

Discourse and Discourse Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This article will explore the variation of definition to discourse and discourse analysis and will compare the features of it given by different scholars. The article will compare varieties and similarities of analysis that can be close to discourse analysis.

KEYWORDS: *critical discourse analysis, conversation analysis, context, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, empirical discourse, formal discourse.*

The word "discourse" has its etymology traced back to the fourteenth century. The term originates from the Latin word "discursus," signifying "discussion".¹ Currently in use, this term might mean many things for different reasons, but it always has to do with language and describes it in some way.

Firstly, according to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English², discourse is literally defined as "a serious speech or piece of writing on a particular subject." It encompasses both spoken and written communication in general, while it is occasionally limited to speech, which is defined as "a serious conversation between people". When the word is employed as a verb, it also implies this constraint.

Carter lists various meanings for the term "discourse." It first relates to the subjects or linguistic constructions employed in particular situations. It is acceptable to discuss philosophical discourse, political speech, and similar topics here.

Secondly, sometimes 'text' is used to refer to written material, and 'discourse' is used to represent spoken communication.

But it is crucial to remember that the line separating text from discourse, which is drawn here, isn't always clear-cut. As demonstrated by Nunan, these two terms are frequently treated differently and are occasionally used interchangeably.³ The "discourse/text" and 'process/product' dichotomies, respectively, are frequently associated, according to Carter. Thirdly, discourse refers to any naturally occurring stretch of language, which creates a stark contrast with the conventional idea of a "sentence," the "highest" unit of language analysis.

In this regard, Trask makes it clear that a discourse might include written or spoken conversations created by two or more people rather than being limited to a single speaker or

author.⁴ The foundation of the method known as discourse analysis is this final interpretation of the term.

Even though discourse means a part of language that is bigger than a sentence, not every group of words fits this definition. What makes discourse special is not just that it goes beyond individual sentences, but rather how everything fits together and makes sense as a whole.

To be more explicit, discourse is a complete meaningful unit conveying a complete message according to Nunan⁵. The nature of this whole cannot be perceived by examining its constituent parts, 'there are structured relationships among the parts that result in something new' – said Schiffrin⁶. Larger pieces of writing and talking, like paragraphs, conversations, and interviews, are all considered types of "discourse" because they are complete forms of communication on their own.

Schiffrin et al (2003) gives three features that can be definition of the discourse:

- A. Anything beyond the sentence: it is not just phonology, syntax and others
- B. Language in use: what people do with language, or a conversation in a café for example can be a use of language
- C. Broader range of social practice that includes nonlinguistic and nonspecific instances of language: for example, clothing of the people, or what they have in hand or their gestures and when it comes to nonspecific instances refer to understandings of the speakers.

Foucault regard discourse as follows:

"not just the language of an individual communication, but the larger systems of thought within a particular historical location that make certain things "thinkable" and "sayable", and regulating who can say them.

Discourse is language, which is set at a certain time, and at a certain place, it is used with people who have certain relations between them, and we have to take all of these things into account if we want to analyze what language means and how it works.⁷

Now what is discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is the process of understanding a text to this by paying attention to everything that gives meaning to this text. Context, time, place, people, their relation between.

¹ McArthur, T. (1996). The Oxford companion to the English language. Oxford University Press

²2001, p. 388

³ Nunan, D. (1993). Introducing discourse analysis. Penguin Books

⁴ Trask, R.L. (1999). Key concepts in language and linguistics. London: Routledge

⁵ Nunan, D. (1993). Introducing discourse analysis. Penguin Books

⁶ Schiffrin, D. (2006). Discourse. In W.F. Ralph & J. Connor-Linton (Eds.), An Introduction to language and linguistics (pp. 169- 203). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

⁷ Sean Sutherland, 2021, 12 Feb

According to Gee Breaks Da gives 2 basic approaches:

1. Descriptive (largely linguistic) – looking at actual language details, how grammar and structure work together and give meaning.
2. Critical (applied, political) – how power flows and operates within the society through language.

3. Moreover, there are the following approaches to analyze discourse:
4. Pragmatics
5. Sociolinguistics
6. Ethnography of communication
7. Conversation analysis
8. Systematic functional linguistics

There are three approaches according to Hodges, which are described, in the following table⁸:

Formal linguistic discourse analysis	Samples of written and oral language and texts	Microanalysis of linguistic, grammatical, and semantic uses and meanings of text
Empirical discourse analysis (such as conversation analysis, genre analysis)	Samples of written or oral language and texts; and data on the uses of the text in social settings	Microanalysis and macroanalysis of the ways in which language and/or texts construct social practices
Critical discourse analysis (such as Foucauldian analysis)	Samples of written or oral language/ texts; and data on the uses of the text in social settings; and data on the institutions and individuals who produce and are produced by the language texts (for example, if we talk about mental illness, the producers are doctors, nurses or psychologists, and those who are produced by are mentally ill people)	Macroanalysis of how discourses (in many forms) construct what is possible for individuals and institutions to think and to say.

Social sciences mainly are interested in social practices what can be regarded as Critical discourse analysis. This discourse will showcase critical issues illustrated through language like sexism, racism, power, inequality.

To understand what is discourse and how it will be illustrated, we can take a sentence as an example to understand what is referred as a discourse and how it will differ from text or speech and why it is considered necessary. The sentence “I am hungry” is taken as a piece of discourse. The variation of context, time, place and the relation between people will influence the meaning of discourse according to difference.

For example, for a daughter and a dad, from the side of the daughter at home, the meaning will be to give something from the fridge.

Now we will change the situation and the participants in our context, between wife and a husband in the situation of walking around the city, the sentence “I am hungry” from the side of woman towards the husband does not send a message to open the fridge and give something to eat, yet it sends the message of going into a restaurant or outlets to eat something. So, here it is visible how the context, relations between speakers and the time can affect the meaning of the discourse.

Text as an object of discourse analysis can be spoken. For example, let’s take the phrase “**what’s up?**”. If someone is crying, it is in different meaning, when meeting friend, it is something different.

Here the need to analyze the difference between Conversation analysis, discourse analysis and Critical discourse analysis will arise:

To understand how language is organized around the world, discourse analysts study pieces of language, whether spoken or written, and look at the situations in which they are used. Widdowson says that context, which is the setting where language is used, can be related to the language itself or to

things outside of the language. One of them can be the context of the discourse. Context can also be viewed more broadly, where interpreting and constructing discourse extends beyond linguistic aspects to encompass the external environment. Analyzing the larger social situation in which language is used is considered highly significant. This is referred to as the 'context of situation' by J. R. Firth (Léon, 2005) or the 'referential context' (Nunan, 1993).

Conclusion

The discourse is viewed differently among scientists while their definition and the mentioned features overlap each other in some points. These features of the discourse will give it an opportunity to have bonds with the different spheres of human life such as medicine, politics, economics and etc. as a representation of human cognition and comprehension.

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