What is discourse analysis?

The relationship between linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour

connected discourse occurs within a particular situation – whether of a person speaking, or of a conversation, or of someone sitting down occasionally over the period of months to write a particular kind of book in a particular literary or scientific tradition (Harris, 1952: 3).

what happens when people draw on the knowledge they have about language ... to do things in the world (Johnstone, 2002: 3).

The analysis of language in use

The relationship between language and the contexts in which it is used

The description and analysis of both spoken and written interactions

Discourse and pragmatics

The discourse structure of texts (Mitchell, 1957)

Emails from Japan

Greetings from a hot and sizzling Tokyo!
It's such a beautiful day today here in Kyoto.

Conversation analysis

Cultural ways of speaking and writing

The ethnography of communication (Hymes, 1964)

Communicative competence (Hymes, 1972)

Different views of discourse analysis

   textually oriented discourse analysis

   socially oriented discourse analysis
Discourse as the social construction of reality

The BBC Panorama interview with Princess Diana

As Diana and others speak, on this and many other occasions, a formulation of the world comes into being. The world as described comes into existence at that moment. In an important sense, the social reality constructed in the Panorama interview and in other places of Diana’s happy marriage bucking under media pressure did not exist before its emergence as discourse (Wetherell, 2001: 16).

Words acquire meaning in discourse

Words in isolation are not the issue. It is in discourse – the use of language in specific contexts – that words acquire meaning. Whenever people argue about words, they are also arguing about the assumptions and values that have clustered around those words in the course of their history of being used. We cannot understand the significance of any word unless we attend closely to its relationship to other words and to the discourse (indeed, the competing discourses) in which words are always embedded. And we must bear in mind that discourse shifts and changes constantly, which is why arguments about words and their meanings are never settled once and for all (Cameron and Kulick, 2003: 29).

Discourse and performance

A discourse is a “dance” that exists in the abstract as a coordinated pattern of words, deeds, values, beliefs, symbols, tools, objects, times, and places in the here and now as a performance that is recognisable as just such a coordination. Like a dance, the performance here and now is never exactly the same. It all comes down, often, to what the “masters of the dance” will allow to be recognised or will be forced to recognize as a possible instantiation of the dance (Gee, 2005: 19).

Summary

Discourses are socially constructed, rather than ‘natural’

People ‘are who they are because of (among other things) the way they talk’ not ‘because of who they (already) are’ (Cameron, 1999: 144).

Social identities are not pre-given, but are formed in the use of language and the various other ways we display who we are, what we think, value and feel etc.
Approaches to the analysis of discourse

Discourse analysis:

- considers the relationship between language and the social and cultural contexts in which it is used
- considers what people mean by what they say
- looks at the way language presents different views of the world and different understandings
- examines how discourse is shaped by relationships between participants
- considers the effects discourse has upon social identities and relations.
- takes us into the social and cultural settings of language use to help us understand particular language choices
- moves beyond description to explanation and helps us understand the 'rules of the game' that language users draw on in their everyday interactions

Some sample studies

Speech act theory

- A sample study


A: omiyage suimasen ne hono-fromi wa[za waza]  
(I’m sorry you went to the trouble, but thank you very much for the present.)
B: ie ie tondemo[nai desu  
(No, not at all.)
A: mooshiwakenai, itsumo kiotsukatte moratte, /??/?kakete [doomo]  
(I’m sorry for the trouble and thank you for the kind thought.)
B: [hongo,] honno okuchig yosshi=  
(It's a just. . ., nothing’s very good.)s
A: =IYA IYA TONDEMONAI desu yo  
(No, not at all.)
Pragmatics and discourse

- A sample study


Bashir: Looking back now, do you feel at all responsible for the difficulties in your marriage?

Diana: Mmm. I take full responsibility, I take some responsibility that our marriage went the way it did. I’ll take half of it, but I won’t take any more than that, because it takes two to get in this situation.

Politeness and face

- A sample study


You are an overweight man parking your car need a crosswalk. A woman with a child is afraid you’ll run over her. You get into an argument and she yells ‘OH SHUT UP, you fat pig!’

You would say ..............................................
You would feel like saying ..............................

Cross cultural pragmatics

- A sample study


Conversation analysis

- A sample study


Barrister: the twins Michael and Allan (. ) live with the wife (1.0) Michael in employed as an apprentice butcher. =
Client oh not MIChael, ALLan=
Barrister: ALLAN. Ye:s.
Solicitor: alrigh.
Barrister: (0.1) ALLAN is employed as an apprentice but[cher]
Solicitor: [How] long has he been an apprentice butcher.
Client: not very long.
Solicitor: o how long. o
Client: maybe three four months I’m not sure
Solicitor: is now employed?
Client: no just leave it that’s fine

**Genre analysis**

- A sample study


**Summary of thesis types and their macro-structures**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional: simple</th>
<th>Topic-based</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Topic 1</td>
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<td>Topic 3 etc</td>
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<td>Discussion</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Conclusions</td>
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Critical discourse analysis

- A sample study


Theoretical Framework for the study

![Diagram of theoretical framework]

- Critical discourse analysis
- Discussions of intertextuality in rhetorical genre studies and SFL
- Systemic functional linguistics (SFL)
- Intercultural rhetoric/discourse studies
Discourse and identity

- A sample study


Violetta: to make friends online you need to be around a lot and be willing to talk ... to be “real” in a virtual kind of way

............

Violetta: i’d have whole typing styles for people. like, if i were trying to trick someone i knew into thinking i was someone else, i’d type a lot differently than i do normally. a person’s typing style can give them away like their voice does (Thomas, 2007: 114)

Multimodal discourse analysis

- A sample study

Barack Obama’s Victory Speech

References


Obama, B. (2008). This is your victory. In Williams, H. (ed). In our time: The speeches that shaped the modern world. London: Quercus Publishing

Further reading

This set of chapters describes a range of approaches and issues in researching discourse. Topics include assumptions which underlie the particular method or approach being discussed and research techniques and instruments appropriate to the goal and method of research. The second part of the book provides an overview of key areas of discourse studies. In each chapter the authors include a sample study which illustrates the points they are making and identify resources for further reading on the particular method or issue under discussion.

Jaworski and Coupland’s introduction to this second edition of their book provides further details on a number of topics that have been presented in this talk. This includes definitions of the term ‘discourse’, traditions in the analysis of discourse, speech act theory and pragmatics, conversation analysis, and critical discourse analysis. Strengths and limitations of discourse studies are also discussed.


This chapter presents an overview of key approaches and areas of influence in discourse analysis. A sample study of newspaper commentaries in Chinese and English on the events of September 11 is provided. The study examines not only discourse features of the texts but also considers reasons for why the texts have been written as they have.
References