

Discourse analysis

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- Medical Discourse (1991-2009)
- UK Security Discourse (2011-pres)
- Intercultural Communication (1997-pres)

Discourse Theory

What is discourse?

Text

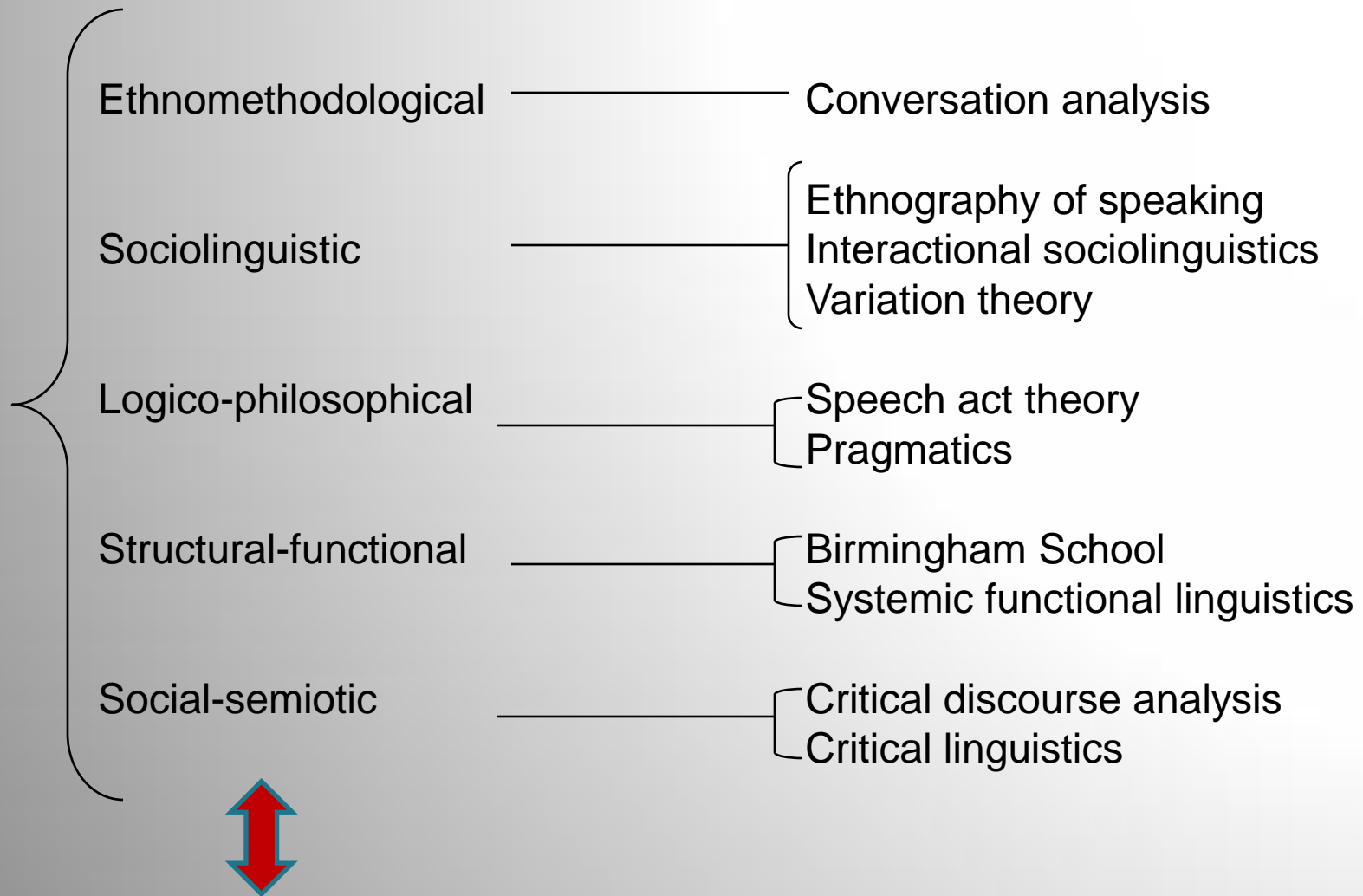
- *a stretch of language interpreted formally, without context.* (Cook 1989: 158)

Discourse

- *stretches of language perceived to be meaningful, unified, and purposive.*
(Cook 1989: 156)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

- analytical research particularly occupied with inquiries into how relations of 'social power abuse', 'dominance', and 'inequality' are realized in written and spoken discourse (after van Dijk, 1998).



Different approaches to DA

after Eggins (1997, p. 24)

Incommensurable discourses? (after Pennycook, 1994)

Descriptive discourse analysis

- Emphasises language as a system and then looks to discourse analysis to explain how various contextual factors affect language in use.

Critical discourse analysis

- Looks at how meanings are a product of social and cultural relationships and then turns to see how these may be realized in language.

DA: ontology

'Descriptive' discourse analysis

- Positivist/modernist: language is the realization of the intentions of the subject. Agency resides with the subject.

'Critical' discourse analysis

- Constructionist/poststructuralist: the subject occupies 'positions' created by language and text.
- Documents circulate within and between institutions, generating power relations which are constitutive of the subject, e.g. the mad person (Foucault, 1967), ill person (Foucault, 1973), criminal person (Foucault 1977), etc.
- Agency de-personalized and realized within institutions and through social relations.

Description

Levels of discourse

(after Fairclough, 1998, 2002)

- Vocabulary
- Grammar
- Text type/genre
- Intertextuality
- Discursive formation
- Culture

Vocabulary

- Semantic fields
- Collocation
- Emphasis
- Pronouns
- Nominalization

Vocabulary: semantic fields, collocation, emphasis

- **Semantic fields** refer to words which are in some mutual meaning relation with one another.
- What words are **collocated** with which participants in the text can be suggestive of how the text constructs an impression of those participants.
- **Italicisation, underlining** and **inverted commas** may suggest emphasis. One of the more significant features of inverted commas is when they are used to suggest something over and above the locutionary meaning of a word or phrase. In many texts this will suggest disassociation or disagreement with this surface meaning.
- **Capital letters** can be of interest in relation to what they are applied to in the text. Words and phrases which attract capital letters are often invested with socio-cultural importance.

Vocabulary: e.g. inverted commas

When she was invited to present TV show Mr Right, in which 15 women fought over an eligible bachelor, Ulrika Jonsson knew the brief. The “prize” – Lance Gerrard-Wright – was, for her, strictly off limits. This was a bit like putting a toddler in a sweet shop and telling them to lay off the Smarties. It was never going to happen. The show was a complete flop, largely because the “trophy” had eyes only for the hostess. And who could blame him?

(Sue Carroll, The Daily Mirror, October 26, 2005: 13)

Pronouns

Inclusive 'we'

***We** have faced serious challenges together – and now **we** face a choice. **We** can go forward with confidence and resolve – or **we** can turn back to the dangerous illusion that terrorists are not plotting and outlaw regimes are no threat to **us**.*

(George Bush, State of the Union address, January 22, 2004)

personalizing 'You'

Personalizing 'you'

***You**, and UBS. That's how **we** see the heart of **our** business. (The Economist, October 16-22, 2004: 15)*

Exclusive 'they'

*Few of **them** make much contribution to the welfare of the rest of the world. Indeed, apart from oil - which was discovered, is produced and is paid for by the West - what do **they** contribute? (Robert Kilroy-Silk, 'We owe Arabs nothing', The Sunday Express, 04.01.04)*

Grammar: verbs

- Voice: passive or active
- Nominalisation: verb form turned into a noun for rhetorical effect
- Tense: tense
- Process type: what type of action is being described by the verb
- Mood: imperative, interrogative, declarative

Passivisation

Agency not specific

- *A spokeswoman for Halliburton ... said seven of its employees and subcontractors had been wounded. (The Guardian, 22.12.04)*

Shift in prominence

- *Mr Gieve, who set up the Budd report, responded angrily to critics who had suggested that key faxes and e-mails had been destroyed, hidden or withheld by the Home Office. (The Guardian, 22.12.04)*

Agency: nominalisation

*Three people were killed and 15 injured in **fighting** on Friday with police during **protests** against prison sentences imposed on seven leaders of the Islamic Salvation Front ... The FIS leaders were convicted of fomenting **riots** last year that killed 55 people. ('Armed Muslim fundamentalists clash with Algerian forces.' Cited in Goatly, 2000: 78)*

Tony Blair: *The modern world is swept by **change*** (Fairclough, 2003: 13).

Inanimate nouns

Radon kills 1000 a year. (The Guardian, 22.12.2004)

Friends of David Blunkett's former lover deserted her today and predicted she could be forced to quit London. (The Evening Standard, 20.12.2004)

Tense

The importance of tense is that it encodes a **validity claim** in relation to a perceived reality.

Thus, if someone says: 'I did all my Christmas shopping yesterday', this utterance involves the **truth claims** that:

- the event happened in the past
- that the action which is referred to is completed, i.e. that there is no more Christmas shopping to be done.

In grammatical analysis this is sometimes referred to as '**aspect**' (cf. Leech and Svartik, 1994).

Tense: universalising truth claims

Scientific fact

*The earth **orbits** the sun* (Galileo)

*Humans **are descended** from apes* (Darwin)

Opinionated 'fact'

*We are told by some of the more hysterical critics of the war on terror that “it is destroying the Arab world”. So? Should we be worried about that? Shouldn't the destruction of the despotic, barbarous and corrupt Arab states and their replacement by democratic governments be a war aim? After all, **the Arab countries are not exactly shining examples of civilisation, are they? Few of them make much contribution to the welfare of the rest of the world. Indeed, apart from oil - which was discovered, is produced and is paid for by the West** - what do they contribute? Can you think of anything? Anything really useful? Anything really valuable? Something we really need, could not do without? No, nor can I. Indeed, **the Arab countries put together export less than Finland.** (Robert Kilroy-Silk, ‘We owe Arabs nothing’, *The Sunday Express*, 04.01.04)*

Ideational meanings

(Thompson, 2004)

The **field** mainly determines, and is reflected in, the **ideational** meanings that are expressed.

- Material, e.g. *they **built** a house*
- Behavioural, e.g. *Simon **ran** towards the door*
- Mental, e.g. *she **believes** my story*
- Verbal, e.g. *she **spoke** to the students*
- Relational, e.g. *she **is** teacher*
- Existential, e.g. ***there is** the teacher*

Process Types

(Christie, 1995)

In a transcription of classroom talk, process types realize aspects of students' behaviour.

Material

*well what we're **going to do** today*

*we're **going to make** from our recipe a shopping list*

Behavioural (mental)

*we're **going to have a look** at our recipe*

Mental

*we **don't have to think** of anything new,*

*the only thing **we have to think about** is*

Arguably, these process types realise distinctive aspects of pedagogic context.

Interpersonal meanings (Eggins, 1997)

The mood of the verb within a clause realizes the role structure: the cluster of socially meaningful participant relationships operating in a situation (Halliday, 1978: 143).

- Status relations
- Affective involvement
- Contact
- Orientation to affiliation

Interpersonal meanings

(Thompson, 2004)

- Social relations of the text mainly determine, and is reflected in, the interpersonal meanings that are expressed.
- Mood and Modality relate to the nature of the relationship of the participants, e.g.:
 - declarative
 - interrogative
 - Imperative

Arguably, the texture (nature and frequency) of the interpersonal meanings realise aspects of the context in which participants interact.

Interpersonal metafunction

(Christie, 1995)

well what we're going to do today

we're going to have a look at our recipe

we're going to make from our recipe a shopping list

the things that we have to buy for our spaghetti bolognaise

we don't have to think of anything new.

the only thing we have to think about is

Mood choice is declarative

- builds teacher monologue
- teacher tells the pupils what is to be done.

There is a strong sense of teacher assertion about what is to happen.

Thematisation

Thematisation allows for certain elements to be foregrounded and backgrounded in the text.

- Theme is the element in the clause which serves as the point of departure of the message.
- Theme is that with which the clause is concerned (Halliday, 1994, p. 37).
- If for example a person or a subject is predominantly foregrounded by being put in the first position in an active or passive clause, then this will give that person or subject a greater thematic role in the text as a whole.
- It will also be indicative of the overall importance which is being attached to the participant or subject in the text.

Theme: textual meanings

(Christie, 1995)

Micro-level of thematic organisation sets out the conjunctive relations between adjacent clauses in the text.

- Theme comes first in a clause
- Points directions in the construction and sequencing of the discourse.

Two types of conjunctive relations:

- Continuatives: ‘all right’, ‘now’, ‘okay’, etc.

all right, well what we’re going to do today

now the things that we have to buy for our spaghetti bolognaise

- Structurals: conjunctions such as and.

and we’re going to make from our recipe a shopping list...

Genre

(Kress, 1989: 17)

The conventionalised forms of the occasions lead to the conventionalised forms of texts, to specific GENRES.

- Genres have specific forms and meanings, deriving from and encoding the functions, purposes and meanings of the social occasions.
- Genres therefore provide a precise index and catalogue of the relevant social occasions of a community at a given time.

Analysing genre is one way of understanding the relationship between text and social context.

- Genre analysis based on the idea the communicative purpose of social context determines the source of the text.
- Understand the genres – understand the culture?

What is a genre?

- *Genres are the effects of the action of individual social agents acting both within the bounds of their history and the constraints of particular contexts, and with a knowledge of existing generic types (Kress, 1989, p. 49).*
- *Language is seen as embedded in (and constitutive of) social realities, since it is through recurrent use and typification of conventionalized forms that individuals develop relationships, establish communities, and get things done (Hyland, 2002, p. 114).*
- *Genres are abstract, socially recognized ways of using language. Genre analysis is based on two central assumptions: that the features of a similar group of texts depend on the social context of their creation and use, and that those features can be described in a way that relates a text to others like it and to the choices and constraints acting on text producers (Hyland, 2002, p. 114).*

Genre and Register

How is a genre signalled?

- The generic identity of a text is the way in which it is similar to other texts of its genre.
- Systemic linguistics suggests that this lies in configuration of register.

Register

We typically use certain recognisable configurations of linguistic resources in certain contexts. Register is 'variation according to use' (Halliday and Hasan, 1985). Three main dimensions of variation characterise any register:

- What is being talked about
- The people involved in the communication and the relationship between them
- How the language is functioning in the interaction, e.g. whether its is written or spoken.

Intertextuality

(after Kristeva, 1966)

- Intertextuality derived from the Bakhtinian notion that texts have histories, that they are an amalgam and an echo of ‘past’ texts (Bakhtin, 1986; Kristeva, 1986; Pêcheux, 1982).
- Features of the text are seen as ‘traces of the process of production ... and as cues in the process of interpretation’ (Fairclough, 1992: 198).
- Taking an intertextual view of the text allows for a further dimension of textual analysis to be opened up beyond the purely linguistic:
 - *‘... while the linguistic analysis of texts shows how [texts] are positioned in the language or languages they draw upon, the intertextual analysis of texts shows how they are positioned in relation to what I shall call ‘orders of discourse’* (quoted in Chouliaraki, 1998: 10);
 - *‘that is, total configurations of discursive practices in particular institutions, or indeed in a whole society’* (Fairclough, 1992: 9).

The archaeological method: discursive formation (Foucault, 1972)

Discursive formations are combinations of statements

Discursive formations constitute:

- concepts within particular forms of knowledge & social practices
- subjects
- objects
- strategies

A discursive formation will be individualized if one can define the system of formation of the different strategies that are displayed in it; in other words, if one can show how they all derive....from the same set of relations (Foucault, 1972, p. 68).

Finale: genre and culture

(Eggins, 2004)

There are as many different genres as there are recognizable social activity types in our culture, e.g.:

- literary genres: short stories, autobiographies, ballads, sonnets, fables, tragedies
- popular fiction genres: romantic novels, whodunits, sitcoms
- popular non-fiction genres: instructional manuals, news stories, profiles, reviews, recipes, how-to features
- educational genres: lectures, tutorials, reports essays, seminars, examinations, text-book writing

Levels of discourse

(after Fairclough, 1998, 2002)

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- Discursive formation
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Workshop

DA mega-task

Discourse analysis workshop: overview

- How does the **vocabulary** in these two texts operate to create meanings and subjects?
- How does the **grammar** in these two texts operate to create meanings and subjects?
- How does the **genre** of these two texts operate to create meanings and subjects?
- How do these two texts operate as part of a '**discursive formation**' to create meanings and subjects?

Group 1A & 1B: Vocabulary/lexis

What experiential values do words have?

- Is there *rewording* or *overwording*?
- Are there words which are ideologically contested;
- What ideologically significant meaning relations (*synonymy*, *hyponymy*, *antonymy*) are there between words?.

What relational values do words have?

- Are there any *euphemistic* impressions?
- Are there markedly formal or informal words?

What expressive values do words have?

Are any metaphors are used?

- To what effect?

Group 2A & 2B: Grammar: experiential meanings

What experiential values do grammatical features have?

- What types of *process* and *participant* predominate?
- Is agency clear or unclear?
- What processes are being used and are they what they seem?
- Are *nominalisations* used? And why?
- Are sentences active or passive?
- Are sentences positive or negative?

Group 3A & 3B: Grammar: interpersonal meanings

What relational values do grammatical features have?

- What *mode* (*declarative, grammatical question, imperative*) is used?
- Are there important features of *relational modality*, i.e. the authority of one participant in relation to another ?

What expressive values do grammatical features have?

- Are there important features of *expressive modality*, i.e. the relationship of the author to the truth value of the statement?

Group 4A & 4B: Grammar: textual meanings

How are (simple) sentences linked together?

- What logical connectors are used?
- Are complex sentences characterised by *coordination* or *subordination*?
- What means are used for referring outside and inside the text?

What is the thematic organisation within sentences?

- How does the information flow from given to new

Group 5A & 5B: Genre

How do these two texts operate as genres?

- To what extent are these texts similar to or different from other texts?
- How do these two texts achieve their distinctive characteristics as particular types of text?
- What is the communicative purpose of these texts?
- To what extent do these texts enable the maintenance of a particular 'discourse community'?

Group 6A & 6B: Intertextuality and discursive formation

How do these two texts operate as part of a 'discursive formation' to create meanings and subjects?

- What is the relationship between these two texts?
- What is the relationship between these two texts and other related texts?
- How are particular forms of knowledge constituted within this particular constellation of texts?
- How are particular subject positions constituted and maintained within this particular constellation of texts?

DA Applied

(Optional follow-up task)

DA Applied

1. In your groups identify **one** research project

- This may be one of your group's PhD projects (or one element of it)
- It may be an imaginary research project

2. In brief, suggest a piece of the research that could use DA as a method.

Write down:

- An over arching research question
- A sample/corpus of texts
- Identify the context
- Identify the genre(s) of text
- Numbers

3. Suggest how you would approach the analysis of the text.

Reading

Reading

- Benwell, B.M. & Stokoe, E. (2008). *Discourse and Identity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press (Chapter 2 'Conversational identities' or Chapter 3 'Institutional Identities').
- Wetherell, M., S. Taylor and S. Yates (eds.). (2001). *Discourse as data: a guide for analysis*. London : Sage. (Chapter 1 'Locating and conducting discourse analytic research').