoples’ lived realities, the media has a
tremendous effect not just on people’s lives and their perceptions of the world, but on the
very world which they perceive and in which the media exists. Due to this connection
between social and political issues and discourse, a traditional CDA study is neither overtly
nor intentionally subjective; however, the fact that subjective, ideologically based
interpretation on the part of the researcher comprises one of the most important analysis
techniques in CDA research often results in a strong ideological discourse being implanted
in CDA studies. Jones (2004), for example—making particular reference to Norman
Fairclough’s place in CDA research—criticizes CDA’s ‘explicit political agenda,’ claiming
that the discipline and its corresponding goals are obscured by its inherent ties to certain
political ideologies and approaches to research.
Despite these well-documented short-comings, many CDA findings are well-presented and, by all outward appearances, reliable in their conclusions. Because of this seeming-credibility within traditional CDA investigations, a more positivist-based approach to CDA questions (in this case, using a combination of corpus linguistics and semantic theory) would be at least as methodologically and theoretically sound as traditional approaches. What this means is that the approach being proposed here has the potential to offer an innovative way to carry out CDA-related research while simultaneously avoiding many of the problems which have been identified in past applications of CDA; however, even if the current project finds nothing new with respect to the effectiveness of CDA methodologies, it will still provide a more linguistically centered and methodologically objective approach which can be utilized in future investigations.

1.2.1. Current Study

As a result of the criticisms which have been raised against CDA research (briefly outlined above), the present research was designed to respond in the simplest and most effective way possible. This was accomplished by creating a methodology that addressed the most common individual criticisms of CDA in a single methodology. In order to accomplish this, the current project was designed to be a combination of Corpus Assisted Discourse Analysis (CADS) (Freake et al., 2011) and SP. This methodological combination was intended to be applicable as a methodological tool for carrying out CDA-based studies. Essentially, the study is based on SP approaches and Methodological Synergy (Baker et al., 2008).
Methodological Synergy is an approach to CDA which was first proposed by Baker et al. (2008). The proposed methodological fusion is broadly based on the combination of CDA and Corpus Linguistics. Since Baker et al.’s initial experimentation in applying Methodological Synergy, other authors have begun to embrace the approach as a way to draw more prominent, empirically provable and applicable findings from the study of CDA issues (see Freake et al., 2011; Salama, 2011). Nonetheless, the Methodological Synergy approach still lacks in key areas. As Baker et al. (2008) point out, CDA never was necessarily a method in and of itself; in fact, CDA researchers utilize any method available to them so long as it proves complimentary to the study being undertaken. Further, CDA has traditionally relied heavily on qualitative data. Because of this, the field has come under attack for being weak in relation to linguistics (Orpin, 2005). Authors who have criticized CDA in this respect have principally done so in relation to CDA’s heavy reliance on the ideologically based interpretation of findings. Despite the fact that this is a strong argument against CDA, it is primarily true of research which relies exclusively on CDA methodology. In the Orpin study (cited above), for example, CDA was only employed in examining the ideological components of the findings. With this sort of methodological balance in mind, many authors have tailored their approaches to account for criticisms of CDA. One of the most obvious attempts at addressing these shortcomings is Methodological Synergy (Baker et al., 2008); however, although Baker et al.’s approach serves to place more importance on empiricism within CDA research, much could still be done to make the approach more objective as well as more tangibly based in linguistic

3 Throughout this study the terms CADS and Methodological Synergy are used in reference to the combination of CDA-related methodologies and corpus linguistics. The current study is essentially a combination of both (CADS is a broader methodological approach and Methodological Synergy utilizes a mega corpus—something not present here). However, a large portion of the research currently available in the area is based on Methodological Synergy and, thus, the term is used to refer to the CDA-based methodology used here.
theory. These methodological problems are not solely relegated to the Baker et al. approach to ‘Methodological Synergy,’ though. One of the only papers published to date which prominently features the use of Methodological Synergy has been Salama’s (2011) study of the contrasting use of ‘Wahhabi’ and ‘Wahhab’ in two texts. This study has likely come closer than any other to combining semantics with Methodological Synergy. Nonetheless, this study could still be improved upon and made more practical and objective in relation to its methodological design (discussed in Chapter 2, p. 29).

With these approaches, studies, criticisms, and findings in mind, the current project aims to examine textual discourse while avoiding many of the pit-falls encountered in traditional CDA research and while building on the foundation that was laid by Baker et al. (2008) with their Methodological Synergy approach. This was accomplished on two fronts. First, the present study was carried out on a stratified random sample of newspapers from two countries (the United States and Mexico). This has not been done extensively in the field to date. Most of the studies published in the area have focused on the use of mega corpora (or at the very least have employed them in order to draw comparisons) and have principally looked at English. Second, SP was utilized when analyzing the results of the corpus analysis. In this way, statistically salient LIs and their collocates (in both English and in Spanish) were looked at in order to examine contrasting, parallel or distinct prosodic features (elaborated in Chapter 3, p. 52). This contrasting analysis was intended to single out any underlying discourse tendencies which may have been present in the corpora, as well as to indicate how the general discourse was different or similar across two corpora of texts based around the same issues.
The analysis which was carried out here was undertaken with the intention of exploring the hypothesis that it is possible to carry out CDA research using a methodological approach which eliminates the necessity for predominately subjective analysis of and commentary on the texts analyzed. In order to test this hypothesis, the current project was designed around the following four fundamental assumptions:

a) Semantic prosody can be used as a research tool in examining corpora written in different languages (in this case, Spanish and English).

b) Semantic prosody can be applied to the analysis of texts from distinct linguistic communities (Mexico and the United States) in order to examine similarities and differences in the predominant media discourses of each country.


d) Semantic prosody and corpus linguistics can prove to be effective tools in carrying out CDA research and can be applied to future CDA research projects; thus eliminating a large portion of subjective guess-work in the area.

Together, these points served as the impetus for proposing, designing and carrying out the present study. While the overall goal of the study was to put forth a more complete way of addressing methodological weaknesses in CDA research, importance was also placed on determining whether or not the use of SP was a feasible way to accomplish this goal. Obviously, if it were impossible to apply any or all of the approaches listed above it would not be feasible to attempt the current project. Nonetheless, there have been enough applications of the individual approaches as well as various combinations of them (see
Chapter 2, p. 29) that the use of SP as a complement to CDA-research was seen as a feasible next step in carrying out this sort of research.

While the above expectations informed the underlying processes utilized in designing and applying the methodology used here, the research process itself was based on the following three research questions. These questions were created for the purpose of being able to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the current project and in what ways the results of the current project could be applied to future research within the field. The research questions are presented below and discussed thereafter.

a) Is an analysis based on the combination of aspects of Methodological Synergy (Baker et al., 2008) and Semantic Prosody capable of analyzing discourses present in two separate languages?

b) Can the combination of certain aspects of Methodological Synergy and Semantic Prosody result in a more comprehensive and less subjective approach to the goals of traditional CDA research?

c) Are the methodological steps utilized here applicable to future studies in CDA?

These research questions formed the pillars of the present study because they set the tone for what the rest of the research process would address. In the most general sense, the present research was focused on determining the feasibility of utilizing a combined methodology for approaching CDA research. However, within this it was also important that the framework used here be relevant to the traditional goals of CDA. That is, the methodology used here was intended to be a complementary approach to traditional CDA and not an entirely separate methodology. With this in mind, it was also vital that the
current project be applicable to future studies, thus moving the field forward. In the interest of laying out the need for the current project as well as the reasoning behind its design, the following chapter presents the concepts and methodologies which informed the design, proposal and execution of the present research.