

# Discourse Analysis

## Lecture 3

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# 1. Discourse analysis: basic assumptions

*Discourse studies = discourse analysis*

(Teun van Dijk).

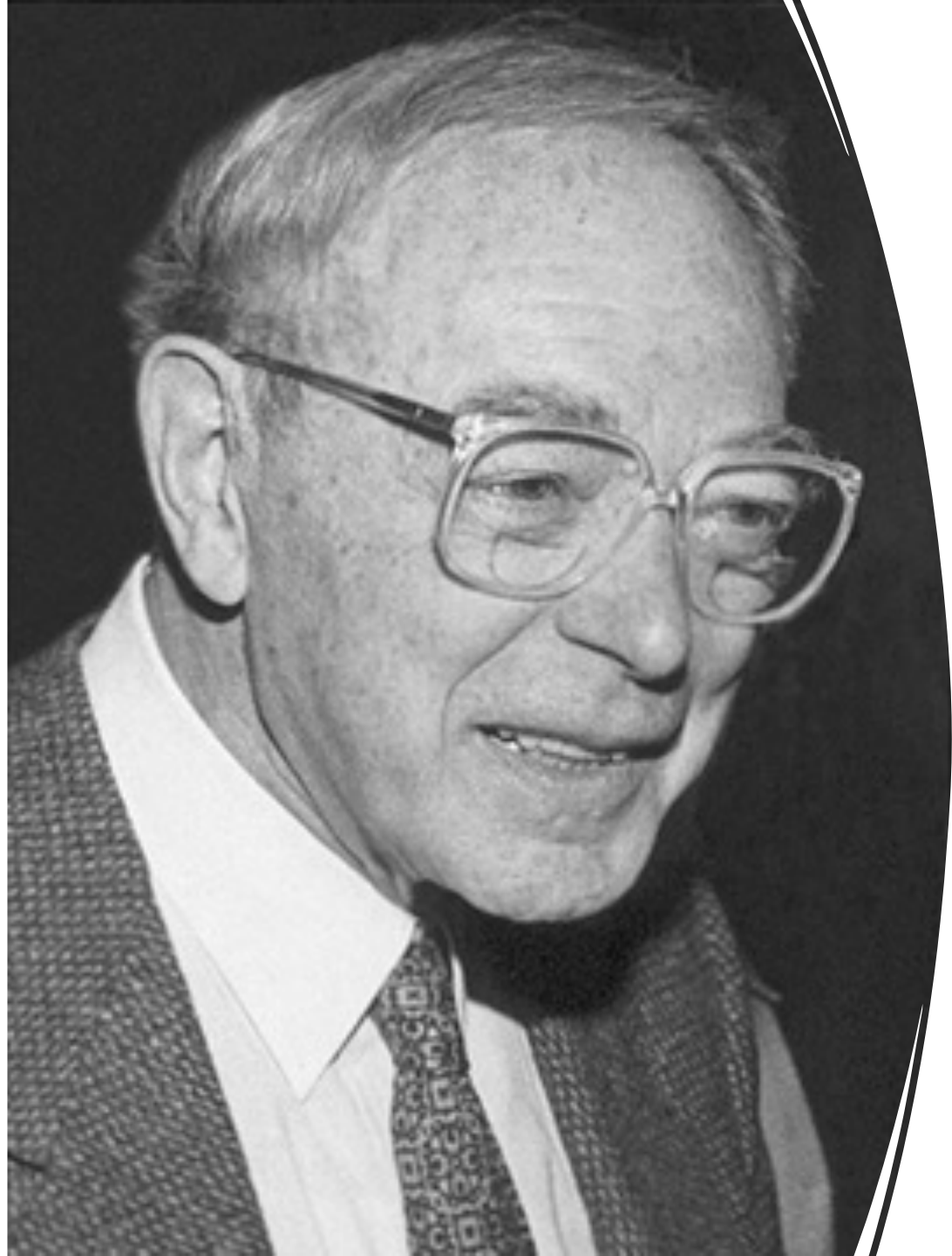


**Discourse** analysis draws on linguistics, sociology, philosophy and psychology.

Discourse analysis is the study of language, a sub-field of linguistics. It is a diverse and rapidly developing field.

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- The term *discourse analysis* was first employed by **Zellig Harris** in his 1952 article entitled 'Discourse Analysis'.

⇒ discourse analysis is a method for the analysis of connected speech or writing



1 examines how **stretches of language**, considered in their full textual, social, and psychological context, **become meaningful** and unified for their users

2

branch of linguistics that focuses on **language use above and beyond the sentence**, how language is used in context

3

study the ways **sentences go together to make texts and interactions** and how those texts and interactions **fit into our social world**

Different interpretations of Discourse analysis





**Discourse analysis** is not just the study of language, but *a way of looking at language that focuses on how people use it in real life* to do things, and to show that they are certain kinds of people or belong to certain groups.

1) *Language is ambiguous*

Communication involves interpreting what other people mean.

People don't always say what they mean, and people don't always mean what they say.

2) Language is always 'in the world'

What language means is always a matter of where and when it is used and what it is used to do.

Language that is in some way **situated**.

Language is always **situated** in four ways:

- ❑ within the **material world**
- ❑ within **relationships**
- ❑ in **history**
- ❑ in **relation to other language**

3) The use of language is inseparable from social identity

through their discourse, people demonstrate who they are and what their relationship is to other people

*Mother, Wife, Friend,  
Professor*

4) Language is never used all by itself

It is combined with other things

tone of voice, facial expressions,  
gestures

⇒ when people **speak**

fonts, layout, graphics

⇒ in **written texts**



## 2. The emergence of discourse analysis

**Discourse analysis evolved from**

grammars + cultural knowledge of rules  
how to talk

**Ethnography**

lacked accounts of cognitive processes,  
social interaction

**Structuralism and semiotics**

focus on how texts are coherent + how  
information is distributed

**Discourse grammar**

focused on everyday interaction and  
conversation

**Ethnomethodology**

mental processes of text comprehension

**Cognitive psychology**

interactional nature of understanding,  
explanation, opinions

**Social psychology and discursive  
psychology**

discourse analysis of mass media  
messages and business communication

**Communication studies**

necessity to study actual language use

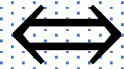
**Sociolinguistics and Pragmatics**



The background features several overlapping organic shapes in shades of teal, olive green, and brown. Some shapes are filled with patterns of small white or brown dots, while others are solid or have a light stippled texture. The overall style is modern and artistic.

# 3. Types of discourse studies

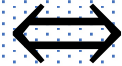
# 1. Text vs talk



- *Text analysis* deals with abstract structures of written discourse as a fixed object.
- *The study of talk* focuses on more dynamic aspects of spontaneous interaction.

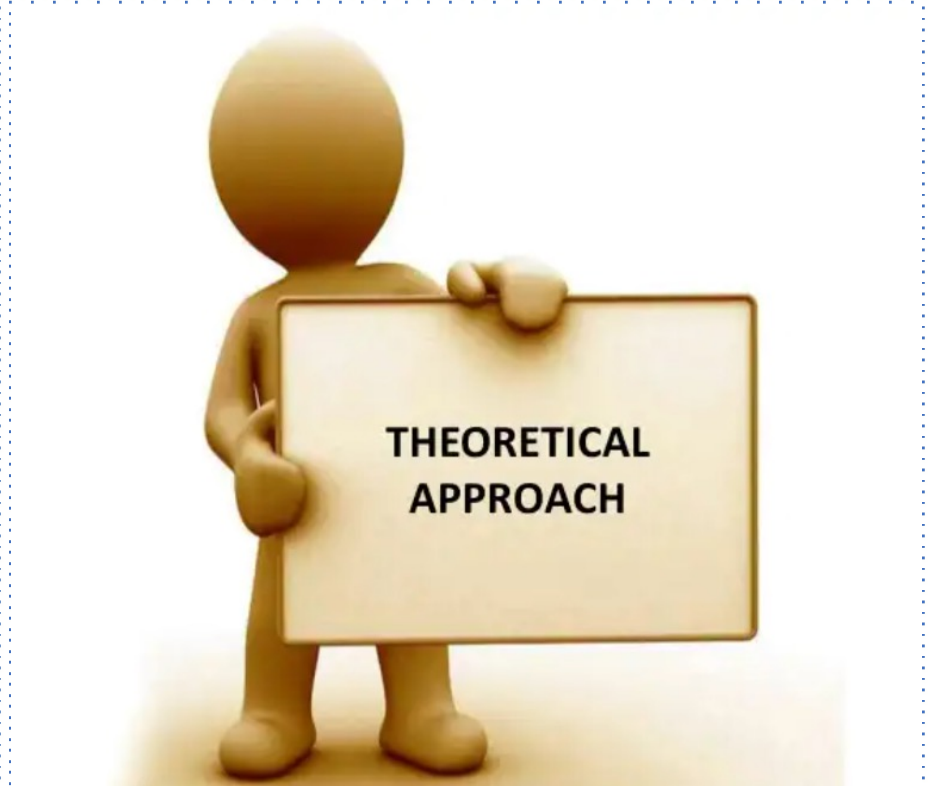
*They are both after **order, rules, regularities** in the analysis of structures and strategies of text and talk*

## 2. More abstract vs more concrete studies

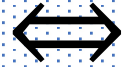


- *Formal studies*
- In grammar and artificial intelligence
- *More concrete studies*
- Actual texts and talk in specific contexts

### 3. Theoretical and descriptive approach vs applied and critical approach

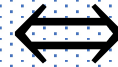


## 4. More empirical research vs more philosophical research



- *Working with concrete discourse data, corpora*
- *More speculative, or impressionistic ways to write about discourse*

# 5. Types of genres



- *focus on conversation*
- *study news, advertising, political discourse*



## 4. Principles of Discourse Analysis

Across various directions of research, there are 3 main approaches:

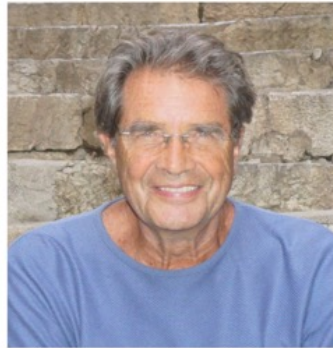
- (a) those which focus on *discourse 'itself'* (on structures of text or talk);
- (b) those which study *discourse and communication as cognition*;
- (c) those which focus on *social structure and culture*.







### Website of Teun A. van Dijk



Welcome to this website !

This site is called "Discourse in Society" because my work in critical discourse studies may best be summarized with that motto. The header (a picture of a demonstration) represents one of the important functions of discourse in society, that of dissent, which is also one of the aims of critical discourse studies.

Besides information about my CV, publications, research projects, journals I edit, as well as teaching, this site provides information about various resources for research in critical discourse studies (CDS). Many of my articles can be downloaded from this site, and more (also books) will be added later.

**NB. November 2020: Updated the list of Journals in Resources-**

Basic principles of 'doing'  
discourse analysis

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# basic principles of discourse analysis

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- 1. ***Naturally occurring text and talk***
- 'Real data' instead of 'constructed examples'. Close to their actual appearance or in their original contexts.
- 2. ***Contexts***
- **Context structures** need to be analyzed **in detail**: settings, participants, their social roles, goals, relevant social knowledge, norms, values.
- 3. ***Discourse as Talk***
- **Talk** is considered as a **primordial form of discourse**. The studies, however, should not lead to a neglect of the written texts in society.

# basic principles of discourse analysis

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## 4. *Discourse as social practice of members*

Users are engaged in discourse as members of various groups, institutions or cultures.

## 5. *Sequentiality*

Discourse is linear and sequential. Structural units (sentences, propositions, acts) should be interpreted relative to preceding ones.

## 6. *Constructivity*

Discourses are constructive : their constitutive units may be understood or analyzed as elements of larger ones, thus also creating hierarchical structures. This applies to forms as well as to meaning and interaction.

# basic principles of discourse analysis

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## **7. *Levels and dimensions***

decompose discourse at various layers and to mutually relate such levels (sounds, forms, meanings). Language users strategically **manage several levels of discourse** at the same time.

## **8. *Meaning and function***

Questions: “What does this mean here?”; “Why is this being said here?”

## **9. *Rules***

Discourse is **rule-governed**. It is also interesting how rules may be violated, ignored or changed, and what the discursive functions are of apparent violations.

# basic principles of discourse analysis

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## 10. *Strategies*

Language users know and **apply mental and interactional strategies** in the understanding and accomplishment of discourse and the realization of their communicative goals.

## 11. *Social cognition*

**Mental processes** and representations are important in the **production and understanding of text and talk**. **Cognition** is the **interface** between **discourse** and **society**.

[Teun A. van Dijk (ed.), Discourse as structure and process. Discourse studies: A multidisciplinary introduction. London & Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1997: 29–31].

## *Two paths of discourse analysis research*

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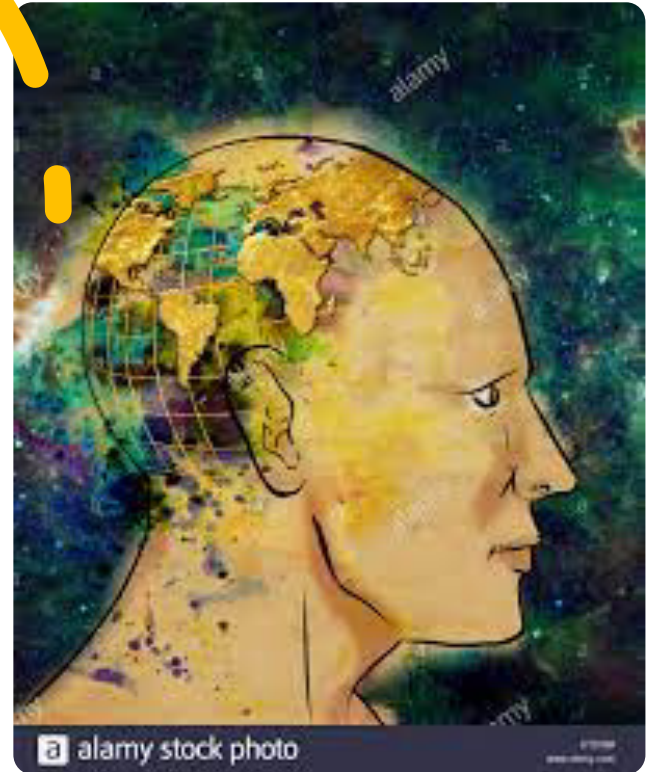
**Descriptive discourse analysis** describes language to understand **the meanings communicated through it**. Explains how various **contextual factors affect language in use**.

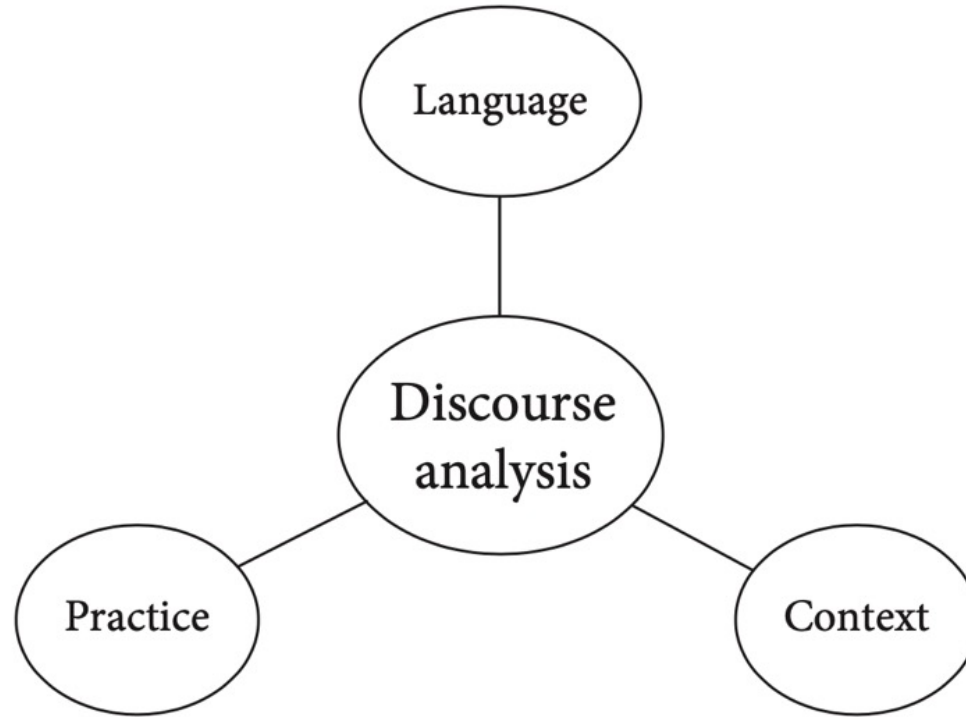
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**Critical discourse analysis (CDA)** is discourse analytical research that studies the way **social-power abuse and inequality are enacted, reproduced, legitimated, and resisted by text and talk** in the social and political context (van Dijk).

## 5. Descriptive discourse analysis

- Discourse does **not only represent what people do, think and are in the social world.**
- Representing the world can also mean **constituting it** in a certain way.





**Figure 2.** The triangle of discourse analysis: language, practice, context

Discourse is a complex object that can be studied from various angles

**Language** designates the semiotic material.

- written and oral texts
- audio-visual materials

**Practice** refers to specific ways of appropriating and processing language and extends to everything that may take place between the participants in interaction.

**Context** refers to the setting, situation or knowledge available to the discourse participants.



*Discourse studies* are about  
talk and text in context  
(Teun Van Dijk ).

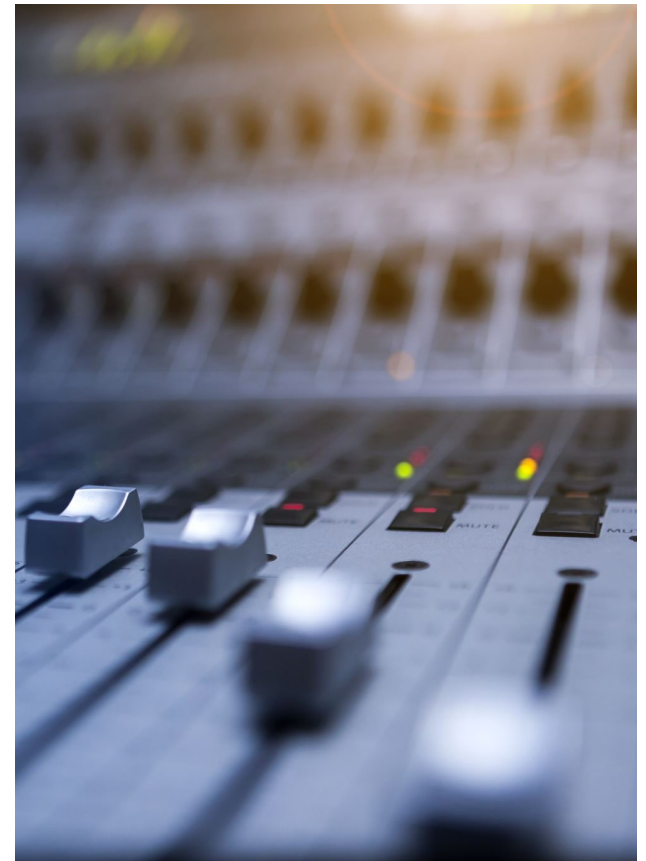


Discourse analysis may begin  
with the analysis of a separate  
level of observable  
manifestations or *expressions*.

# 1. Level of sound, sight, body

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- *sounds*: how pronunciation, intonation, volume contribute to the typical sound structure of discourse.
- *visual marks*: analysis of the *visual* dimension (ads, television programs) – multimodal analysis.
- *non-verbal activity*: gestures, face-work, bodily position, proximity, applause, laugh.





# S e n t e n c e

## 2. Level of order and form

- *abstract form of sentences*: order of words, phrases or clauses that are studied in syntax.
- The *order of words* may have various *functions* in relation to other sentences in discourse.
- In English the 1<sup>st</sup> noun phrase (NP) of a sentence tends to express information that is known to the recipient (*theme*), the latter parts of the sentence express the new information (*rheme*).

### 3. *Level of meaning*

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- Abstract meanings of discourse are called *semantic representations*.
- There is a special *term* for the meaning of a whole clause or sentence – a *proposition*.

***Discourse syntax*** focuses on the formal  
structure of sentences,  
***discourse semantics*** rather studies the  
structure of propositions and the  
relation between propositions in a  
discourse.

The notion of *coherence* is crucial:

How do the meanings of propositions in a discourse  
'hang together'?

Coherence can be studied

on the *micro level*

⇒ for sentences that immediately follow each other  
on the *macro level*

⇒ the meaning of discourse as a whole

**A semantic analysis of discourse** may spell out *how meaning is emphasized* or being placed *in or out of focus*.

Meaning may function as the **topic of a sentence**  
*what/who* the sentence 'is about'

*John is late. He is always late.*

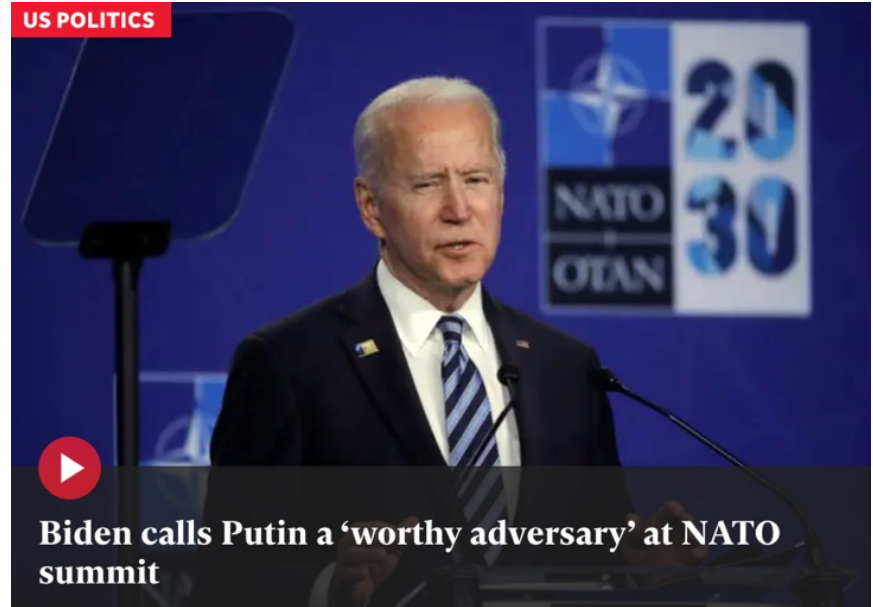
The concept *John* (*he*) is the topic of the two sentences.

With the description of the **macro level** of discourse meaning we encounter such notions as **topics** or **themes**.



## US POLITICS

# 'No threats': What we learnt from Biden and Putin's Geneva summit



Topics are crucial for text and talk. They define the overall 'unity' of discourse.

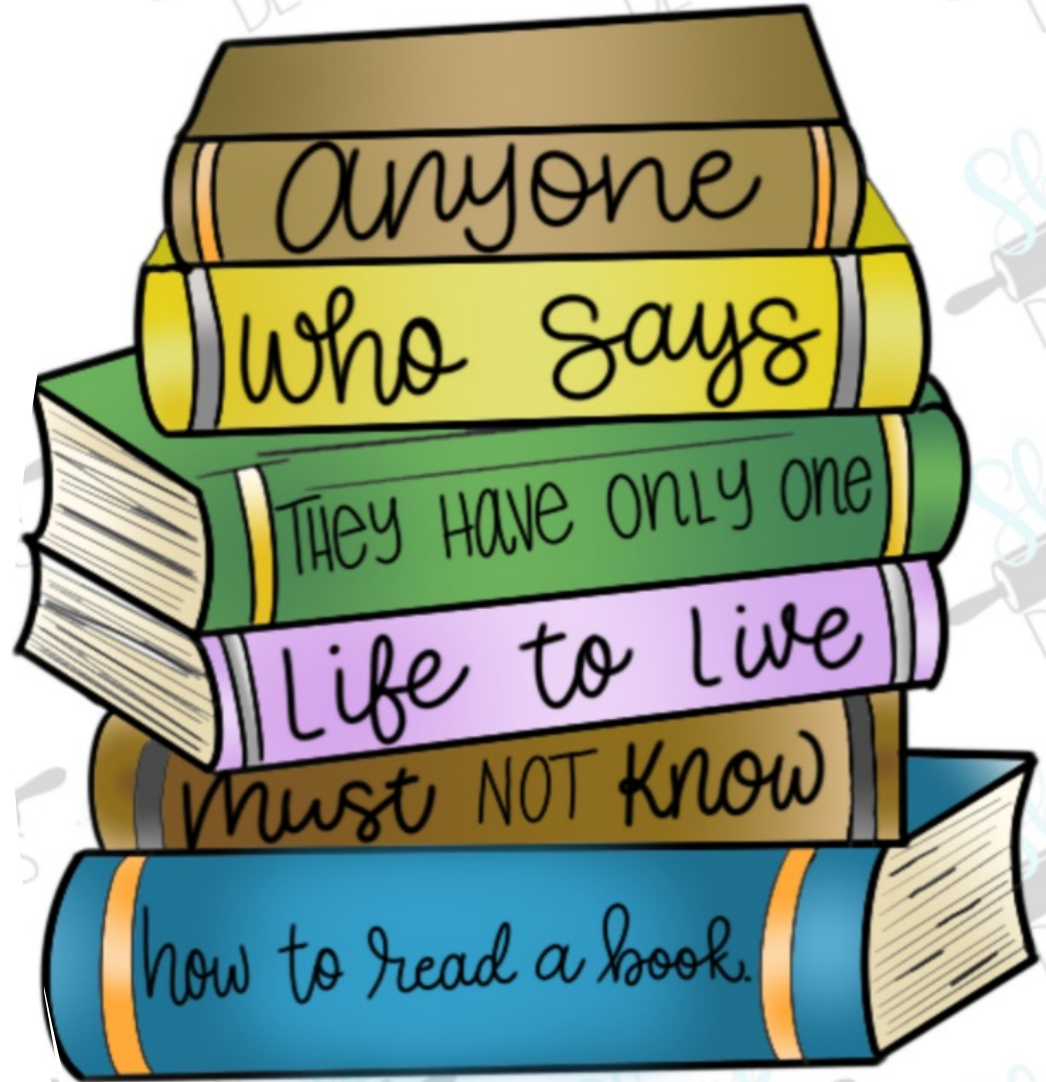
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## 4. *Level of style*

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- **Style** is a context-bound variation of the expression level of discourse.



Biden and Putin had one of the most *critical* summits of recent times in Geneva 2021, June, 16.

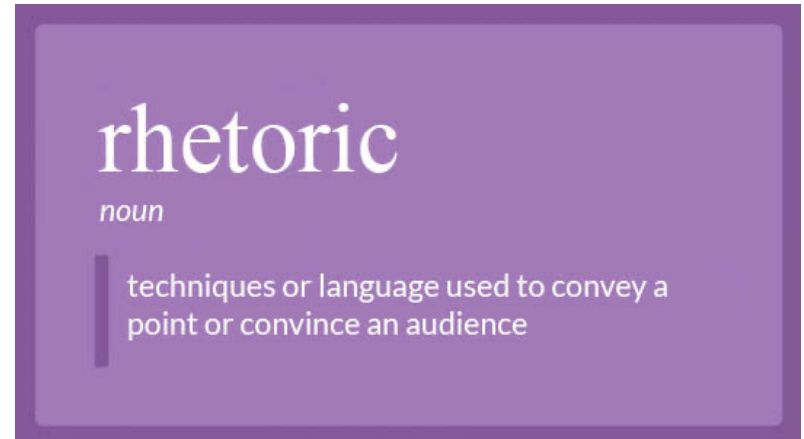
BIDEN-PUTIN SUMMIT: US AND RUSSIAN LEADERS MEET FOR *TENSE* GENEVA TALKS (BBC)

**BIDEN AND PUTIN HOLD *HIGH-STAKES* GENEVA SUMMIT (CNN)**

BIDEN *DREW THE LINE ON* PUTIN. NOW IT'S THE RUSSIAN'S MOVE. (NBC)

# 5. Level of rhetoric

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- Van Dijk calls **rhetoric** the ‘forerunner’ of discourse studies.
- Rhetorical means make discourse **more memorable** and more **persuasive**
- Rhetorical analysis will focus on such ‘**persuasive**’ devices - special structures at all discourse levels that attract attention.

*unexpected repetition, inverse order, incomplete structures, changes of meaning*

## 6. Level of schemata

*schematic structures  
or superstructures*

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discourses have an **overall meaning (topic)**, they also have an abstract **overall form** in which these global meanings will fit.

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the form of texts can be decomposed into a number of fixed, ***conventional components*** or *categories*.

# SUPERSTRUCTURE

Topics are arranged by arranging sentences or news elements in the order:

- Headlines → leads  
→ core of the news →  
conclusion

## Biden and Putin praise Geneva summit talks but discord remains


1 day ago



**headlines** are at the top and are usually printed thicker in certain sizes and types of letters

## Conclusion


⇒ they wrap up the story and tell the reader that they've reached the end



CNN summarized the 2021 Geneva summit

## What we covered here

- US President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin held their first face-to-face meetings today at a **historic summit in Geneva.**
- Biden said the tone of the talks were "positive," and he told Putin that certain US "critical infrastructure" should be off-limits for cyberattacks.
- Putin described the summit as "constructive," saying both countries will begin consultations on cybersecurity and US and Russian ambassadors will return to their diplomatic posts.



## 6. Critical discourse analysis

- Discourse researchers share a critical interest in **power** and **inequality**, particularly as represented by ***Critical Discourse Analysis*** (CDA).
- The terms ***Critical Linguistics*** and ***CDA*** are often used interchangeably.

- **Critical discourse analysis** is a type of discourse analytical research that studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context.



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Critical research on discourse has the following properties:

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focuses on ***social problems*** and ***political issues***

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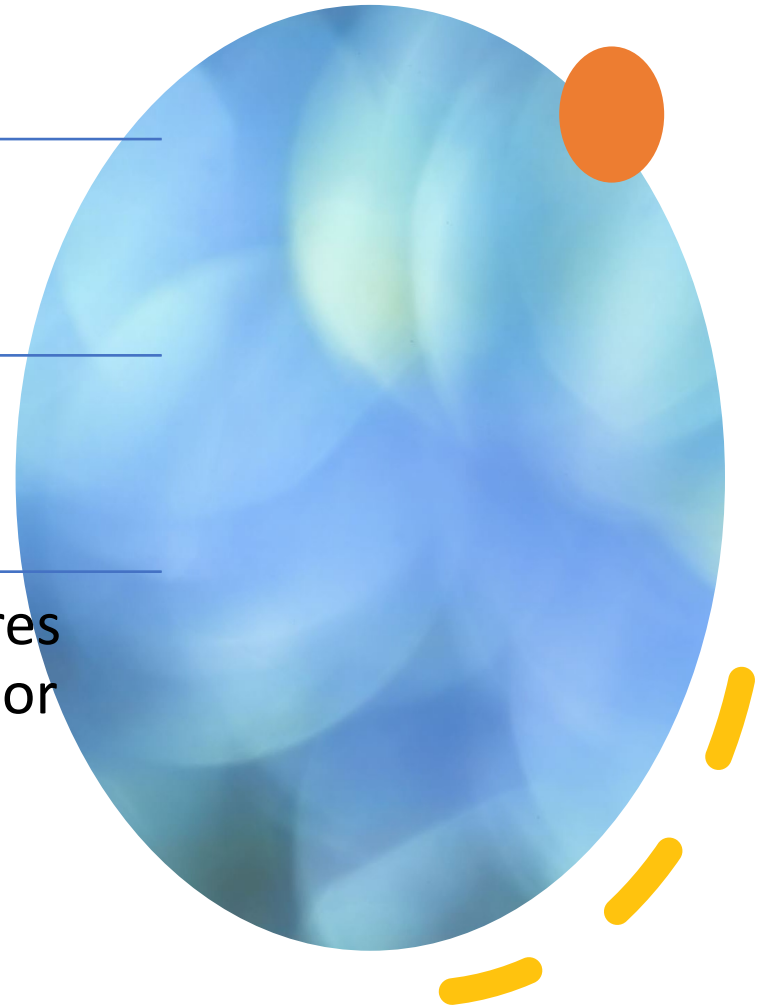
critical analysis of social problems is ***multidisciplinary***

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tries to ***explain*** discourse structures in terms of ***social interaction***

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focuses on the ways discourse structures enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce, or challenge relations of ***power abuse (dominance)*** in society.





Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak summarized the main tenets of CDA

# *Critical discourse analysis*

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1 CDA addresses social problems.

2 Power relations are discursive.

3 Discourse constitutes society and culture.

4 Discourse does ideological work.

5 Discourse is historical.

6 The link between text and society is mediated.

7 Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory.

8 Discourse is a form of social action.

The typical vocabulary  
in CDA

***POWER***

***DOMINANCE***

***HEGEMONY***

***IDEOLOGY***

***CLASS***

***GENDER***

***RACE***

***DISCRIMINATION***

***INTERESTS***

***REPRODUCTION***

***INSTITUTIONS***

***SOCIAL STRUCTURE***

***SOCIAL ORDER***

three concepts figure  
indispensably in all  
CDA:

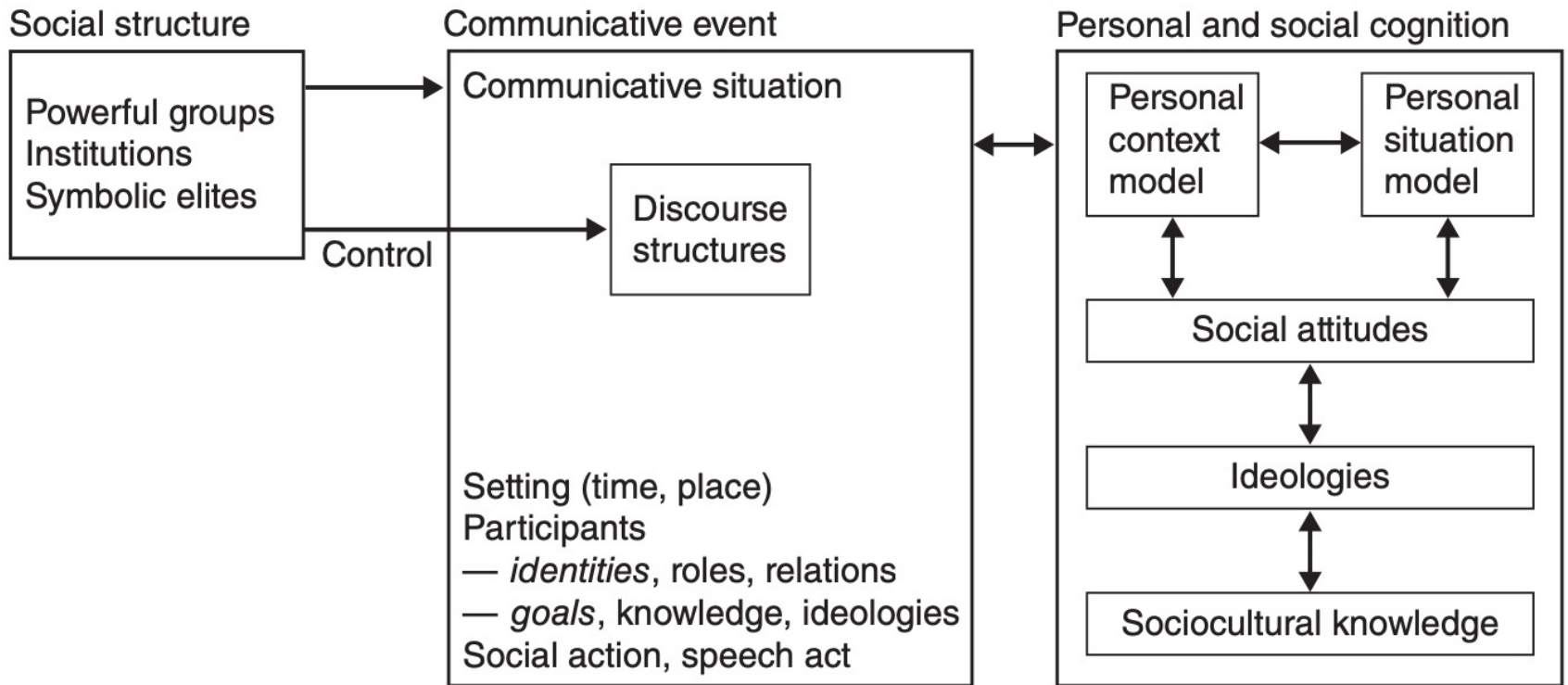
- the concept of *power*
- the concept of *history*
- the concept of *ideology*



Van Dijk asks three questions for a CDA research:

- (1) How do powerful groups ***control the text and context*** of public discourse?
- (2) How does such ***power discourse control the minds and actions*** of less powerful groups, and what are the, such as ***social consequences of such control social inequality?***
- (3) What are ***the properties of the discourse*** of powerful groups, institutions, and organizations and ***how are such properties forms of power abuse?***





**Figure 22.1** Schema of the discursive reproduction of power.

# Main areas of research in Critical Discourse Analysis

- *Gender inequality*
- special attention to male access and domination in interaction.
- *Ethnocentrism, antisemitism, nationalism, and racism*
- show how discourse expresses and reproduces underlying prejudices about Others in the social and political context.



- **Kushneruk S. (2021). Images of Slavs in Discourse-World of Brexit**

[https://discourseworld.ru/electronic-library/stati na angliyskom yazyke/kushneruk s\\_2021 images of slavs in discourse world of brexit/](https://discourseworld.ru/electronic-library/stati_na_angliyskom_yazyke/kushneruk_s_2021_images_of_slavs_in_discourse_world_of_brexit/)

- Examples from the news on the web corpus are used to prove that images of the Slavs are discursively constrained and biased.

# Main areas of research in Critical Discourse Analysis

- *Political discourse*
- the critical study of power abuse
- *Professional and institutional power*
- power and dominance are associated with specific social domains (politics, media, law, education, science, etc.)

# Main areas of research in Critical Discourse Analysis

- *Media discourse*
- Critical analysis of media discourse has a central place in CDA.
- a systematic analysis of the structures of media discourse, such as **lexicon, syntax, topics, metaphor, coherence, actor description, social identities, genres, modality, presupposition, rhetorical figures, interaction, news schemas, and multimodal analysis of images.**

# Research on the discourse of *immigration* (by van Dijk)

- *Headlines and leads* of news reports express semantic *macrostructures* (main topics) as defined by the journalists.

## **Number of migrants at US border hits new record high**

US border agents encounter more than 180,000 immigrants, the largest monthly total since 2000.

# Research on the discourse of *immigration* (by van Dijk)

## **Pau attack: Immigration official stabbed to death in France**

The alleged attacker, a Sudanese migrant, recently had an asylum request rejected.

- *Implications and presuppositions*

- aim to **obliquely assert “facts”** that may not be true
- when politicians and the media refer to the *violence* of demonstrators or the *criminality* of minorities.



- **Metaphors** are powerful means to make abstract mental models more concrete.
- The notion of **immigration** is made more concrete and more threatening by using metaphors such as **waves** of immigrants.

## **Texas governor promises to build border wall amid migrant surge**

Republican Greg Abbott says Texas "will not sit idly by as this crisis grows" at the Mexico border.

The number of undocumented migrants reaching the US-Mexico border has hit the highest level in more than 20 years in the latest sign of the humanitarian crisis facing the Biden administration.

- **The lexical expression** of mental models in the discourse of powerful speakers may influence not only knowledge but also opinions in the mental models of recipients.





## 7. Discourse and Ideology

The focus is on four things:

- 1) the ways authors create '**versions of reality**' based on their choice of words and how they combine words
- 2) the ways authors **construct certain kinds of relationships** between themselves and their readers
- 3) the ways authors **appropriate the words of other people**
- 4) the ways authors **draw upon** and **reinforce the larger systems of belief** and knowledge

Words are never neutral ⇨ texts promote a particular *ideology*

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«+»

«-»

**helps to create a shared worldview, sense of purpose among people in a group**

limits the way people look at reality,  
tends to marginalize or exclude people, things and ideas that do not fit into these models

Ideology has positive and negative effects

Michael  
Halliday

pointed out that  
whenever we use  
language people  
are always doing  
**three things**

⇒ **representing  
the world**  
(*ideational*  
function)

⇒ creating,  
ratifying or  
**negotiating**  
**relationships** with  
the people  
(*interpersonal*  
function)

⇒ **joining sentences** and **ideas**  
**together** in particular ways to form  
cohesive and coherent texts (*textual*  
function)

# *Participants and Processes*



According to Halliday, people represent the world through language by choosing words that represent




people, things : *participants*



what these participants are *doing* :  
*processes*

# Texts 'construct' reality



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## PARTICIPANTS IN A CHURCH WEDDING CEREMONY

the convener of the ceremony	a priest, a minister
after the couple have taken their vows	'man and wife'

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The utterance portrays the groom and the bride as two different kinds of beings, and as fundamentally *unequal*.

This choice of words gives to the 'man' an independent identity, but makes the woman's identity contingent on her relationship to the man.

## 2. Processes

- The words we use for processes can also create different impressions of what is going on.
- After pronouncing the couple '*man and wife*' the convener might turn to the man and say, '*you may now kiss the bride.*'
- This sentence is usually not an accurate description of what happens next: they kiss each other.
- Rather, it is an ideological interpretation of what happens.

# Relationships

## *interpersonal function of language*

- We construct relationships through words we choose to express things like **certainty** and **obligation**.
- The traditional priest typically says *'you may now kiss the bride,'* rather than *'kiss the bride!'*
- We construct relationships through the style of speaking or writing.
  - the convener says, *'you many now kiss the bride,'* rather than something like *'why don't you give her a kiss!'*





- *Intertextuality*

- the relationship texts create with other texts

- When we appropriate the ideas of others in our texts, we almost always end up communicating **how we think about them in the way we represent them.**

Asked by journalists how Mr Biden would approach Mr Putin, **a former KGB operative** whom the president famously **dubbed a “killer”** in an interview earlier this year, the president declined to “negotiate” with Russia in front of the world’s press ahead of the meeting while promising that he would confront Mr Putin on issues over which the two nations disagree.

CNN: 18/03/2021

Russia reacts angrily after **Biden calls Putin a 'killer'**

The Kremlin has reacted angrily to US President Joe Biden's remarks that Russian leader Vladimir Putin is **"a killer,"** calling the comment unprecedented and describing the relationship between the two countries as "very bad."

## 8. Multimodal discourse analysis

- ***Multimodal discourse analysis*** focuses on different 'modes' of communication:
- on 'texts' like magazines, comic books, web pages, films and works of art.
- on social interaction
- ***sequentiality*** – how elements are ordered in relation to one another
- ***simultaneity*** – how elements that occur at the same time can affect one another





## Reading Images

The Grammar of Visual Design

Gunther Kies and Theo van Laeuwen



Second Edition



- Modes **can never really be analyzed in isolation** from other modes.
- Not only do modes always interact with other modes in texts and interaction, but authors often shift from foregrounding one mode or set of modes, to foregrounding other modes, and in doing so, alter the ‘meaning potential’ of the communicative environment.